

Dear Paolo,

As promised earlier in an e-mail I start here giving my remarks, mainly positive but sometimes also critical, on your very interesting small book *L'uomo libero. L'eresia spinozista alle radici dell'Europa moderna* (Pisa 2007). I prefer a personal style in the form of a letter above a detached review as one would offer to a journal, since we have already for about three decades a personal relation in the field of Spinoza studies. We met each other on Spinoza conferences, invited each other (to Pisa and to Rotterdam), had much epistolary contacts and sent books to each other, although I must confess that you were more generous in this respect than I. I own from your desk, spread on various shelves, at least seven books! And what is more: I always read them. To my regret I took not always enough time to formulate my comments. I most profited, perhaps, from your edition and translation of Spinoza's Political Treatise (Pisa 1999), looking from aside to your solution of translation problems, to your coining of key-terms, to your valuable notes.

Of course I am too late with my reaction on your present copy. I should have written immediately, because its content is so precious, but, as I told you already, I was fully occupied with my own work on Spinoza's classical sources, on Van den Enden and his radical democracy, on Locke being deeply influenced by Spinoza in epistemological and political theory and finally on Mandeville's continuation and elaboration of the 'secrets' of Spinoza's theory of human behavior. But now, after studying it carefully, I can hardly refrain myself. Let me tell you on forehand, that I rather often had to consult my Italian dictionary, because I did not know the meaning of many words you make use of. I consider this as a symptom of your original writing and thinking.

But your word for indicating the expression *homo liber*, namely 'sintagma', in spite of its being absent from my dictionary, I knew already from my lecture of books on classical literature and especially also from Omero Proietti's phantastic book on *La città divisa. Flavio Giuseppe, Spinoza e i farisei* (2003) which (between brackets) is to my view one of the most important books on the TTP. A couple of chapters in my *Spinoza classicus* would not have been possible without the extremely rich material provided by Omero. How is the reception of this book in your circle? I agree with your claim on p. 2, that the sintagma *homo liber* is heritage from Spinoza. But can we assess Spinoza as an 'Educatore del genere umano nel senso di Lessing'? This would imply, that it was Spinoza's *intention* (as it was Lessing's) to contribute to man's liberation in the *Ethics*, whereas I think that he had no illusions about this ideal. He presented the results of his *scientific* research of Scripture and of man's behaviour only to the *docti* without trying to make himself understandable for the common people. Lessing, indeed, had a broader scope and made use of another genre of writing.

Yes, in the final scholium the perfectly wise and perfectly ignorant men must be conceived as *due poli estremizzati* (p. 11) or, as I would phrase, 'boundary concepts', i.e. *entia rationis*. Just like pure circles or pure spheres they are products of reason which as such cannot exist. Otherwise we would come in conflict with the whole of Spinoza's argument, as you rightly argue. I had also no hesitation about your putting between those extremes "Spinoza's bet (*pari*) on the possibility of a free republic only on the basis of the

realistic (and Machiavellian and Tacitan) persuasion, that people (etc.)". Man dominated by passions is, indeed, the only possible startingpoint for a free republic. Later on I will make a remark on 'your' Machiavelli. But I had some problems with your *simplificata* statement (p. 13), "that all wise men are free men, but not alle free men are wise men". Is '*homo liber*' not an abstract concept too, on the same foot als *homo sapiens*? Further, in this same paragraph, you take distance from the elitarism of people who pretend to "compress Spinoza romantically in a pretended ascetism of the final part of the Ethica". It is the word 'ascetism' that I cannot combine with my reading of part 5. And are you, Paolo, not close to romanticism when you speak about 'a Spinozean odyssee' in the direction of Ithaca? No, it is said a bit stronger: Spinoza would have seen "a free republic as a loved and attainable (*raggiungibile*) Ithaca". But sorry, I surcharge the text. You only claim that Spinoza *aimed at* or that he, with his political constructs, *opened a view on* Ithaca. After all: we agree. But yet, the word *raggiungibile* does disturb me a bit. Spinoza knew about the impossibility of perfect individual and collective freedom.

