

Freedom of Thought versus Freedom of Religion

Freedom of Thought versus Freedom of Religion: an Eighteenth-Century – and now also a Twenty-first-Century – Dilemma

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Deze tekst werd op 11 november door Jonathan Israel uitgesproken tijdens de Thomas More Lezing 2006 in De Rode Hoed in Amsterdam. In het voorjaar van 2007 wordt deze tekst (in Nederlandse vertaling) gepubliceerd in een essaybundel van het Soeterbeeck Programma. In deze essaybundel vindt u dan ook een uitwerking van het interview dat na afloop van de lezing met Jonathan Israel werd gehouden, en enkele commentariërende essays.

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Judging from the number of American and British newspaper and television reports about the change in the position of toleration and freedom of expression in the Netherlands since the murder of Theo van Gogh, in November 2004, the intellectual and political ferment in progress in Dutch society today is attracting the attention of the English-speaking world to a degree that has perhaps never been witnessed before. The same remarkable phenomenon is reflected in the interest being shown in, and lively reactions to, Ian Buruma's new book, *Murder in Amsterdam*. This situation is undoubtedly a vindication – of sorts – of those who maintain that the Netherlands has indeed served for some time as a theoretical model of toleration in life-style, thought, and religion for a great many of those who both read and think throughout the Western world. There is right now a sense abroad, surely justified, that the current dilemmas facing Dutch society, and the crucial decisions that are now being taken here, will have a considerable and lasting significance far beyond the confines of the Netherlands itself.

This being the case, it is a matter of some importance to analyze correctly the nature of the tension between 'freedom of thought' and 'freedom of religion', during the European Enlightenment – including Dutch eighteenth-century debates - and the resulting intellectual and cultural dilemmas. For there can be little doubt as to the considerable continuing relevance of the Enlightenment debate for our own time and especially for realistically and accurately grasping the nature of the conflict between 'freedom of thought' and the claims for 'freedom of religion' in contemporary society. An unmistakable sign of that relevance is that politicians and commentators both in Holland and the United States have begun slipping the terms 'Enlightenment', 'Enlightenment values' and 'Enlightenment fundamentalists' into the everyday discourse of public life and politics.

This spells potential danger as well as the possibility of constructive dialogue. For nothing is more readily or more often misrepresented than history. The fact that sections of the present Dutch government have gone on record as claiming that modern Europe is essentially a 'Christian' civilization and that the Dutch Enlightenment was more 'moderate' and more in tune with religion than was the Enlightenment of the French *philosophes* shows how historically questionable and potentially divisive is the official response to even the most crucially important contemporary Dutch issues. As a historian of eighteenth-century thought and debates, I see it as a duty very strongly to dissent from what some politicians are saying about the Enlightenment - Dutch and European - not just because it is historically entirely confused and wrong, as any expert must agree, but also because it seems to me to be highly damaging politically and socially.

Let me begin by asserting that I don't think there is any chance of correctly grasping the true character of the freedom of thought and expression debate within the Dutch and European Enlightenment - and hence within the wider framework of modern democratic societies in general, without first recognizing the intense and bitter opposition between full freedom of thought as proclaimed by the Radical Enlightenment and the limited, essentially Protestant theological toleration of Locke, Le Clerc, and Barbeyrac. The latter undoubtedly came to dominate in 18th century Dutch thought as it did in the rest of Europe. But at the same time it is undeniable that from then, down to now, Lockean toleration with its exclusion clauses and hesitations has also continually functioned as a kind of surrogate - however much favoured and insisted upon by conservative circles in Britain and the United States - for the until 1945 mostly officially suppressed and marginalized but nevertheless more comprehensive fully secular version of freedom of thought and expression.

Comprehensive toleration and freedom of thought which in the eighteenth-century was called *tolérantisme* in order to distinguish it clearly from Locke's essentially theological and Christian toleration, also originated in the late seventeenth century but this time not in Locke or English thought but rather in the clandestine Dutch world of radical Spinozists and of fringe Huguenots such as Pierre Bayle. This gives Holland a very special place in the history of modernity. Spinoza's and Bayle's theories of toleration, individual liberty and freedom of expression, especially regarding the quest for freedom of life-style, speech and publication, need to be seen, as these always were in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, as standing in very sharp and fundamental opposition to the - by our standards - excessively limited and censorious toleration of Locke, Le Clerc and Barbeyrac. Moreover, in Spinoza, even more than in the 'philosopher of Rotterdam', as Bayle deserves again to become known, the impulse to protect individual faith above everything else, along with the co-existence of churches and forms of worship, was pushed very firmly into the background, Spinoza's emphasis being always on the need for freedom of thought, life-style and of the press rather than on any particularly urgent need for protecting the sensitivities of faith.^[1] As is well known, it was always one of Spinoza's chief objectives to show not just that freedom of thought and expression can 'be granted without endangering piety and the peace of the commonwealth' but also that the 'peace of the commonwealth and piety depend on this freedom'.^[2]

