The Dutch Tradition of Tolerance and Enlightenment, in the Context of Critical Theory

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Initial Question[1]

Dialektik der Aufklärung[2] (*Dialectic of Enlightenment*) by Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) and Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969) was published by the Querido-Verlag in Amsterdam in 1947—thus one of the most important works of critical theory or of the "Frankfurt School" was first printed in exile in the Netherlands. Yet its socio-philosophical content made no great impact there, especially when compared to its reception in Germany.

This article, however, is not about the specific history of the reception of critical theory in the Netherlands.[3] Instead it is concerned with the

[1] The content of this article is partially based on a text published in: Oberlechner, Manfred, Koch, Anne, Gmainer-Pranzl, Franz (eds.), *Religion bildet: Diversität, Pluralität, Säkularität in der Wissensgesellschaft*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2019.

[2] *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: printed in 1947 by the "Querido Verlag N.V.", a German-language publisher in exile founded in 1933 by Emanuel Querido (1871–1943), with publishing director Fritz Landshoff (1901–1988), a refugee from Germany. The company was a subsidiary of the Dutch firm "Em. Querido's Uitgeverij N.V."

[3] See, for example, Hoefnagels, Harry J.M., *Kritische sociologie: inleiding tot het sociologische denken der 'Frankfurter Schule'*, Alphen aan den Rijn, Samsom, 1973; Mulder, Bertus, *Andries Sternheim: een Nederlands vakbondsman in de Frankfurter Schule*, Zeist, Kerkebosch, 1991; Korthals, Michiel, *Kritiek van de maatschappijkritische rede: de structuur van de maatschappijkritiek van de Frankfurter Schule*, Muiderberg,

formative influence of religions on the historical Enlightenment in the Netherlands.[4] Here, the narratives of Enlightenment and religion in this process do not necessarily have an antagonistic and mutually destructive relationship[5], where the annihilation of one formative narrative means the survival of the other—as formulated by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno in the texts *Dialektik der Aufklärung*[6] and *Zur Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft*[7] (first published in 1947 under the title *Eclipse of Reason*), or as subsequently expressed in Jürgen Habermas's concept of secularization in *Glauben und Wissen:*

> According to the first interpretation, religious ways of thinking and living have been replaced by reason-based and consequently superior equivalents. According to the second, modern modes of thinking and living are to be regarded as the illegitimate spoils of conquest. The 'replacement' model lends a progressive-optimistic meaning to the act of deconsecration, whereas the 'expropriation' model connotes theoretically conceived corruption of a rootless modernity. But I think both interpretations make the same mistake. They both consider secularization as a kind of zero-sum game between, on the one hand, the

Coutinho, 1986; Goldmann, L., Harmsen, G., van Santen, J., Schweppenhäuser, H., *Dialektiek en maatschappijkritiek*, Meppel, Boom, 1970.

[4] There is no such thing as *the* Enlightenment; instead, there are different manifestations of it in different countries and regions. Cf. Porter, Roy, Teich, Mikuláš (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981; Thoma, Heinz (ed.), *Handbuch Europäische Aufklärung: Begriffe – Konzepte – Wirkung,* Stuttgart, J.B. Metzler, 2015; Israel, Jonathan I., *Les Lumières radicales*: *La philosophie, Spinoza et la naissance de la modernité (1650–1750),* Paris, Editions Amsterdam, 2005.

[5] The combination of enlightened thought and religiosity is not exclusive to the Netherlands. This combination also appeared in the German Enlightenment, for instance. Following Leibnitz and Wolff, the German Enlightenment conceived itself as a Christian Enlightenment. Cf. Gründer, Karlfried, Rengstorf, Karl Heinrich (eds.), *Religionskritik und Religiosität in der deutschen Aufklärung,* Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2011; Cordemann, Claas, *Herders christlicher Monismus: Eine Studie zur Grundlegung von Johann Gottfried Herders Christologie und Humanitätsideal*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2010, p. 178.

[6] Cf. Horkheimer, Max, Adorno, Theodor W., *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. by Edmund Jephcott, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2002.

[7] Cf. Horkheimer, Max, *Zur Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft: Aus den Vorträgen und Aufzeichnungen seit Kriegsende,* Frankfurt am Main, Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verl., 1992.

productive powers of science and technology harnessed by capitalism and, on the other, the tenacious powers of religion and the church.[8]

The critical theorists Horkheimer and Adorno see 'Enlightenment', in historical-generic and systematic-topological terms, as obscuring and blinding itself, as being one-sidedly reduced to its instrumental, benefit-maximizing rationality, and therefore devoid of any objective reference to values such as tolerance or humanism. This enlightened thinking, they argue, inevitably leads to the devastating disaster of National Socialism: Enlightenment mutilated. Through this kind of mastery over nature, man, a component of nature, has turned himself into a thing and an instrument. The history of the Enlightenment, from its origin in Greece to the present, has led to a state of affairs in which reason as a medium of ethical, moral or religious insight has liquidated itself: this is the basic idea on which Horkheimer's and Adorno's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* is constructed. If one does not acknowledge any authority beyond man and his reason as an objective measure, then humanist thinking—as the argument continues—loses its foundation. This reason offers no means of proving the value of morality, altruism, consideration, friendship, love, etc. This is highlighted by this statement at the end of the second excursus in the *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: "The dark writers of the bourgeoisie, unlike its apologists, did not seek to avert the consequences of the Enlightenment with harmonistic doctrines"; instead they "pitilessly expressed the shocking truth"[9]—that morality

[8] Jürgen Habermas, "Faith and Knowledge: Peace Prize of the German Book Trade 2001, Acceptance Speech", <https://www.friedenspreis-des-deutschen-buchhandels.de/sixcms/media.php/1290/2001%20Acceptance%20Speech%20Juergen%20Habermas.pdf> (accessed 19 March 2020). Original: Habermas, Jürgen, *Glauben und Wissen: Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels 2001,* Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2009, pp. 12–13: "Nach der einen Lesart werden religiöse Denkweisen und Lebensformen durch vernünftige, jedenfalls überlegene Äquivalente ersetzt; nach der anderen Lesart werden die modernen Denk- und Lebensformen als illegitim entwendete Güter diskreditiert. Das Verdrängungsmodell legt eine fortschrittsoptimistische Deutung der entzauberten, das Enteignungsmodell eine verfallstheoretische Deutung der obdachlosen Moderne nahe. Beide Lesarten machen denselben Fehler. Sie betrachten die Säkularisierung als eine Art Nullsummenspiel zwischen den kapitalistisch entfesselten Produktivkräften von Wissenschaft und Technik auf der einen, den haltenden Mächten von Religion und Kirche auf der anderen Seite. Einer kann nur auf Kosten des anderen gewinnen, und zwar nach liberalen Spielregeln, welche die Antriebskräfte der Moderne begünstigen."