At the bottom of the same page you make – correcting a false titelature - a personal confession about your situation in the academic world, saying that you always met with a refusal when candidating for a cathedra. We can, Paolo, shake hands! The same happened to me. But, looking backwards, I cannot regret it. I never had to nor wanted to accommodate to academic discipline. I experienced in my environment the academic '*coercion of the ingenia*' (TP). Some people like it in behalf of the remuneration. My '*bonus*' (or better *bonum*) is another one and more than enough. I guess that you also agree in this respect. We are relatively free in doing things and publishing what we like without wishing to adapt our work to the stupid criteria of the peers of journals. But after I left the university in 1995 on the age of 65, I had most of the time difficulties in finding a publisher and therefore often refuged to do it myself privately. So I went to a printing office for my very unconventional and incorrect book (I translate the Dutch title): *With the old Greeks, Van den Enden and Spinoza to real DIRECT DEMOCRACY, included the modernized and annotated text of Van den Enden, Free Political Propositions*. Second revised edition of *Democratical Renewal on historical and philosophical basis* (Vriestad 2007). In this book I give, apart from what the title says, an elementary sketch of Greek democracy, Aristotle's enumeration of the principles of democracy (*Politica vi/2*), a reconstruction of Spinoza's democratic model and, finally, a chapter with precisely detailed proposals for a transformation of our contemporary pseudo-democracy in the direction of de model based on Van den Enden and Spinoza's political theory. I did not dispatch it to you because you don't master the Dutch. You can imagine that publishers, which I approached, were afraid of repercussions. Our way does not always follow the path of roses!

Back to the basics of your book. You plea for an interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy as the foremost *European* philosophy. What can I have against it? Nothing, except perhaps that I would myself prefer an indication of the classical roots of Spinoza's humanistic work, as I did in my *Spinoza classicus. Antieke bronnen van een moderne denker*. I inserted in the English Vandenenden-book I send to you today a leaflet with an index of the

contents. In this chapter I was not fully convinced by your argument (pp 24-25) that Mozes did not cheat the Hebrews. He had much charisma and convincing power, and succeeded in making people believe his receiving special messages from above. You know the fragments I hint at (Praefatio and chapter 5 of TTP). Why could one not assess this as imposture? I quote Van den Enden: "All pretending and seemingly precise religious Politicians conceive and understand by Religion nothingbut a necessary and pretend *holy deceit*" (p. 170 in my English edition). And he continues: "Only Polybius and N. Machiavel are plain in this matter, I think". Second, you surmise a causal relation between conditions of social life and the possibility of human intellect. Again, I have nothing against this thesis, but I would like to limit the knowledge benefits to practical, even prudential knowledge. I do not see, that the highest kind of knowledge is especially furthered in this sense, that the political experience of living in a free and prosperous aristocracy like Amsterdam is privileged above other kind of social experiences, among which eventually living in a state of anarchy and civil war (like Spinoza's 'England').

The TTP is indeed primarily and fundamentally '*un proposito defensiva*' (28) and not an offensive strategy as most scholars conclude from the intentionally misleading subtitle. Spinoza is (1665, Voorburg) in life danger, accused by theologians and ministers of being an atheist, of being a harmful and noxious 'instument for the policy'. Just as he formerly wrote an 'apology' for his departure from the synagogue, he now writes an *apology* for his being a good citizen. And what better could he do than drawing the arguments for his correct and *harmless* political attitude from an adequate hermeneutic of Scripture by itself, since his opponents argued by misusing Scripture? The *libertas philosophandi* was indeed a highly important item of the TTP, directly broached and treated only in chapter 20, but indirectly *defended* by *practising* it irrefutably in the preceding chapters.