Liberty of worship as such is actually only marginally touched on in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Spinoza's longest and most famous exposition of his plea for freedom of thought, a text where Spinoza also extensively discusses the place of religion in society and politics, no doubt because, unlike Locke or Le Clerc, he saw freedom of religion as entirely secondary to the wider and real issue of liberty of thought, and perhaps mainly a political problem, rather than something fundamental to the making of a good society. Religious freedom, in any case, he treats as included in, but subsidiary to, toleration as conceived in terms of liberty of thought and expression.^[3]

In his later work, the *Tractatus Politicus* (1677), Spinoza does more extensively deal with liberty of conscience and worship but in a way which again shows that his foundational *tolérantisme* - ie. toleration not grounded in theology - refuses to allow special privileges to the protection of faith and is chiefly intended to ground individual freedom of opinion, as well as of speech and writing. At the same time, Spinoza, again quite unlike Locke, always evinced a marked disinclination to encourage organised ecclesiastical structures to expand in influence, compete for followers, and assert their spiritual authority over

individuals, as well as engage in politics. He begins by distinguishing carefully between toleration of worship, strictly speaking, which is one thing and empowering religious groups to organize and extend their authority just as they wish which he sees as something rather different. While readily granting that everyone must possess the freedom to express their beliefs no matter what faith they profess, or what they believe, Spinoza simultaneously urges the need for restrictions on the activities of churches. While dissenters should have the right to build as many houses of worship as they want and individuals may freely fulfil the duties of their faith as they understand it, Spinoza does not agree that this means that minority religions should have a free hand to acquire large and impressive ecclesiastical buildings or exercise sway over their members, as the Amsterdam Portuguese synagogue had once sought to dictate to him. Large and magnificent houses of worship should, he thinks, be monopolized by a publicly endorsed religion supervised by the state which in any well-ordered society needs to be a 'very simple, universal faith', that is one which teaches ordinary folk that salvation comes through practicing 'justice and charity'. 'True religion' in his terminology is a symbolic or concretely articulated universal philosophical religion. What is absolutely disastrous for any society, he argues, is allow religious leaders of whatever kind sufficient autonomy and prestige to be able to mobilize elements of popular opinion to play an active role in the political process and challenge the authority of the state and its institutions.[4]

On this point Bayle was in complete agreement. If statesmen, magistrates, and educators are not in a position to ensure that all organized churches no matter which are completely stripped of the ability to introduce theological criteria and ways of judging men into the political process, legislation and the administration of law, then one cannot reasonably expect to have a stable or well-balanced society and politics. In this way, the publicly monitored and guaranteed absolute weakness of all churches becomes a vital interest of the tolerant, free and well-ordered state and to such a degree that any departure whatsoever from the complete impotence of ecclesiastical authority is *ipso facto* incompatible with true freedom, individual liberty and toleration of the people. Hence, while minority faiths should be kept firmly subordinate to the political authority, 'no more disastrous policy can be devised or attempted in a free commonwealth', as Spinoza puts it, than to render the official religion sufficiently autonomous and strong that it is able to demand that the views and expression of opinion of individuals be subjected to and judged in terms of theological criteria. For 'to invest with prejudice or in any way coerce the citizen's free judgment', contends Spinoza, 'is altogether incompatible with the freedom of the people.'