[9] Horkheimer, Max, Adorno, Theodor W., *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments,* ed. by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. by Edmund Jephcott, Stanford,

cannot be justified by reason. However, this is not necessarily always true, as the present article on the Dutch Enlightenment will argue.

Church, faith, and tolerance in the Netherlands

Most European countries were deeply influenced by the Enlightenment, which triggered processes of intellectual and cultural transformation. The emphasis varied, however, in the different cultural areas, so 'the Enlightenment' had various national manifestations as well as common features.[10] From this perspective, the influence and vitality of the Dutch Enlightenment declined over the course of the 18th century: it had considerable significance in the first third of the 18th century, then declining influence in the second and only marginal influence in the final third of the century.[11]

The Dutch Enlightenment was able to connect to historically established models: in questions of reason, freedom, natural law and the state, the Dutch Republic already offered a fitting setting for Enlightenment thought.[12] For example, the concept of freedom

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CA, Stanford University Press, 2002, p. 92. Original: Horkheimer, Max, Adorno, Theodor W., "Dialektik der Aufklärung", in Horkheimer, Max, Adorno, Theodor W., *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1987, p. 11–290, this quote p. 141: "Die dunklen Schriftsteller des Bürgertums haben nicht wie seine Apologeten die Konsequenzen der Aufklärung durch harmonistische Doktrinen abzubiegen getrachtet, sondern rücksichtslos die schockierende Wahrheit ausgesprochen."

[10] Porter, Teich, in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, rightly stress that the French Enlightenment by no means implies a universal norm. See also Buijnsters, Piet J., "Les Lumières hollandaises", in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 87 (1972), 197–215; cf. Israel, Jonathan I., *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy,* Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2009.

[11] In the Catholic Austrian Netherlands, the Enlightenment began relatively late compared to the Dutch Enlightenment. Here it was primarily dirigiste in character. Cf. Israel, *The Dutch Republic – Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall: 1477–1806,* Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 1038; Zwager, Hajo Hendrik, *Nederland en de verlichting,* p. 56. See also Bruneel, Claude, "The Spanish and Austrian Netherlands, 1585–1780", in Blom, Johannes, Hendrik, Cornelis, Lamberts, Emiel (eds.), *History of the Low Countries,* New York, Berghahn Books, 1999, p. 221–266.

[12] Examples worth mentioning here are Hugo de Groot, Baruch de Spinoza and Pieter de la Court, later also Simon van Slingelandt. See Blom, Hans W., *Causality and morality in politics: the rise of naturalism in Dutch Seventeenth-century political thought*, Univ. Utrecht: proefschrift, 1995; Dann, Otto, Klippel, Diethelm (eds.), *Naturrecht – Spätaufklärung –Revolution*, Hamburg, Meiner, 1995.

originating in the rebellion against Habsburg Spain was initially associated with privileges, but subsequently came to be seen as a category defined by reason. This is made clear by the rationality of the 17th century, as reflected in the state theory of the Dutch Republic. For the 18th–century republic, then, much of what the Dutch Enlightenment brought was already in practice. Roy Porter certainly does not see the 'ferment' of the Enlightenment as arising in France; instead, he points to the 17th–century Dutch Republic: "Dutch thinkers resolved the problems of the Enlightenment almost before anyone had experience of them."[13]

The Netherlands have a long-established reputation as a tolerant country, with some of the most famous examples of humanist anti-Church criticism. Desiderius Erasmus (1469–1536) and Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert (1522–1590) provided the Dutch regents in the 17th and 18th centuries with humanist food for thought. Respect for fellow humans was a firmly established principle in these Erasmus-inspired, humanist circles. Simon Schama writes:

> Aristocratic obsessions and fanatical dogma informed the policies of the Spanish king and his councillors and were wholly out of place in a country which had been shaped by the eminence of *burgerlijk* virtues. And to be a burgher was not, as we might glibly suppose, to be a bourgeois, but to dwell in the ways of Christian civility—the Erasmian way of life. At any rate, it was indifferent or hostile to the feudal preoccupations of war, land and honour it took to be the reigning values of the Spanish court. The history of the revolt and the war was, then, a working out of these already polarized collective traits, so that what was special to the Netherlands might be extracted from a fortuitously unsuitable framework of allegiance and transferred to one that might be determined by regional character. And the chronicles were written in such a way as to make this separation irreversible through perennial recall of Spanish incivility or, even, inhumanity.[14]

Johan Huizinga[15] (1872–1945) points out the fact that the burning of 'witches' was stopped much earlier in the Netherlands than in other

[13] Porter, Roy, *The Enlightenment,* Atlantic Highlands, NJ, Humanities Press International, 1990, p. 52.

[14] Cf. Schama, Simon, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age,* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988, p. 83.

[15] Huizinga, Johan, *Dutch Civilization in the Seventeenth Century and Other Essays,* New York, Harper & Row, 1969, p. 59.

parts of Europe. The last 'witch' to be burnt here was Entgen Luyten, in Limburg on 9 October 1674—while in Salzburg (Austria), for instance, a 'witch' was executed as late as 6 October 1750. Freedom of conscience was officially granted in 1579 (in Article 13 of the *Unie van Utrecht*),[16] a further indication of how advanced the Netherlands were in terms of tolerance in comparison to the rest of Europe.

Martin Luther (1483–1546) and other reformers brought some radical changes to Dutch society and politics; the introduction of Reforms in the Netherlands was one of the main sparks for the Dutch Revolt, and it invested the rebellion with legitimacy, thanks to the Calvinist theories of a legitimate resistance to a tyrannical higher authority.[17] Luther's teachings were disseminated in the Netherlands, and eventually became popular in the Northern provinces, but most of Dutch people remained loyal to the old Catholic faith. Instead of renouncing the Catholic Church, many had already, in the 14th century, moved to a piety that was focused less on the church and more on the life of Christ: this form of faith, known as Devotio Moderna, was characterized by serenity, altruism, cheerfulness and industriousness. Anabaptism also lost its political potency in the Netherlands: Menno Simons (1496–1561) succeeded in renewing Dutch Anabaptism and giving it a peaceful, unworldly orientation.[18]

Besides underlying political conditions, such as the absence of a territorial principality, which could have formed a coalition with the Lutherans, we can also identify specifically Dutch constellations: a combination of structural and intellectual factors contributed to what is referred to as Dutch tolerance in the 17th and 18th centuries. In the *Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden* (1579–1795) there was extensive local and regional autonomy. Towns and provinces were able to chart their own political course with relative autonomy. Freedom of conscience was enshrined in the foundation document and multi-

[16] The 'Union of Utrecht' was mainly a strategic military alliance aimed at driving the Spanish troops out of the country.