The final page of chapter 1 (p. 37) is a very well done steak. You hit adequately on the hard core of the TP. I enjoy this page with its hugely important statement. What you claim here was first affirmed by me in an article in *Acta Politica* (1988) under the title (I translate) "The coupling principle in Spinoza's political theory" and afterwards many times repeated in various publications. I explain it again in the Van den Enden book dispatched to you on page 205. Please, look up the passage on arrival of the document. On this point Spinoza is thoroughly and clearly dependant on Van den Enden and Johan de la Court (who was present in his library). Therefore, after having praised the first nine lines of the page, I wish to criticize the tenth line, on which you assert that Machiavelli's realism is the "fountain of major inspiration" for the principle you so excellently formulate in the earlier and later lines. I think, Paolo, that you don't realize that Spinoza is also heavily criticizing Machiavelli in the TP, as I explained in an article (2001) on www.foqliospinozano.it under the title *Imperium aeternum. Spinoza's critique of Machiavelli and its source in Van den Enden*.

On the same page you talk about Spinoza's 'prefiguration' of a 'model of a possible democracy'. I think that Spinoza has done more than that. We only need to collect the many 'dèmotica' (as Aristotle calls them) that are spread in the chapters on monarchy and aristocracy and compose them to a whole on the background of Van den Enden's program,

as I did in my afore mentioned chapter. Spinoza could hardly have given more details about his democratic model! We know enough. You are also to the point with the remark, that Spinoza above all produced “the creation of instruments of control”. He very creatively devised not a few of them, which would also be of great help for the crisis of our time.

Your chapter on Spinoza’s ‘full scale heresy’ (*eresia totale*) is not less interesting. TTP 19 is formidable, yes. And clear. The upshot of the moralizing lessons of prophets and Christ is nothing less than trying to realize justice and charity.: *Deo servire [do integro animo obedire] justitiam et caritatem colendo*. Biblical ‘Gottesdienst’ (Duch: godsdienst) is nothing else. And this top priority of a true Christian (or generally of ‘catholica religio’) leads him (the man thinking of it) straight on to political cooperation, because, as TTP 16 explains, this is the only way to reach justice and charity in our community. And this, on its turn, implies unmistakably that the service of God is identical with obedience to the state authorities, better (on account of the absoluteness of democracy) with passive *and active* citizenship. *Certum est, quod pietas erga patriam summa sit, quam aliquis praestare potest etc* (Cf. Klever, *Spinoza’s concept of Christian piety. Defense of a Text Correction by Brudder in the TTP*, NASS Monograph 9, 2000, pp. 17-28). On p. 52 at first sight you don’t seem very inclined to give its full weight to this conclusion, since you write: “*Isolate dal contesto, queste proposizioni suggeriscono indubbiamente l’idea di una ferrea religione di stato*”. But reading further I discover that you don’t really deviate an inch from Spinoza’s line and fully subscribe to Spinoza’s ‘religio publica’, which, as you also correctly remark, “*non si identifica con nessuna delle religioni singole*” (p. 52). And then I gratefully read your fine and very adequate distinction between the three models of religion in Spinoza’s text: 1) the diversified kinds of private religion on a small scale tolerated in the free space which every modern state leaves open for similar particular initiatives; 2) the public religion or *religio patriae* in the sense just now described; and 3) the *vera religio* which consists in the *amor Dei intellectualis*.

You elucidate the ‘religion of state’, which I in my book of ‘radical democracy’ define as ‘citizenship’, with the illuminating sintagma ‘al modello *traiano*’. I am very happy with this remark. Citizens have to show their loyalty to the political authority in the way this authority prescribes. I guess you think of the public expression of loyalty, which was required from the Asiatic members of the forbidden ‘hetaeria’ of ‘christians’ by Plinius the Younger in his correspondance with Trajanus. I paid due attention to this in my *Spinoza classicus* (ch. 10) and defended there the ‘raison d’état’ of the persecution of those strange people.

Private religions (like Roman Catholicism) require from members adherence to a huge amount of improbable but yet obligatory dogmata and articles of faith. No problem for the believers. Public religion, however, best flourishes on the basis of *no more than seven* fundamental but simply formulated articles of faith, which seem – on behalf of the state service, i.e. the ‘divine’ realm of justice and charity - unavoidable (*necessariae*) for the common people which is always still living in the sphere of imagination. Spinoza enumerates them *exhaustively* (!) in chapter TTP 14 by introducing his list with the words: “*Atque hinc facile omnia determinantur, quaeque adeo **nulla praeter haec sunt**, videlicet I, II, III, IV, V, VI,*