Officially condoned prohibitions of views, or persecution, justified under pretext of the need to protect religious truth or safeguard the sensitivities of believers is an intrusion of the law 'into the sphere of speculative thought' and results in individuals' opinions being 'put on trial and condemned as crimes'. [5] Consequently, he urges, the state should punish men only for deeds and never for their utterances or opinions. In Spinoza's view, neither the Dutch Reformed Church nor the Catholic Church of his time, nor any religious organization equipped with a separate, trained priesthood, can be upright, praiseworthy and justified religious institutions; for all are invariably career structures and political organizations, and hence corrupt bodies in which what he considered the churches' true function, namely to help instruct the people in 'justice and charity', is systematically perverted by 'base avarice and ambition' so that religious doctrine in practice is just a lever to gain influence and a weapon to defeat rivals. Churches, by exploiting the people's ignorance and credulity, all aim eventually, if they can, to amass influence and control. As a result, holds Spinoza, faith had in his day 'become identical with credulity

and biased dogma', dogma which degrades human reason 'completely inhibiting men's free judgment and capacity to distinguish true from false', a system of tenets 'apparently devised with the set purpose of utterly extinguishing the light of reason'.[\[6\]](#)

The crucial and absolutely indispensable thing, then, according to Radical Enlightenment thought, is to ensure that all religious leaders without any exception remain completely impotent in relation to the law, the state and state institutions and that no theological criteria are permitted to play any part in the constitutional or legislative process. In effect, all theological doctrine is by definition false 'religion', according to the Spinozists of the eighteenth century, and the only 'true religion', the veritable 'cultus Dei ejusque obedientia' [the cult of God and obedience to him], as Spinoza puts it, is the principle that the pursuit of the 'common good' consists in 'sola justitia et charitate sive amore erga proximum' [solely in justice and charity or love of one's neighbour].[\[7\]](#)

Whenever any society permits an organized clergy to evolve, distinct from the ruling elite or democratic office-holders teaching the publicly proclaimed religion, the 'multitude' will always consider the clergy and its leaders an alternative, and higher, source of authority, believing as they inevitably do that religious leaders are closest to God.[\[8\]](#) Churchmen, as is only to be expected, will then devise more and more elaborate dogmas, mysteries and rulings designed to enhance clerical sway and subordinate secular authority to their judgement and approval. Consequently, a vital safeguard for preserving liberty in a republic, argued the Spinozists, freethinkers and so-called 'libertines', is to prevent the factions that form among a ruling oligarchy, or the office-holders in a democracy, from dividing into competing sects or theological denominations supporting rival priesthoods and doctrines. For the more politicians seek the approval and support of churches in their conflicts with other political factions, the more they and the people will defer to theologians, and the more office-holders will become helpless prey to 'superstition', Spinoza's shorthand for subservience to ecclesiastical authority, theology and religious leaders. In such cases, argues Spinoza, adherents of religious congregations and doctrines condemned by the dominant priesthood, and everyone else who refuses to defer to them, are brutally sacrificed 'not to the public interest but to the hatred and savagery of their opponents'.[\[9\]](#)

Freedom of religion, then, as distinct from freedom to expand ecclesiastical authority, hierarchy and church property, is fully accommodated in Spinoza's scheme but remains entirely secondary to freedom of thought and expression and is tied to restrictions on sacerdotal independence and the authority of churches over their members. Freedom to embrace a particular faith, practice the religious duties it prescribes, and profess the tenets its clergy stipulate, not only should be respected but is politically useful to the state when well managed, albeit only when accompanied by effective safeguards against the perils of popular religious zeal and intolerance. Preventing the growth of a separate, powerful and unified public priesthood in Spinoza's view is nothing less than essential in a free republic because the outward forms of religion and religious authority fundamentally affect the cohesion, stability and orderliness of the commonwealth as well as individual freedom and liberty of expression and the press.[\[10\]](#) Where ecclesiastical authority exercises hegemony, the loyalty of the masses will inevitably and always be alienated from a government which upholds individual liberty, aiding those who thirst for power over others 'so that slavery may return once more' and 'superstition' again reign supreme.[\[11\]](#) Having himself witnessed the street disturbances, and murder of the Brothers De Witt, in The Hague in 1672, Spinoza knew at first hand the politically disastrous consequences of allowing theologians to denounce office-holders or policies

they dislike as ungodly and heretical, and then inflaming the angry, credulous and resentful among the populace against ministers of state.