[17] For the history of Calvinism in the Netherlands see Schäfer, Christoph, "Glaube, Kirche, Toleranz", WWU Münster, 2004. <https://www.uni-muenster.de/NiederlandeNet/nl-wissen/geschichte/anfaenge/glaube.html> (accessed 3 July 2020).

[18] Cf. Schäfer, Christoph, "Die Geschichte der Niederlande im 16. bis 18. Jahrhundert", WWU Münster, 2004. <https://www.uni-muenster.de/NiederlandeNet/nl-wissen/geschichte/anfaenge/wirtschaftswunder.html> (accessed 19 March 2020).

confessionality was common in large cities such as Leiden, Gouda, Utrecht, and Amsterdam:

> The Republic was a particularly hospitable setting for the rise of plurality, not only due to its mix of principle and pragmatism, but also due to the fluid nature of the religious culture that emerged with the Reformation.[19]

The *gereformeerde kerk* remained dominant, but there was no state church in the Netherlands and the *regenten* were able to counteract the influence of the *hervormde predikanten*. The *Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk* emerged in the early phase of the *Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden*: only members of this church could hold public office in the Netherlands (until 1800, when the separation of church and state took effect). The Catholic Church, on the other hand, was *gedoogd* (tolerated) and was not allowed to play a role in public life.

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[19] The federation of the seven northern provinces was not a political unity, but a political plurality. The power and sovereign independence of the urban and provincial governments was not greatly curtailed. Within this state structure, which, in constitutional terms, embodied a mixture of estate-based claims to sovereignty and aristocratic institutions, the wealthy province of Holland was particularly eager to assert its hegemony. For many years its ruling class, the patrician "regents", the leading merchants, and wealthy manufacturers, held the fate of the whole Republic in their hands. Towards the end of the 17th century, the relative decline of the Republic began, with the English overtaking the Dutch as a trading and naval power. In the early 18th century the Republic's market opportunities were limited by other countries' mercantile policies; France, in particular, developed its position as a major European power, putting the Netherlands under severe economic and political pressure. Inside the country, economic crises exacerbated social antagonism. The Dutch regents and merchants, the leaders of the commercially active bourgeoisie, continued to prove unsuccessful in acquiring the efficiency and innovative potential needed to defeat English industrial capitalism. The growing opposition to their hegemony, combined with accusations of political, economic, and moral decline, culminated in the *Patriottentijd*, a period of unrest between 1780 and 1787. In this political rebellion, the Netherlands were aligned with the democratic and revolutionary tendencies of the time, as found in countries such as the US and France. Cf. Dixon, Scott, "Introduction: Living with Religious Diversity in Early-Modern Europe", in Dixon, Scott, Freist, Dagmar, Greengrass, Mark (eds.), *Living with Religious Diversity in Early-Modern Europe,* Burlington, Ashgate, 2009, p. 1-20, p. 16; Israel, Jonathan I., *De Republiek 1477–1806*, Franeker, Van Wijnen, 1996; See also Schama, Simon, *Patriotten en bevrijders: revolutie in de Noordelijke Nederlanden*, *1780-1813*, Amsterdam, Agon, 1989; Velema, Wyger R.E., "From the Rule of Law to Popular Sovereignty: The Concept of *Liberty* in the Dutch Republic, 1780-1787", in: Reichardt, Rolf (ed.), *Aufklärung und Historische Semantik: interdisziplinäre Beiträge zur westeuropäischen Kulturgeschichte*, Berlin, Duncker und Humblot, 1998, p. 69-82.

In 1796 the Catholics were accorded statutory equality, and 1853 saw the reinstatement of Roman Catholic bishops, and thus of the episcopal hierarchy in the Netherlands.[20]

Noteworthy is the presence of substantial non-reformed minorities in the country: Catholics, Mennonites, Lutherans and Socinians.[21] Admittedly, there was no guarantee that all this would lead to a religiously tolerant climate. But the above-mentioned humanist education of the regents (albeit combined with a pragmatic weighing up of politics and economics) significantly boosted a tolerant attitude of the Dutch in the 17th and 18th centuries. Tolerance was not dictated 'from above', it was normally proclaimed because of actual practice. The earliest forms of tolerance were elaborated locally, specifically in the cities, where religious coexistence was a fact and tolerance (seen as a system softening the rather harsh laws) made it possible to ensure that this coexistence remained peaceful. Hence, it is a collection of local experiments that set the framework of this tolerance, rather than a top-down policy. How could it be otherwise in a confederate country, where every local authority clung to each bit of privilege? It was not a fair flower sprung from the good character of a virtuous people: this kind of glorification would be inappropriate. Dutch tolerance was a historical value of Dutch culture, which was reflected in norms of everyday action, it was a pragmatic process and a necessary and sometimes difficult adjustment needed to maintain the social peace and public order.[22]

A key feature of the Dutch theory of tolerance was a principle shaped for example by Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert or Pierre Bayle[23] (1647–1706)—a clear differentiation between the functions of church and state.[24] Bayle also saw no legitimation for state-enforced religious

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[20] See Lademacher, Horst, *Die Niederlande: Politische Kultur zwischen Individualität und Anpassung,* Berlin, Propyläen-Verlag, 1993.

[21] Socinianism was an anti-Trinitarian movement, which spread across Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries and was named after Fausto Sozzini (1539–1604).

[22] Cf. Zwager, "Nederland en de verlichting".

[23] Pierre Bayle is not a Dutch theoretician, but as *fugitif* in the Netherlands he left a lasting impression on Dutch theories of tolerance.