VII". You, Paolo, borrow in good faith the French *mis*interpretation of this chapter, as if the list constituted a *credo minimum*, from the nearly always misleading quasi-authorities Moreau and Lagrée and could better not do so.[They also seriously misconceive the relationship between Lodewijk Meijer and Spinoza, not to speak about many other items!] We could, if and only if we had to add something, better speak of a *credo maximum*. Yes, the various kinds of religion could equally well be divided in a) low level religion, b) high level religion, and c) medial religion, in which only a) and c) do belong to the *forum externum*, inconditionally subject to political authority, and c) belongs to the *forum internum*, which escapes state control. And yes, states which try to prescribe certain religious opinions operate violently and enhance the danger of civil war.

Two last points about this second chapter. I never realized that Spinoza with the word *Ecclesia* (singular) in ch. 20 indicates the totality of the republic, the free republic considered as the harmonious commonwealth, until you reminded me of this by your close and intelligent reading. You score an important point, Paolo! Second, I also like your qualification of Fabricius' inviting letter to Spinoza as a *perfida lettera*. I, too, did so in my chapter *Professor?* of my *Zicht op Spinoza* (1994) [which also seems to be translated in Italian, although I never saw this version]. I found interesting and rather revealing details about the anti-Spinozistic background of Fabricius in his *Opera Omnia* (1698).

The third chapter bears on p. 57 a title which differs from the title mentioned in the *Indice* on p. 111. I guess that the latter one is the improved one. No big question, however! But I do launch a serious protest against the proposition (of Paolo Cristofolini and nearly all Italian and French Spinoza scholars) on page 60, which sounds in translation: "It seems to us that we can say that no other classical [writer, wk?] furthers better than Spinoza the understanding of a citizen in a free republic for realizing himself in the direction of a fuller freedom, first individually and later collectively". *Spinoza e nessun altro prima di lui*, as it is proclaimed in a slightly different sintagma on the backside of the book. I have to contest this claim. Van den Enden was the first to emphasize in a fascinating (but difficult) style and develop deductively the same theory about freedom of man in and through a free *gemenebest* (commonwealth). His *Short Story of New Netherland* (1662) and his *Free Political Propositions* (1665) programmed Spinoza's mind. They are twin philosophers, 'father and son' fighting for the very same liberation of man from his slavery under his passions and under tyranny and lesser kinds of domination, fighting for the same ideal of radical democracy under the mantle of whatever concrete form of political organization. I cannot but refer you to my book, which documents his biography and translates his main texts.

I was further struck by your taking distance from Negri's characterisation of Spinoza's 'philosophy' as being subversive (64). You take him to be *anti-subversive*, because he opposes revolutionary violence (on the example of replacing Charles with Cromwell, the one dictator by another one). But this is not the only way of being subversive and put things upside down. The existing system might be repaired by means of gradual reformation (as was proposed by Van den Enden in VPS). Moreover, Spinoza designs, like an architect,

structures for a monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, which are totally different from the systems we know under those names. Might this not be rightly called a *subversive* political theory? You conclude the paragraph with the question whether there is a strategy for the passage from the vicious circle to the virtuous circle? I do agree with your suggestion if you mean by the sintagma 'virtuous circle' the arrival to a free, strong and prosperous state; and I also agree if one understands this in the sense of personal freedom. A free and virtuous man is in a sense a product of a free society. This is specifically emphasised by Van den Enden as well as Spinoza.

