

Baruch Spinoza on Democracy

Only free people are truly grateful to one another.....

The supreme mystery of despotism, its prop and stay, is to keep people in a state of deception, and with the specious title of religion to cloak the fear by which they must be held in check, so that they will fight for their servitude as if for salvation.

Humans are mistaken in thinking themselves free; their opinion is made up of consciousness of their own actions, and ignorance of the causes by which they are determined.

When all decisions are made by a few people who have only themselves to please, freedom and the common good are lost.....

The ultimate aim of government is not to rule, or restrain by fear, nor to exact obedience, but to free every person from fear In fact the true aim of government is liberty.

All laws which can be violated without doing any one any injury are to be laughed at. ... Men of leisure are never deficient in the ingenuity needed to enable them to outwit laws framed to regulate things which cannot be entirely forbidden... He who tries to determine everything by law will foment crime rather than lessen it.

Those who take an oath by law will avoid perjury more if they swear by the welfare and freedom of the state instead of by God.....

The free person never acts with deceit, but always with good faith.

Those who cannot manage themselves and their private affairs will far less be capable of caring for the public interest.....

The basic purpose of democracy is to keep people rational, as far as possible, in order to live in peace and harmony.

It is far better for the honest policies of a state to be open to enemies than for the guilty secrets of tyrants hidden from citizens.

States must necessarily be created so that all people—both rulers and ruled; willing and unwilling—will act for the common welfare.....