[24] In this regard see also the struggle between remonstrants and counter-remonstrants, which demonstrated the need for a separation of civil and church powers. The term *Remonstrant* comes from the Medieval Latin verb *remonstrare*, i.e. "to raise objections"—in this case against the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. The Remonstrants emerged from the conflict between the *rekkelijken* (wide-ranging, liberal, free-thinking), and the

conversions; he did, however, argue that religious errors were possible at any time, and that therefore only God had the right to judge these. According to Bayle, secular rulers were not entitled to any power in questions of religion; on the contrary, it was up to the secular authorities to protect the freedom of belief, so that Christians and atheists[25] or those of other faiths could peacefully coexist. These Dutch ideas of tolerance did not, however, go so far as to tolerate vilification of the dominant church, or blasphemy. The primary reception of Enlightenment did not imply an irreconcilable opposition to the dominant religious faith and is referred to as *reformatorische Verlichting*.[26]

This freedom of conscience characterized not only theories of tolerance, but also and especially the practice of everyday life. Characteristics of the Enlightenment such as those found in France among *philosophes* in the tradition of Voltaire (1694–1778) were not manifested as strongly in the Netherlands.[27] The works of Voltaire, Diderot (1713–1784), d'Alembert (1717–1783), Condillac (1714–1780) and La Mettrie (1709–1751) were published and sold in the Netherlands, but their deism, materialism, determinism or atheism did not become widespread here. The version of the Enlightenment which gained currency in the Netherlands took a conciliatory attitude towards Christianity; a distinctive feature was its confidence in human ratio, which was not incompatible with reverence for God and divine revelation. It did not propound any strict separation of reason and religious truth, and the history of science in the Netherlands, the physicotheological epistemology of the 18th century, clearly shows the intertwining of religion and science.[28] Siep Stuurman writes:

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preciezen (precise, faithful to scripture) at the end of the 16th century. <http://www.mennlex.de/doku.php?id=top:remonstrantische_bruderschaft> (accessed 2 July 2020).

[25] The more general Dutch tolerance did not include atheists. Bayle was on the margins with this conception.

[26] The *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal* (1993, column 845) shows that *verlicht* has a dual semantics in Dutch language use. On the one hand, since the 16th century it has meant "scientific, learned, illuminated by reason and free of prejudice". On the other hand, it has had a spiritual meaning since the 13th century: "inspired by the inner light, the light of the holy spirit" (Vries, Matthias, te Winkel, Lambert Allard, *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal*, Leiden, 1993).

[27] Cf. Schama, "Patriotten en bevrijders".

[28] The German philosopher Christian Wolff, who also taught in Utrecht, is important here. His theory of eudemonism became known in the Netherlands and was very well received. His Dutch colleagues—Pestel, Van Alphen and Van der Marck—also

> Aan de voorrechten van de Hervormde Kerk werd een einde gemaakt, maar anti-godsdienstig was de Bataafse revolutie zeker niet. Men streefde veeleer naar een verlicht, 'algemeen' christendom.[29]

The Dutch Enlightenment tradition

> Die niet en twyvelt en leert niet: Want blijvende op zijn oude plaats, en gaet hy niet voort, komt niet daer hy noyt en was, ende siet niet dat hy noyt en sach, waer an soude hy dan twijfelen?[30]

The *Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden* (1588–1795) was in many respects an unsuitable target for the attacks typically launched by the French *philosophes*. While religious intolerance and public censorship did sometimes appear in the Republic,[31] they did not have such firm institutional foundations as in the absolutist monarchies of the time.[32] The Dutch Republic at the end of the 17th century can serve as a working example of Enlightenment desiderata: freedom from tyranny, religious pluralism, tolerance and prosperity.[33]

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saw empirical science as a means of gathering "natural proof" of God's all-powerful existence. This superficial version of Leibnizian-Wolffian optimism characterized a large part of the progressive public sphere in the Netherlands well into the 19th century. See Schama, "Patriotten en bevrijders", p. 100; Zwager, "Nederland en de verlichting", p. 76.

29 Stuurman, Siep, "De overwinning van de zonde", in Luykx, Paul, Righart, Hans (eds.), *Van de pastorie naar het torentje: een eeuw confessionele politiek,* The Hague, SDU, 1991, p. 11–34, this quote p. 17 ("The privileges of the *hervormde kerk* were discontinued, yet the Batavian Revolution was certainly not anti-religious. Instead there was a striving towards an enlightened, 'universal' Christianity").

30 Coornhert, quoted in Bonger, Henk, *Leven en werk van D.V. Coornhert,* Amsterdam, G.A. van Oorschot, 1978, p. 411 ("He who does not doubt does not learn. By remaining in the same old place, he makes no progress and does not get to the place where he has never been and does not see anything he did not see before. So, what should he have doubts about?").

31 Cf. Knuttel, Willem Pieter Cornelis, *Verboden boeken in de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden: beredeneerde catalogus,* The Hague, M. Nijhoff, 1914; Zwager, "Nederland en de verlichting", p. 52; Lademacher, *Die Niederlande: Politische Kultur,* p. 359; Klein, Stephan Robert Edward, *Patriots Republikanisme – Politieke cultuur in Nederland (1766–1787),* Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 1995, p. 77.

32 Cf. Schama, Simon, "The Enlightenment in the Netherlands", in Porter, Teich (eds.), *Enlightenment,* p. 54–71, see p. 55.

33 Porter, "Enlightenment", p. 53. But see also the forty years of nearly continuous warfare (1672–1678, 1688–1697, 1702–1713), led most of the time by stadtholder William III.

This Enlightenment established deep roots in Dutch culture: Pieter Rabus (1660–1702), for example, spoke enthusiastically of Erasmus, and, in his Dutch-language periodical *Boekzaal van Europa* (1692–1702),[34] he linked the fight against superstition with the ideas of Erasmus. The Republic became a refuge for (persecuted) critical and progressive thinkers from all over Europe. One of the most famous immigrants was René Descartes (1596–1650). While living in the Netherlands, Descartes wrote *Le Monde* (completed 1633; not published), *Discours de la méthode* (1637), *Meditationes de prima philosophia* (1641), *Principia philosophiae* (1644), and *Les Passions de l'âme* (1649). This is where he honed his philosophical thinking. His reflections on the relation between body and mind were made possible by the insights of Dutch physicians.[35] Other famous immigrants were John Locke (1632–1704),[36] Pierre Bayle, and Anthony Ashley Cooper of Shaftesbury (1671–1713).[37]

Around 1700, however, the Netherlands were the centre of the European Republic of Letters. Here the relative tolerance of state and society meant that religious controversies could be battled out via printing presses. Publishers and printing houses supplied the Netherlands and the surrounding European countries with scholarly monographs and learned journals.[38] The Dutch printing houses were a universal refuge, and manuscripts from all over Europe, whether Catholic or Protestant, were published here: the Netherlands functioned de facto as the main hub of the Enlightenment in Europe.[39]

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[34] Rietbergen, Peter, "Pieter Rabus en de Boekzaal van Europe", in Bots, Hans (ed.), *Pieter Rabus en de Boekzaal van Europe, 1692–1702,* Amsterdam, Holland Universiteits-Pers, 1974, p. 1–109, see p. 1–2.