You have so many striking expressions in your text. So I much liked, on the next page (65) your word combination *bisogno-impulso*, that drives towards common rights in society and has an ambivalent effect or a double sided direction: in contrast and in favour with one's own *conatus*. You, then, attempt the major academic question of some French scholars, whether the state has to be conceived as a real individual or not, by fatally leaving out on p. 67 the most important and typically Spinozistic element from Spinoza's definition of an *individuum*. I badly miss in your presentation an equivalent of Spinoza's *coercentur!*. Any aggregate of bodies we call an individual is constituted by a kind of *compression*, of course by external agents. This point distinguishes Spinoza's physics from Descartes' physics. Descartes explained the stability (temporal continuity) of interrelated bodies by supposing hooks in particles! Even inertia, the rest of bodies or body systems, is the result of a never ending circular compression (in fact of all existing bodies in the universe by each other / *ab invicem*). The same with motion or *conatus*, uniform or not. This not only applies to human bodies, but likewise to social bodies like states (or cultural, climatological, ecological systems). Desintegration or weakness and decay is always the effect of destruction from the outside of the individual in question. I agree with Matheron's consequent affirmative answer and disagree with the always compromising Moreau, everyman's friend. He cannot assign firm ground for his view on the *lesser or poor* integration / composition of the parts of a political body. His view is chimaeric and not backed by Spinoza's principles. I cannot see why impacts and imports to human bodies would have better results in terms of individuality than impacts and imports, equally infinite in number, of other types of bodies. The '*veluti*' of the phrase '*quasi guidata una mente*' may better be interpreted as a qualification of the '*guidata*' than as an enfeeblement of the coherence. No body is guided by its mind. Guidance of a body by its mind can only be interpreted as a false imagination, a metaphor.

It gives me great pleasure to read that you, Paolo, also enjoyed so much Locke's 'stupendous page' on enthusiasm. I had the same surprising experience when first reading the *Essay*. I will, of course, subscribe to your underlining of Locke's vicinity to Spinoza (p. 78). According to both one cannot allow any remission or historical absolution for fanaticism. But Locke is, in fact, very close to Spinoza in other respects too. You know this as you by now have read my *Locke's Disguised Spinozism*. I look forward to your reaction on the arguments for my claim of his being a true follower of Spinoza, at least in epistemological, political and theological respects. And further, in case you agree with me, I would be very grateful to you

when you, in your position, would stimulate further research in Italy on this historical novum. Aren't you the president of the Italian association of friends of Spinoza?

Starting with your chapter on the '*beatitudini*' of Jezus on the mountain I must first praise your courage to tackle this tricky subject and second, your intelligently handling it. I think – if I understand your text correctly – that your verdict about Lagrée- Moreau's proposal is too benevolent. Their statement implying a direct connection (*collegamento diretto*) between Christi mountain discourse and what they *miscall* the *credo minimum* is in my view nothing less than a nonsensical betrayal of Spinoza. It is impossible to strictly prove articles of faith or low level assent, whether they are fundamental or not. Imaginations (like I-VII) are logically unwarranted and therefore essentially false assumptions. The way Christ persuaded his disciples on the mountain, however, is according to Spinoza: *demonstrating* something as a truth, not more geometrico, but with other methods (examples, similitudes, stories etc.). His *messaggio di sapienza morale* (as you rightly call it, p. 81) is of greatest importance for mankind and has nothing in common with *opinions and assents* the free man rationally supersedes, at least has to relativize. It is against all textual evidence to maintain that Spinoza might ever have asserted about the elementary *fidei dogmata* of ch. 14 what he actually said about the *documenta*, that he *taught* (*docuit*) on the mountain? '*Docere* is typically the word for what Spinoza did himself in the *Ethica*.! Cf. Also the 'either – or' alternative in ch. 5, the two methods one can make use of and which do not exclude each other. You are right, Paolo, The TTP 14 – credo “does not constitute the substance of Christ's peculiar message in Matthew 5”.

Not less annoying is the question with which Alexandre Matheron has badly surcharged our agenda since 1971. We could better have spared our time by *not* reading his book about the “salvation of the ignorants” in his projection of Spinoza's Christ. I fully agree with your (and Bettini's) opposition against Matheron's distinction between two kinds of salvation: the strong and full happiness of the elitist few who arrive at complete wisdom on the one hand and the weak and unsteady state of happiness of the always erring and wavering multitude on the other hand. Beatitudo is one and undivisible in various (higher or lower) kinds. This is crystalclear in the *Ethica*, which *only* in a kind of evangelical accommodation *ad captum vulgi* speaks in the final scholium about the *arduous* way to perfect wisdom practicable only by a few, but in fact demonstrates that all people *have* the highest or intuitive kind of knowledge and in so far *do* enjoy the highest peace of mind. The theoretical part of the *Ethica* does not distinguish between dull and wise people. *Everybody*, simple believer or academically educated *doctus*, arrives by his milliard experiences alone (!) to seeing and conceiving everything as eternal and to *know* adequately Gods' infinite essence. Whoever denies this, testifies to his not having interiorized the fifth part of the *Ethica*., in which Spinoza develops the *neurological mechanism* (5/11-15) which irresistibly produces our intuitive knowledge. I may refer here to my Dutch language article (I translate): “How one becomes wise. A stretched but fruitfull relation between Spinoza and Bouwmeester in the light of a new document” (*De Zeventiende Eeuw* 2005, 315-3553), of which article I concluded the English summary with the words: “Finally, Spinoza seems to