Spinoza's and Bayle's toleration, accordingly, while granting freedom of worship, and full freedom of thought, at the same time insists on weakening ecclesiastical sway over the 'multitude'. For Bayle and Spinoza, the true good of society has no greater interest than that. By contrast, once freedom of worship is accorded and plurality of churches acknowledged, Locke's toleration envisages, like much subsequent liberal thought in this area, the withdrawal of the state in the main from the sphere of religious affairs. Indeed, in Locke's liberalism it is broadly assumed that preaching, exhorting the people to greater piety, staging ceremonies, organizing education and supervising sexual attitudes and life-style can all then safely and beneficially be entrusted to churchmen. Where Spinoza and Bayle are deeply fearful that rivalry of political factions in states will enable designing ecclesiastics to extend the ascendancy of theological notions over popular consciousness and ultimately deprive citizens 'of the freedom to express their views',^[12] in Locke's conception, the state leaves churches free to compete with each other, enhance their grip over their followers, discipline internal dissidents, and widen their influence in education, as well as crack down on homosexuality, extra-marital intercourse, and other forms of disapproved-of sexuality and life-style as much as they can, on the assumption that this (in reality notably illiberal) doctrine actually benefits society.

In Spinoza, freedom of thought and expression is grounded on a particular conception of political power and of the role and functions of the state. Since the right of the state, in his thought, is identical to the power of the state, and since no-one can control the thoughts of someone else, it follows that it is impossible to control men's thoughts and lies entirely outside the competence and proper business of the state to attempt to do so. When setting up the state, argues Spinoza, every individual surrenders, for the sake of added security, co-operation and also freedom, his or her natural right to act unrestrictedly, as he or she pleases - but not his or her right to reason, judge and express opinions; and since everybody retains the right to think and judge independently, it follows that it remains everyone's right to express whatever views one wishes about religion, politics, law and everything else pertaining to the 'common interest' and the state, provided such freedom is exercised without undermining the law or prejudice to the state. Expressing views about this or that decree, event, political decision, or office-holder, only becomes subversive and hence liable for punishment, holds Spinoza, if it directly obstructs implementation of laws and decrees.

That so clear and evident a distinction between action, on one side, and thought and expression, on the other, as this theory presupposes would in practice be a clear and viable one may well seem unlikely.^[13] When exactly, by Spinoza's criterion, is political or religious propaganda seditious and when not? But however he proposed to substantiate it in particular instances, this divide between action as distinct from thought and expression remained fundamental to Spinoza's (and the Spinozists') conception of individual liberty. Whatever thoughts, utterances, speeches and publications can safely be allowed in society should be permitted, he urges, since the fundamental 'purpose of the state is, in truth, freedom' [finis ergo republicae re vera libertas est].^[14]

A well-ordered state, contends Spinoza, 'grants to every man the same freedom to philosophize as I have shown to be permitted by religious faith' and indeed draws strength from this freedom.^[15] Here we find Spinoza's claim that philosophy and theology are totally separate, and do not conflict, combining with his subversive

redefinition of the meaning of 'religious' and 'faith' in terms of his own philosophical system. For what matters in the case of all religious doctrines, in his opinion, is not what anyone thinks, or believes, theological articles, mysteries or tenets of belief actually mean but rather their practical value in terms of maintaining social stability, disciplining conduct, and promoting justice and charity. Indeed, for Spinoza whose explanation of this is surely one of the most astounding passages in his oeuvre, it doesn't matter in the slightest for anyone truly concerned about the good of society, whether this or that individual understands religious doctrines theologically or philosophically: 'whether God is believed to be everywhere actually or potentially, whether he is believed to govern things freely or by natural necessity; or is believed to lay down laws as a ruler or evince them as eternal truths' .[\[16\]](#) Neither does it matter whether anyone believes men should obey God from free will or by the necessity of the divine decree; or finally, whether the reward of the good and punishment of the wicked is deemed to be natural or supernatural.[\[17\]](#)

In this way Spinoza sought socially and politically to reconcile Man's two intellectually irreconcilable modes of comprehending the universe- the philosophical and theological. The essential point is that no-one can or should ever be coerced. Everyone should be allowed to interpret simple religious tenets of 'faith' in his or her own way and do so entirely freely.[\[18\]](#) Spinoza, of course, denies that theological doctrines and points of belief as such contain any truths at all other than allegorically and metaphorically. He also thinks that whatever theological notions individuals actually embrace, or fail to embrace, can make no conceivable difference to society or their own prospects for personal salvation. The function of religious teachings, according to the Radical Enlightenment, is not to explain truth--which they are wholly incapable of doing--but purely to inculcate into the minds of the more superstitious and less educated segments of society maxims of good conduct. Since these are the substance of true 'religion', according to Spinoza, the only genuine measure of who is 'religious' and who not, the sole universal and valid criteria of true piety are those of 'charity' and 'justice'.[\[19\]](#)