[35] See e.g. Herman Boerhaave (1668–1738), Jan de Wale (1604–1649) or Frederik Ruysch (1638–1731). See also Israel, "The Dutch Republic", pp. 890–891; Dibon, Paul, "Der Cartesianismus in den Niederlanden", in Schobinger, Jean-Pierre (ed.), *Frankreich und Niederlande,* Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1993, pp. 349–374, see p. 349.

[36] Cf. Israel, "The Dutch Republic", p. 1049.

[37] Cf. Schama, "Enlightenment", p. 56.

[38] Cf. Stouten, Hanna, "Verlichting in afleveringen: over tijdschriften in de achttiende eeuw", in Spies, Marijke (ed.), *Historische letterkunde: facetten van vakbeoefening,* Groningen, Wolters-Noordhoff, 1998, p. 115–135, see p. 115.

[39] Cf. Berkvens-Stevelinck, Christiane, Bots, Hans, Hoftijzer, Paul G., Lankhorst, O.S. (eds.), *Le Magasin de L'Univers: The Dutch Republic as the Centre of the European Book Trade.* Papers presented at the International Colloquium held at Wassenaar, 5–7 July 1990, Leiden, Brill, 1992.

In the Netherlands, in contrast to the practice in other countries at the time, manuscripts did not have to be submitted to a censor before publication to obtain an imprimatur (though this could happen after printing). In the period from 1583 to 1794, 450 books were officially banned by the local and provincial governments; only a small number (such as the patriotic pamphlet *Aan het volk van Nederland* (1781) by Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol, illustrating the "thirst for power" of the House of Orange) fell under the general prohibition of the *Staten Generaal*,[40] and were therefore banned throughout the Union. Neither the book trade—whose noteworthy figures included Luzac, Van Duren, Néaulme, Marc-Michel Rey, Scheurleer, Elzevier, Blaeu and Pierre Gosse—nor the urban regents had any interest in a strict censorship regime. Lay preachers were zealous in demanding bans, but the authorities were reluctant to give in to such demands, only doing so if the tenets of the public church seemed to be too much under attack (as in the case of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Voltaire's *Philosophie de l'Histoire* and *Dictionnaire philosophique* or Diderot's *Pensées philosophiques*), or if there was a danger that the public peace might be disturbed—"perturbateur van den gemeene rust" (this was the case for Rousseau's *Du Contrat social* and *Emile ou de l'Education*, and for La Mettrie's *L'Homme machine*). In comparison to the surrounding countries, then, the freedom of the press in the Netherlands was considerable.[41]

The Netherlands as a place of exile and a 'Noah's Ark' for the European Enlightenment

One phenomenon of the publishing activity in the Dutch Enlightenment was the linguistic gap between exiled writers (*fugitifs*), mostly Huguenot in origin (who generally did not speak Dutch, and who wrote in French and focused their attention on other countries, and/

[40] From 1588 until 1795, the States-General were the assembly of the Seven United Provinces constituting the Dutch Republic (Gelderland, Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, Overijssel and Groningen). During this period, the States-General acted as the *de facto* federal government of the Dutch Republic; <https://www.staten-generaal.nl/begrip/geschiedenis> (accessed 3 July 2020).

[41] CF. Knuttel, W.P.C., *Verboden boeken in de Republiek der Vereenigde Nederlanden: beredeneerde catalogus*, 's-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1914; Zwager, "Nederland en de verlichting", p. 52.

or on the Enlightenment themes that were dominant there), and those authors—writing mainly in Dutch or Latin, but also in French—whose work was strongly influenced by local themes.[42] The point at which the more locally and regionally oriented Dutch Enlightenment authors converged with the more internationally oriented Enlightenment thinkers (whose focus was mainly on France) was their common battle against Baruch de Spinoza (1632–1677).[43] This intellectual attack, led by the Huguenot Bayle, continued uninterrupted through the first quarter of the 18th century.[44] Numerous publications of the time attest to the presence (allegedly throughout society) of Spinozists, freethinkers, deists and deniers of revealed religion. Their attackers denounced the outspokenness with which they publicly presented their own opinions, and although in the first two decades of the 18th century the prevalence of these phenomena in the Republic was similar to that in England, it is striking how vehemently this anti-deist and anti-atheist campaign was waged in the Netherlands. Consequently, the attacked Spinozists became an intellectual movement operating in secret and continuing to exist into the 19th century.[45]

Spinoza himself probably contributed to the influential French translation (by Dominique de Saint-Glain, 1620–1685) of his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.[46] The translation was published in the Netherlands in 1678 and was subsequently banned there and in France. Many of the personalities who helped to promote Spinoza's influence after his death in 1677 were French exiles in the Netherlands with close connections to France. Spinoza's *Ethica* appeared in the framework of his *Opera posthuma* in 1677, and was immediately denounced as blasphemous

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[42] Cf. Hatin, Eugène, *Les Gazettes de Hollande et la presse clandestine aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (first published 1865), Geneva, Slatkine Reprints, 1964.

[43] Cf. Blom, Hans W., *Causality and Morality in Politics: The Rise of Naturalism in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Political Thought,* Utrecht, Universiteit Utrecht, 1995, p. 201–202; Israel, "The Dutch Republic", p. 923–924.

[44] Cf. de Regt, Lies, *Het artikel Spinoza in de Dictionnaire historique et critique van Pierre Bayle,* n.p., 1990.

[45] Referred to in the Netherlands as 'Radical Enlightenment'. Cf. Israel, "The Dutch Republic", pp. 916–917; Jacob, Margaret C., "Radicalism in the Dutch Enlightenment", in Jacob, Margaret C., Mijnhardt, Wijnand W. (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century: Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution,* Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1992, pp. 224–240, see p. 224.