have followed Bouwmeester's criticism [see letter 37], because in the fifth part of the Ethics he systematically defends the *casual and fortuitous* origins in experience of our highest kind of knowledge".

According to Spinoza's pervasive theory in the TTP we have, indeed, to distinguish between two *bona*: the *verum bonum* (or *bonum commune*) of our being safe and saved as a member of the commonwealth (preferable in a democracy) and, second, the *summum bonum*, i.e. the *gaudium* we experience in the *amor Dei intellectualis*. These two are, of course, identical with the afore discussed *religio patriae* and the *vera religio* of the wise man. The *summum bonum* does not coincide with the *verum bonum* of living in and being part of a healthy state. It can (and will also be, see above) arrived at by individuals in the absence of a *verum bonum*, e.g. in times of corruption, anarchy and civil war. On the other hand does the presence of the *verum bonum* (especially a tolerant city like the free Amsterdam with its *libertas philosophandi*) as such not automatically lead to the highest good of the *acquiescentia mentis* in the citizens, although it might further it. Now: which kind of goods was the object of Christ's philosophical instruction on the mountain? To my view both. Matheron was certainly right in assigning a *political* demension in Christ's discourse. Earlier and with a stronger accent this theory was defended by Van den Enden, who 'baptizes' Christ as the '*gemeenebestbetrachter van alle volkeren*' (the propagator of the *bonum commune* of all people). Spinoza clearly follows his master's view on Christ as a kind of political philosopher and activist in his explanation of *Matthew 5/4* (*Beati lugentes quoniam consolationem accipient*). Their *tristitia* must be viewed upon as an effect of the deficiency of the public *verum bonum*, i.e. of defects of justice. They deplore the neglect of "Gods reign and its *aequitas*", which latter feature is essential for a real commonwealth. Christ is a motivated fighter for justice and charity of neighbours. But how ought we combine these social-democratic political principles of action with his teaching that we should offer the right part of our body when hit on the left part, that we should offer other parts of our belongings when bereaft of a desirable suit? Is it justice to give way to criminals in our environment who threaten and maltreat us? No, is Christ's answer. Those things only happen and have to be tolerated as an unavoidable evil "in corrupt states", like the state with so many *sicari, zelotes and phariseic arrogance* in which he, then, lived. Christ explicitly states in this context that he was not come to abolish the Law, but to cooperate to its fulfilling and vindication. "You have heard that it was said to your forefathers: *you must love your neighbours and hate your enemy*" (5/43). This Mosaic law of eye for eye and tooth for tooth had according to him to remain 100% valid, *excepting* a situation of bankruptcy of the state (as then and there). That was the *only reason why* he suggested to his followers to give way to lawless persecutors, just like Jeremia had taught: *docet (!) instante urbis ruina*. In the reference *Lament. 3/29-30* we, indeed, read that whoever is attacked by criminal compatriots should best keep quiet, look to the ground and wait for help, giving to him who hit his cheek his other cheek! *That Christ certainly did not teach the loving of your enemies* can be demonstrated to be Spinoza's authentic interpretation of the relevant passages. CHRIST/SPINOZA IS AGAINST LOVING ONE'S ENEMIES inside or outside one's home country.