It is not then religious toleration, according to Radical Enlightenment thought, but freedom of thought and expression which principally safeguard individual liberty under the state, constituting the most precious possession not just of the wise but of those who are genuinely 'religious'. At the same time, it is essential to bridle the freedom of churches and the pretensions of churchmen in order to safeguard this freedom of thought. Unfortunately, this essential difference (and tension) between freedom of thought and freedom to subscribe to organized religion is very rarely grasped in society. To regulate men's thoughts, beliefs and judgements may be impossible but in Spinoza's and Bayle's time, as in many countries in the world today, it was generally not thought appropriate for individuals to form their own views as to what is true, and what is not, freely and independently. Rather governments and churches took it for granted that individuals have no right to decide the most fundamental matters of conviction for themselves; and that what is proper to believe, and especially the core theological doctrines, should be vigorously enforced and what is incompatible therewith suppressed. Among the various censorship laws, anti-heresy statutes and decrees of religious uniformity applying in Europe in his day, that which Spinoza himself most directly encountered were the Dutch anti-Socinian laws of 1653, the instrument of censorship by which the books of Hobbes, Lodewijk Meyer and Adriaan Koerbagh, as well as Spinoza's, were comprehensively banned and suppressed.

For Spinoza, the fairly rigorous Dutch censorship of the late seventeenth century posed a formidable problem of whether, when, and how to publish his own writings, something

which dogged him in his later years on an almost daily basis.[20] A key aim of his toleration theory, consequently, was to ground freedom to publish one's views however much these are condemned by theologians and denounced by the majority. No other Early Enlightenment theory of toleration, not those of Locke or Le Clerc, nor even the *tolérantisme* of Bayle, seeks to clear so wide and solid a path for liberty of the press.[21] For Spinoza, the principle that society may rightly and justifiably demand of the individual submission regarding actions but not with respect to thoughts, opinions and conversation, means that men must also be free to express their views in print. All efforts to curb expression, and freedom to write and publish, he insists, not only subvert the sphere of legitimate freedom but entail constant danger of instability for the state. The bitter strife between Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants in the United Provinces, and the overthrow of Oldenbarnevelt, in 1618, he maintains, sufficiently proves that in times of spiritual turmoil the 'real schismatics are those who denounce the writings of others and subversively incite the unruly multitude against their authors; and not those authors themselves who generally write only for scholars and appeal to reason alone; and that finally the real disturbers of the peace are those who, in a free commonwealth, vainly seek to suppress liberty of judgement which cannot be suppressed.' [22] His rule that the 'less freedom of judgement is conceded to men the further their distance from the most natural state, and consequently the more oppressive the regime', [23] besides securely anchoring everyone's free right of access to information and ideas in a free republic also afforded a useful method for evaluating the degree of freedom in any state.

It is true, of course, that the subordination of freedom of conscience and worship to individual freedom of thought and expression as expounded in Spinoza and Bayle, placed their toleration entirely beyond the pale of mainstream Dutch society at the time. Aside from a few radical Socinians, like his friends Pieter Balling and Jan Rieuwertsz, relatively few Dutch or other European contemporaries considered such a concept either compatible with a theological outlook or proper for a well-ordered society. Generally, Locke's toleration was widely preferred and, in this sense, it is doubtless true that 'Locke provided the theoretical defence of the toleration which would rule the outlook of the coming age'. [24] Yet Locke's 'Christian argument' was in no way that of most modern post-1945 Western freedom of thought; rather it was Spinoza who by eulogizing freedom of the individual, and of expression, in preference to freedom of conscience and worship, and by insisting on minimizing ecclesiastical authority, who in fact cleared a much wider space for liberty, and human rights, than Locke and though, until recently, far too little acknowledged, cut a historically more direct and, clearly much more important path towards modern western individualism.

All this is plain not least from the fact that it was the toleration of Spinoza and Bayle, and never that of Locke which was espoused by the French Radical Enlightenment of the mid eighteenth century, that is to say by Diderot, d'Alembert and the *encyclopédistes*. Just as Diderot followed Spinoza in many of his metaphysical preoccupations, and his monism, so he was also the mid eighteenth century French thinker who most seriously addressed Spinoza's dilemma of how a society based on liberty of the individual, and freedom of thought and personal life-style, should conduct itself with regard to ecclesiastical power and the expansive authority the vying churches strive to extend over their members, public institutions and over society generally.