[46] Cf. Bartuschat, Wolfgang, "Baruch de Spinoza", in Schobinger, Jean-Pierre (ed.), *Frankreich und Niederlande,* p. 893–969.

and godless, and therefore almost immediately banned by the States General.[47] One of them was Jean-Maximilien Lucas (1636–1697), who published a biography of Spinoza, which provoked much speculation: *La vie et l'esprit de Mr. Benôit de Spinoza*. It was published in 1719, together with the most sensational text of the 'Radical Enlightenment' in the Netherlands, *Le Traité des trois imposteurs* [an allusion to Moses, Jesus and Mohammed] *et L'Esprit de Spinosa* by Jan Vroesen (1672–1725).[48] As in France, this secret current of Spinozism in the Netherlands continued until around 1730, after which these generally simplistic teachings ceased to play any more than a marginal role in the dissemination of atheism, deism and anti-Christian ideas in Europe.[49]

At the same time, the nature of this reaction to Spinoza is typical of the Dutch Enlightenment, which presents virtually no frontal challenge to the idea of divine revelation. Instead, the aim is to combine a conventional, pious, and tolerant or non-denominational faith in an omnipresent God with a passion for empirical science and for categorization and order *(esprit systématique)*.[50] Bernard Nieuwentyt (1654–1718) is regarded as the most important early exponent of this scientific-theological school of thought. In the attempt to convince Spinoza, the godless, and the unbelievers, and to replace Cartesianism with the new *philosophia experimentalis*, he wrote two influential texts: *Het Regt Gebruik der Wereltbeschouwingen ter Overtuiginge van Ongodisten en Ongelovigen aangetoont* (1715) and *Gronden van zekerheid of de regte betoogwijze der wiskundigen* (1720). While there were deists, freethinkers, and materialists in the Dutch Republic, as was the case in France and Great Britain, the Dutch freethinkers gradually learned to proceed cautiously and to compromise with the Calvinist 'public church'. In relation to church organization, Calvin advocates the separation of state and church, arguing that the authorities should

47 *Ibid*., p. 893.
48 *Ibid*., p. 895.
49 Cf. Israel, "The Dutch Republic", p. 1049.
50 Cf. Walther, Manfred, "Spinozissimus ille Spinoza oder Wie Spinoza zum 'Klassiker' wurde. Zur Etikettierungs-, Rezeptions- und Wirkungsgeschichte Spinozas im europäischen Vergleich", in Reinalter, Helmut (ed.), *Beobachter und Lebenswelt: Studien zur Natur-, Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaft,* Thaur, Thaur Verlag, 1996, p. 183–238, see p. 185–186.

have no influence on matters of church and religion.[51] As sovereignty in the United Netherlands was held by the provinces, the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* could not be enforced. Rather than being a state church, which all subjects were obliged to adhere to, the Calvinist church is referred to as a 'public church'. The highest duty of all authorities in the Netherlands was the preservation of peace.

For example, the Jewish economist Isaac de Pinto (1717–1787), in *Apologie pour la nation juive ou réflexions critiques sur le premier chapitre du VII. Tome des œuvres de Monsieur de Voltaire, au sujet des Juifs* (Amsterdam: J. Joubert, 1762), criticized Voltaire's anti-Semitism and campaigned for the emancipation of his fellow believers;[52] at the same time, he was a deist and a critic of materialism and atheism. In his *Précis des arguments contre les matérialistes* (1774), he expresses the fear that posterity would condemn the 18th century as "le plus pervers et le plus corrompu qui se soit écoulé dans le vaste océan de la durée".[53] De Pinto also condemns Spinoza and affirms that the contemporary *Lumières* are even more worthy of condemnation: "Ils ont beau faire l'éloge de la morale, [...] la vertu n'a point de base, si Dieu n'existe pas."[54]

The Netherlands and religions

What is striking is the process of change, the shift in the debate about religion or religions in the Netherlands from 1700. Balthasar Bekker (1634–1698) spoke out against the excessive "belief in witches and other kinds of superstition" of his time in his influential and much-discussed text *De Betoverde Weereld* (Amsterdam, 1691–1693) in 1691,[55] which is a key text of the early European Enlightenment. With his systematic critique of the demonology of his time, Bekker became the most

[51] Admittedly this is a normative demand of Calvin's, and history in the Netherlands also shows Calvinistic strivings to be the sole state church; see also footnote 67.

[52] Cf. Zwager, "Nederland en de verlichting", p. 37.

[53] Quoted from Israel, "The Dutch Republic", p. 1063 ("[…] the most perverse and the most corrupt to have passed in the vast ocean of time").

[54] *Ibid.* ("However they may praise morality, […] virtue has no basis if God does not exist".)

[55] For a detailed account, see also Frijhoff, Willem, "Dimensions de la coexistence confessionnelle", in Berkvens-Stevelinck, Christiane, Israel, Jonathan I., Posthumus Meyjes, Guillaume H.M. (eds.), *The Emergence of Tolerance in the Dutch Republic,* Leiden, Brill, 1997, pp. 213–237, see p. 218.

influential opponent of superstitions about witches and demons.[56] The positive view of religious tolerance continued to grow after Bekker, and the debate became increasingly independent of the church-controlled framework. At the same time, there was a rising interest in and awareness of the pluralism of religions, and the relationship between them. One impetus for this was Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1695–1697).[57] From his base in the Netherlands, Bayle took up the fight for reason, and against superstition and intolerance. Jacques Basnage (1653–1723) was another advocate of the idea of tolerance; he wrote *L'Histoire et la religion des Juifs depuis Jésus-Christ jusqu'à présent* (1706–1711) and the *Traité de la Conscience* (1696). Basnage's *Traité de la Conscience* was written to rebut Bayle's theory of the *conscience errante*; in his *L'Histoire et la religion des Juifs*, he draws parallels between the sufferings of the Jews and those of the Huguenots, as two *peuples élus de Dieu.* Noteworthy here is Basnage's objective tone, and above all his detached attitude towards Sephardic, anti-Christian polemics such as those of Eliahu de Luna Montalto (1567–1616), Saul Levie Morteira (1596–1660), and Isaac Orobio de Castro (1617–1687). He is conscious of his new approach, and emphasizes the injustices and persecutions committed by Christians against Jews. For the same reason, he gives considerable space to the arguments against Christianity, presented by Orobio de Castro in the debate with Philip van Limborch (1633–1712). (Knowledge of the refutation of Christianity as argued by Jews becomes the hallmark of the radicalized French Enlightenment after 1750).[58]

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[56] Cf. Kors, Alain Charles, Peters, Edward (eds.), *Witchcraft in Europe: 400-1700*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001, see p. 66. On the subject of witch hunts in the Netherlands, see also Jacob Cats, who is explicitly mentioned by Johan Huizinga in *Holländische Kultur im 17. Jahrhundert*, Munich, Beck, 2007, p. 81.