TTP 19: *Sic etiam, quamvis Hebraeis dictum fuerit, ut unusquisque socium tamquam se ipsum amaret (vide Levit. 19/17-18), tenebantur tamen eum, qui contra edicta legis aliquid commiserat, iudici indicare (vide Levit. 5/1 et Deut. 13/8-9) et eundem, si reus mortis iudicabatur, interficere (vide Deut 17/7). Deinde ut Hebraei libertatem adeptam possent conservare et terras, quas occuparent, imperio absoluto retinerent, necesse fuit, uti cp. Xvii ostendimus, ut religionem suo solo imperio accommodarent, seseque a reliquis nationibus separarent. Et ideo iis dictum fuit: dilige proximum tuum et odio habe inimicum tuum. Vide Math. 5/43. Postquam autem imperium amiserunt et Babyloniam captivi ducti sunt, Jeremias eosdem docuit ut incolumitati etiam illius civitatis, in quam captivi ducti erant, consulerent; et postquam Christus eos per totum orbem dispersum iri vidit, docuit, ut omnes absolute pietatem colerent; quae omnia evidentissime ostendunt, religionem reipublicae utilitati accomodatam semper fuisse.*

I corrected the text by adding an 'm' to *pietate* on account of Spinoza's final explanation that the practice of religion (*patriae*) always has to be totally directed to the prosperity of the republic of which one is a part / member. This conclusive sentence clashes with the *uncorrected* antecedent phrase, which would teach the (impossible and impoverishing) love of all men and peoples in the world! This latter idea is, indeed, the lesson *conventional* Christians draw wrongly from Matthew 5, but Spinoza sharply rejects it. Fighting one's enemies (bringing to justice and executing criminal compatriots or warfare with hostile nations) is according to Spinoza high obligation for every citizen, in behalf of his own wellbeing. In the corrected fragment '*omnes*' is no longer the 'object' of '*pietate colere*', but the grammatical subject of '*pietatem colere*'. '*Pietas*, then, is used here in the same substantial way as in the earlier capital phrase: "*pietas erga patriam summa est, quam aliquis praestare potuit*", and as the Roman concept of *pietas* like chez Plinius and Vergilius. Fokke Akkerman, whose critical edition of the TTP you seem to praise, did not see the incoherence of the traditionally (but not by Bruder) followed text and missed a chance to correct the corrupt text. Also in his notes to his Dutch translation of the TTP he mostly follows slavishly the failures of the French bobo's.

It is time to return to your text, Paolo. But I hope that my comments were *ad rem*. You are on the right way (p. 93) by paraphrasing Christ's blessings as meaning "*coloro che soffrono per la giustizia calpestrata e trascurata nel mondo presente*". You, then, join me in interpreting Christ's instruction as having a political bias. But a few lines further I shall not join you where you, referring to the above quoted passage of TTP 19, unduly interpret it as if "*il Cristo rovescia la morale tradizionale con l'invito ad amare i propri nemici*". No, for normal political circumstances Christ **does not invite us to love our enemies**. Moreover, our neighbours in biblical (see Leviticus) and Spinozistic sense are no fewer nor more than our compatriots. *Caritas erga proximum, hoc est, erga concivem* (TTP 17). The whole upshot of Spinoza's exemplification of interpreting Scripture by itself in TTP 7 comes down to conceiving the *verum bonum / bonum commune* as having essentially a socialdemocratic and nationalistic structure. No Alexandre, Christ did not teach, "*une fois accomplies les obligations légales, une charité extra-légale* », he did not teach an '*amour universel*' à

l'échelle cosmique" (*Le Christ ...*, p. 64 ff). This is a fatal misunderstanding of Spinoza's brilliant reading of the bible, against the whole tradition of christianity and socialism.

Apart from being an engaged political theorist Christ was according to Spinoza likewise a first class philosopher, who saw God *de mente ad mentem*, with the conceptual eyes of the mind. Because we have no different view on this aspect of Christ's discourses on the mountain, I wish to abstain here from further comments. My reaction on your phantastic and very stimulating book is already long enough.

Wim Klever.

Capelle aan den IJssel

22 August 2009

Op 26 augustus 2009 op internet geplaatst met url:

<http://www.benedictusdespinoza.nl/lit/KleverToCristofolini.pdf>