Diderot in fact detested Locke's approach: for the state to withdraw and allow the churches *laissez faire* to his mind provided no solution at all. Indeed, here, Diderot goes

still further than Spinoza or Bayle, contending that the moral and social influence of Christianity is not in general a positive good but rather something socially harmful since the churches, Catholic or Protestant, introduce into society two wholly different, conflicting and incompatible standards as to what is good and what is bad.[25] It was not simply, holds Diderot, that this or that religion persecutes, or that all powerful religions are invariably intolerant; the difficulty, in his opinion, was that belief in God, spirits, miracles, and transcendental realities as such, damages society and the individual even where such beliefs are propagated by a church which formally renounces compulsion. This is because such doctrines are then claimed to be the holiest and most fundamental that men can conceive but are yet, at the same time, by definition, incomprehensible, not demonstrable, and definable only by theologians specially trained for this purpose.

Confessional faith, indeed all religion, he contends, foments individual unhappiness and strife by persuading people that *chimaeras* no-one understands are more important than the quality and content of individuals' daily lives.[26] Such a perspective could only further sharpen what eventually became a basic Spinozist dilemma: liberty of thought and expression must include freedom of belief and religious conviction; but how, in good conscience, can a true *philosophe* countenance the churches' sway over the people without seeking to impose curbs, restrictions proposed by philosophy, to safeguard the 'common good' and its secular social morality? Here we see the first seeds of that 'philosophical' intolerance of which the young Turgot, a fervent advocate of Lockean toleration, after reading Diderot's first book, the *Pensées philosophiques* complained in 1746: accusing Toland and Collins of aggression and intolerance towards Christianity, he records that he had heard that Shaftesbury too 'poussait sa haine pour le christianisme jusqu'à l'intolérance'.[27]

Diderot later returned to this dilemma, notably in his article 'intolérance' written for the *Encyclopédie*, around 1759, by shifting the focus of discussion from promoting toleration to curbing intolerance, intolerance being depicted by him as not just a moral evil, indeed an appalling injustice, but also something which, in practice, mostly either takes the form of 'ecclesiastical intolerance', something which, in his view, needs to be treated as a special type of political problem or else lay intolerance fed by theological ideas. Diderot builds his argument on Bayle's principle that 'men who fall into error in good faith should be pitied, never punished' and on Spinoza's principle that the 'mind can only acquiesce in that which it regards as true', implying that what the people believe is of concern to all. But he gives all this a particular twist of his own, claiming that in much of society it is the clergy and churches which are chiefly guilty of 'impiety', 'irreligion' and 'immorality' because intolerance is basic to their teaching and because it is rank impiety 'to stir up the people, arm nations and soak the soil with blood'; in this way, he ties into his toleration theory a favourite strand from his political thought, the primacy of the 'general will', and one, moreover, which contains just a hint of a revolutionary threat.[28] In his radical separation of moral truth from the sphere of the churches, and determination to check the latter, Diderot hence reveals himself in a sense more *Spinoziste* than Spinoza and more *Bayliste* than Bayle.

Meanwhile, in an age in which the Inquisition was being dismantled and church censorship generally receding before secular state censorship, no-one could be confident that Locke's freedom of worship, rapidly gaining ground in much of western Europe and America, particularly after 1715, necessarily entailed a corresponding shift towards greater freedom of thought. Rather, developments in Prussia, Denmark, Russia, France, and elsewhere during the eighteenth century showed that freedom of conscience and

worship, no matter how liberally defined, even disregarding Locke's highly illiberal reservations regarding Catholics and Jews, can not simply be equated with growing freedom of thought and expression. For widening religious freedom clearly did not necessarily mean greater freedom to express ideas – and especially not 'philosophical' arguments in Spinoza's or Diderot's sense of the term – particularly where these seek to weaken churches, curtail ecclesiastical power, contradict the essentials of revealed religion or, indeed, criticize sovereigns who proclaimed themselves champions of the public churches. [29]

Ultimately, the term 'libertas philosophandi' which appears in the sub-title of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* denotes everyone's right to examine and, if he so chooses, reject, or argue against and ultimately contribute to toppling, traditional theological and ecclesiastical structures as well as other kinds of opinion and authority. The term 'philosophy' is here already charged with that revolutionary intent with which it was later infused by Diderot and the radical philosophes. The shift from a quest for freedom of worship, such as Spinoza's Dutch Socinian friends, Jelles and Balling espoused, to the pursuit of freedom of thought and expression beginning with Spinoza's philosophy was indeed to become a key defining feature of the Western Enlightenment. By the early eighteenth century, radical *philosophes* in western European countries, with the Netherlands very much to the forefront, no longer complained primarily about lack of religious freedom. Indeed, safeguarding the sensitivities of men of faith had become irrelevant and even counter-productive. The focus of their struggle now was the battle for intellectual liberty and liberty of expression, as well as freedom to publish, a fight which was to prove long and arduous indeed.