[57] Cf. Bayle, Pierre, *Dictionnaire historique et critique,* Amsterdam, Brunel, 1740; Bayle, Pierre, *Projet et fragments d'un dictionaire critique,* Geneva, Slatkine Reprints, 1970; Bayle, Pierre, *Historisches und Critisches Wörterbuch: Nach der neuesten Auflage von 1740 ins Deutsche übersetzt; auch mit einer Vorrede und verschiedenen Anmerkungen versehen von Johann Christoph Gottsched,* 2 vols. (repr.), Hildesheim, Olms, 1997; Hazewinkel, Hendrik Cornelis, "Pierre Bayle à Rotterdam", in Dibon, Paul (ed.), *Pierre Bayle: Le philosophe de Rotterdam,* Amsterdam, Elsevier, 1959, pp. 20–47, see p. 38.

[58] See Limborch, Philippus van, *Philippi A Limborch De Veritate Religionis Christianae Amica Collatio Cum Erudito Judaeo*, Basel, Im-Hoff, 1740; see also Popkin, Richard H., *Spinoza*, London, Oneworld Publications, 2004. Cf. Israel, Jonathan I., "The Intellectual Debate about Tolerance in the Dutch Republic", in Berkvens-Stevelinck, Christiane,

Another central figure in the reassessment of religions was Jean Le Clerc (1657–1736). As it was not possible for him to publicly declare himself a Remonstrant in Switzerland, he emigrated to Amsterdam, where he became the French-speaking pioneer of Remonstrantism, and a leading figure in the Dutch idea of tolerance. One of his principal projects was to edit the *Opera omnia* (1703–1706) of Erasmus of Rotterdam. Le Clerc's journal, initially entitled *Bibliothèque choisie* (1703–1713), later *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne* (1714–1727), far surpasses Bayle's *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* (1684–1687) in the systematic-objective criticisms it expresses.[59]

Another prime example of the new approach to religions is the monumental work *Cérémonies et Coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* by Bernard Picart (1673–1733), edited by Jean-Frédéric Bernard (1683–1744), which offers a systematic account of religious practices and rites, without according Christianity a hegemonic position in relation to Islam or Judaism. Of special interest are the preface to volume 1 and the *Dissertation sur le culte religieux* (page III), where the absurdity and cruelty of some religions are highlighted. The *Dictionnaire historique, ou Mémoires critiques et littéraires concernant la vie et les ouvrages de divers personnages distingués, particulièrement de la République des lettres*, by Prosper Marchand (1678–1756), is a continuation of Bayle's critique of Catholicism, exposing Catholic intolerance and Catholic practices of persecution, while simultaneously describing Socinianism.[60]

Israel, Jonathan I., Meyjes, Guillaume H.M. Posthumus (eds.), *Emergence of Tolerance,* Leiden, Brill 1997, pp. 3–36, see p. 33.

[59] See Thijssen-Schouten, Louise C., "La diffusion européenne des idées de Bayle", in Dibon (ed.), *Pierre Bayle*, pp. 150–195, see pp. 156–157; Zwager, "Nederland en de verlichting", p. 57.

[60] See Berkvens-Stevelinck, Christiane, "Les éditions du Dictionnaire historique et critique de Pierre Bayle jusqu'en 1740, avec ses éditions pirates", in Bots, Hans (ed.), *Critique, savoir et érudition à la veille des Lumières: le Dictionnaire historique et critique de Pierre Bayle (1647–1706),* Amsterdam, APA-Holland University Press, 1998, p. 17–25, see p. 17–18.

Religions, education, and Enlightenment in the Netherlands

The more than seventy *Spectatorische schriften*[61] published between 1718 and 1800 reflect key characteristics of the Dutch Enlightenment. Moderation rather than political extremism, a moral and optimistic incitement to virtue, and an eclectic and Christian inspiration.[62] Voltaire's *écrasez l'infâme* did not gain widespread popularity in the Netherlands,[63] where the reception of Enlightenment thinking hardly entailed any conflict over the dominant religious faith. The main premise of the Dutch Enlightenment was that God is the creator of both reason and revelation: The truth which man derives from one source can therefore not contradict the truth he derives from the other. If this nonetheless appears to happen, then this is due to the misuse of reason.[64]

Another characteristic feature of the Dutch Enlightenment is the great confidence in human ratio: The intellect is regarded as an autonomous instrument received from God, which man can surrender to without risk. Justus van Effen writes in the *LXXXI. Discours* of his *Misantrope*: "Le Christianisme perfectionne l'Humanité, & ne la détruit pas; & quand on est Chrétien, on ne cesse pas d'être une substance intelligente."[65] The Dutch Enlightenment thinkers are *verlichte geesten* ('enlightened spirits'), but not *philosophes à la française*: they are authors writing in French (as well as Dutch and Latin), read by an international, cosmopolitan audience. The Dutch Enlightenment shows

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[61] *De Hollandsche Spectator* (1731–1735) was the journal which (based on the English *Spectator*) became the model for more than seventy subsequent Dutch publications, referred to as spectatorial journals.

[62] Cf. Buijnsters, "Lumières", p. 197–198.

[63] Cf. Schama, "Enlightenment", p. 70.

[64] See de Vet, Jan, "Verlichting en christendom in Nederland", in Fritschy, Wantje, Toebes, Joop (eds.), *Het ontstaan van het moderne Nederland: staats- en natievorming tussen 1780 en 1830,* Nijmegen, Sun, 1996, pp. 94–122, this quote p. 98: "'God is so wel d'Auteur der Reden als der Openbaringe'. De waarheid die de mens uit de ene bron toevloeit kan daardoor niet strijdig zijn met die uit de andere. Wanneer dit zich toch lijkt voor te doen, is er sprake van misbruik van de rede."

[65] van Effen, Justus, *Œuvres diverses de Mr. Juste van Effen, Le Misantrope:* LII. Discours, Vol. II, Amsterdam, Herman Uytwerf, 1742, p. 243 ("Christianity improves humanity and does not destroy it; if one is a Christian, one does not cease to be an intelligent substance").

clearly that religious knowledge and enlightened, scientific knowledge are not 'islands of meaning', separated by insuperable differences, but that they can have a reciprocal, formative influence, in the sense of ongoing development, mutual enrichment, and coexistence. This Dutch tradition of tolerance prohibits destructive fanaticism.

Is the Dutch tradition of Enlightenment and tolerance—as reflected by religions, just *een schijn van verdraagzamheid*—an illusion of tolerance? Certainly not: the historical examples shown here prove that efforts to promote enlightened, scientific education and religious education can coexist, or that 'secularization' in the context of the Enlightenment does not automatically displace, replace or destroy religious ways of thinking with "reason-based and consequently superior equivalents"[66] in the context of a zero-sum game. An important component of Dutch tolerance is the Calvinist doctrine of predestination: if only God decides whether sinners will be punished or not, but in his absolute sovereignty might well decide to punish the guiltless if he so pleases, then it makes little sense for Calvinists to quibble about beliefs or try to convert unbelievers—especially since doing so is bad for business.[67] The relationship between the Enlightenment and religions in the Netherlands cannot be explained solely by the Enlightenment and religions: it is also the result of pragmatic, solution-oriented social negotiation processes (*vergaderingscultuur*) related to the historical (religious) pluralism in Dutch society and following the maxim 'live and let live'—a maxim embraced by calculating (and profit-motivated) bourgeois elites in the interests of socially peaceful accommodation.

The question of whether and to what extent Dutch society and culture were characterized by a foundation of tolerance, both real and theoretical, can be answered positively for the period of the Republic—

[66] Habermas, *Glauben und Wissen* (for translation see Habermas, "Faith and Knowledge"); see also Habermas, Jürgen, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion,* Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2005, p. 143. For a detailed discussion see Frijhoff, Willem, "How Plural were the Religious Worlds in Early-Modern Europe? Critical Reflections from the Netherlandic Experience", in Dixon, Scott, Freist, Dagmar, Greengrass, Marc (eds.), *Living with Religious Diversity in Early-Modern Europe,* p. 21-52, see p. 32.

[67] It would be a misunderstanding to think that Calvinists did not try to convert people of other beliefs. In the period 1600–1650, there was for example a strong Calvinist dynamic with widespread conversions. See also Gribben, Crawford, Murdock, Graeme (eds.), *Cultures of Calvinism in Early Modern Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019, p. 51.

there was no sharp religious polarization at this time. Even after the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) had put a short-term stop to religious pluralism in the Netherlands, those who had been pushed to the margins in 1619 returned a few years later.[68] Furthermore, the absence of strong centralist tendencies and the presence of federal particularism, allowing every city and province (or the regents and patricians on the bourgeois municipal councils) to make liberal decisions on both worldly and religious affairs,[69] meant that inhabitants of the Republic enjoyed a relatively large degree of freedom in the 17th and 18th centuries, especially compared to other countries in Europe. The Netherlands were the country where social and political power was dispersed among the towns, and not in a capital city,[70] so it was always possible to flee to a place with more lenient laws.[71] The municipal archive of the town of Haarlem records 20,927 inhabitants for 1791, of whom 12,109 belonged to the Reformed Church, 1,140 were Mennonites, 114 were Jews, and 225 had no religious affiliation.[72] Until the Batavian Republic of 1795, however, there was no individual right to free speech, no equality of religious practice, and no right to asylum.[73] Of course economic arguments could be heard in the Netherlands, as elsewhere, but these related only to the broadness or narrowness of the interpretation of the principle of tolerance, which was not fundamentally in dispute. The construct of the public church (in contrast to a state church) made

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[68] Schama, "Enlightenment", p. 60.

[69] M.E.H.N. Mout ("Limits and Debates: A Comparative View of Dutch Tolerance in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries", in Berkvens-Stevelinck, C., Israel, J., Posthumus Meyjes, G.H.M. (eds.), *The Emergence of Tolerance in the Dutch Republic*, Leiden, New York, Köln, Brill, 1997, pp. 37-47, p. 46) writes: "That lack of consensus and tension between the privileged church and the secular authorities were responsible for such a remarkable phenomenon as tolerance is the genuine miracle of the Dutch Republic."

[70] See Woltjer, Jan Juliaan, „Stadt und Reformation in den Niederlanden", in Petri, Franz (ed.), *Kirche und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in deutschen und niederländischen Städten der werdenden Neuzeit*, Köln, Wien: Böhlau, 1980, p. 155-168.

[71] Cf. de Voogd, Christophe, *Histoire des Pays-Bas*, Paris, Hatier, 1992, p. 116.

[72] Cf. van Boheemen-Saaf, Christine, "The Fiction of (National) Identity: Literature and Ideology in the Dutch Republic", in Jacob, Margaret C., Mijnhardt Wijnand W. (eds.), *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century*, Ithaca, London: Cornell, 1992, p. 241-252, p. 245.

[73] Cf. Bronkhorst, Daan, *Een tijd van komen: De geschiedenis van vluchtelingen in Nederland*, Amsterdam, Jan Mets, 1990, p. 17.

specific legitimation of religious tolerance superfluous. Regardless of all actual restrictions, individual freedom of conscience (established for Holland in 1572, and for the other provinces in § 13 of the Union of Utrecht) remained one of the cornerstones of the state, a crucial element in the self-image of Dutch society. The Dutch Republic was based on the conviction that a stable state and a well-ordered society did not necessarily require unity of belief.[74]

Conclusion

The concept of Enlightenment developed in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* shows an unjustifiably dark claim to totality. Although the critical theorists' concept of Enlightenment contains both positive and negative aspects, their emphasis on the reason-destroying elements is too one-sided. In describing the "dialectic of Enlightenment", Horkheimer and Adorno draw too straight a line from antiquity to the French Revolution, and on to National Socialism in the 20th century—unjustifiably overlooking The Dutch Enlightenment tradition. If they had considered this tradition, they would have found arguments for their own concept of a successful Enlightenment. This would not have weakened their general criticism of a repressive, capitalist social order, but would have added another aspect to it: an awareness that a repressive society is not inevitable, and that history contains other examples.

However, an examination of the Dutch tradition of Enlightenment, tolerance and humanism reveals the untenability of Horkheimer and Adorno's claim to totality, since the Enlightenment realized in the Netherlands differs clearly and significantly from the findings of critical theory on the Enlightenment.

In fact this revelation—that Horkheimer and Adorno's claim to totality is rendered untenable by the Dutch practice and theory of Enlightenment, tolerance and humanism—is in harmony with critical theory itself, which developed a highly nuanced and ambivalent concept of Enlightenment. What this means, ultimately, is that there is no a priori inevitability in the path from the Enlightenment to National Socialism; rather, the Enlightenment leads to National Socialism when it betrays itself and contradicts its own humanist values and goals

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

(freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance), by failing to make these a reality. The Dutch model teaches us that if the Enlightenment takes itself seriously, it can prevent the emergence of tyranny in society and politics. If Horkheimer and Adorno had studied the Enlightenment in the Netherlands, they would have perceived a different, successful Enlightenment.