To draw to a conclusion, it seems necessary amid the dilemmas of the contemporary world scene, and the specific dilemmas facing the Netherlands, to strengthen Dutch society's commitment to the best and most relevant strands of its own Enlightenment tradition and experience. The inherent connections between democracy, freedom of thought and freedom of the individual surely need to be more strongly affirmed than they are at present in schools, in public debate and in the press and in ways that link these values specifically and closely to the egalitarian, democratic wing of the Enlightenment. At the same time, it is crucial to understand and present these core values as the basis of a modern universalist moral and political order which was shaped and generated not by the West as such, and not by Christianity, but by the purely secular philosophical and scientific impulses of the Enlightenment conceived of as a global movement. As part of this, such indispensably crucial thinkers as Spinoza and Bayle need to be given a much higher profile in society and in education with more statues, more streets named after them, and more talk about them in the media. Above all, there must be a stronger commitment than there is discrediting notions that religious leaders of whatever kind should be influencing the direction of society, legislation and politics and to detaching theological criteria and theological notions at every level from society's legal and constitutional processes and institutions. No matter how free individuals are and should be to believe whatever they want, no-one's religious sensibilities, and no theological criteria, can safely be allowed to acquire a shaping role in contemporary political and general culture. To give way to claims that religious sensibilities of whatever sort are what must be chiefly respected in society is a sure path to political and social disaster.

- [1] Walther, 'Spinoza's Critique', 100; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 266-7
- [2] Spinoza, *TTP*, preface
- [3] Spinoza, *The Political Works* (ed.) Wernham, pp, 410-11
- [4] *ibid.*, p. 411; De Dijn, 'Spinoza and Revealed Religion', 42-3; Mignini, 'Dottrina spinoziana', 73-4; Sprigge, 'Is Spinozism a Religion?', 138-40
- [5] Spinoza, *TTP*, preface
- [6] *ibid.*
- [7] Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus*, 411; Spinoza, *TTP*, 224
- [8] Matheron, *Individu et communauté*, 439-41
- [9] Spinoza, *TTP*, preface
- [10] Moreau, 'Spinoza et le *Jus circa sacra*', 336; Halper, 'Spinoza', 173, 179
- [11] Spinoza, *TTP*, preface
- [12] Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus*, 411
- [13] Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 26-30; Smith, *Spinoza, Liberalism*, 157
- [14] Spinoza, *Opera iii*, 241; Spinoza, *TTP*, preface
- [15] *ibid.*, 295; Halper, 'Spinoza', 173
- [16] Spinoza, *TTP*, 225-6; Spinoza, *Opera iii*, 241
- [17] *ibid.*; Roothaan, *Vroomheid*, 121-2; Israel, 'Spinoza, Locke', 107
- [18] Spinoza, *TTP*, 225; Preus, *Spinoza and the Irrelevance*, 204-5
- [19] Mignini, 'Dottrina', 68-70, 74; De Dijn, 'Spinoza and Revealed Religion', 42-4
- [20] Israel, 'Banning', 3-14; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 278-93
- [21] Spinoza, *TTP*, 295, 298; Enno van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid*, 291
- [22] Spinoza, *TTP*, 298; Roothaan, *Vroomheid*, 69
- [23] *ibid.*
- [24] Cragg, *Church and the Age*, 80; Waldron, *God, Locke and Equality*, 208-13
- [25] Diderot, *Additions*, 67; Cherni, *Diderot*, 488-9
- [26] Diderot, *Additions*, 67-72; Duflo, *Diderot philosophe*, 390-1; Pätzold, *Spinoza, Aufklärung*, 25-7;
- [27] Turgot, 'Réflexions', 91
- [28] Diderot, *Political Writings*, 29-30
- [29] Sina, *L'Avvento della ragione*, 344-7; Wootton, 'Introduction', 109-10