

THE POLITICAL
THOUGHT OF THE
DUTCH REVOLT
1555–1590

MARTIN VAN GELDEREN

*Assistant Professor at the Department of History,
the Technical University, Berlin*



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CHAPTER I

Introduction

I.1. PRELIMINARY

On 26 July 1581 the States General of the United Provinces in the Netherlands¹ passed a resolution which declared Philip II, King of Spain, Duke of Brabant, Duke of Guelders, Count of Flanders, Count of Holland and Zeeland, Lord of Friesland etc. forfeited of his sovereignty over the provinces. The resolution, better known as the Act of Abjuration, ascertained that, ‘despairing of all means of reconciliation and left without any other remedies and help’, the States had been forced

in conformity with the law of nature and for the protection of our own rights and those of our fellow countrymen, of the privileges, traditional customs and liberties of the fatherland, the life and honour of our wives, children and descendants so that they should not fall into Spanish slavery – to abandon the King of Spain and to pursue such means as we think likely to secure our rights, privileges and liberties.²

Like many resolutions of the States General, the Act of Abjuration was the outcome of a lengthy decision-making process, marked by discussion and bargaining, slowness and carefulness. A so-called ‘committee of conciliation’ had prepared the Act, and all provinces had been asked to give their opinion on the question of relinquishing Philip II. Many had cautioned against provocation. Although they

¹ In this study the words ‘Dutch’, ‘Netherlands’ and ‘Low Countries’ refer to the so-called ‘Seventeen Provinces’ in the north-west of continental Europe which were united in 1548 by the Transaction of Augsburg in a separate Burgundian Circle of the Holy Roman Empire and, following the 1549 Pragmatic Sanction, were the patrimony of Philip II. The ‘Seventeen Provinces’ included the present Benelux and French Flanders, in the north-west of present-day France.

² Act of Abjuration, in E. H. Kossmann and A. F. Mellink (eds.), *Texts concerning the Revolt of the Netherlands* (Cambridge, 1974), 225.

accepted the Act of Abjuration as such, the States were of the opinion that its proclamation must not arouse too much passion and certainly should not damage the trade with the Spanish enemy which was considered of vital economic interest for the provinces. And so it happened. Without any pomp and circumstance, a number of mainly well-to-do Dutch citizens, deputies of provinces and towns, declared the King of Spain forfeited of his sovereignty over their provinces.

The Act of Abjuration stands out as a milestone in Dutch history. It was one of the key events in what nowadays is called the Dutch Revolt, the period of protest and resistance against Philip II, leading to the abjuration and ultimately to the emergence of the Dutch Republic of the United Provinces.

As one of the Netherlands' finest hours, the Revolt belongs to the most extensively studied subjects of the history of the Low Countries. Over the past centuries it has continued to fascinate historians, theologians, jurists, playwrights and others. This attention has not been limited to the Netherlands and Belgium. As far as historical research is concerned the monumental and exultant work of the American historian Motley in the nineteenth century, or more recent studies of the British historians Geoffrey Parker and Helmut Koenigsberger (and many others),³ stand out as principal examples of the attention the Dutch Revolt has attracted throughout the world.

However, despite the general recognition of the rise of the Dutch Republic as being of major political and economic importance for the course of European history, the intellectual dimensions of the emergence of the Republic have been rather neglected. This is especially manifest in the history of political thought. In twentieth-century texts on early modern European political thought, the Dutch Revolt has been virtually discarded. In Allen's *History of political thought in the sixteenth century* the Dutch Revolt is not mentioned at all. Mesnard's *L'essor de la philosophie politique au XVIe siècle* has six pages on 'Calvinist theories and the revolt of the Netherlands', which basically stress the international co-ordination of Calvinist political doctrines and the influence of French Huguenot treatises on the rest of Europe.⁴ In Quentin Skinner's magisterial study *The foundations of*

³ See J. L. Motley, *The rise of the Dutch Republic*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1858). For the studies of Parker and Koenigsberger see Bibliography.

⁴ Pierre Mesnard, *L'essor de la philosophie politique au XVIe siècle*, 3rd edn. (Paris, 1969), 370.

modern political thought, which covers both the Renaissance and the Reformation, only two pages are devoted to a discussion of the justification of the Dutch Revolt, leading to the rapid conclusion that Dutch treatises 'were basically derived from French sources'.⁵ The view seems to be dominant that as far as the justification of the Dutch Revolt was concerned, Dutch political thought was essentially an application of French monarchomachic ideas.⁶

Amongst Dutch and Belgian historians the intellectual history of the political thought of the Dutch Revolt has not attracted widespread attention.⁷ Nor has it been esteemed very highly. In more recent Dutch contributions to the topic it has been concluded that, whatever its value and importance may have been, late sixteenth- (and early seventeenth-) century Dutch political thought hardly qualifies as political theory.⁸ In spite of 'all their application and ingenuity', Dutch pamphleteers succeeded in working out neither a 'royalist nor a parliamentary constitutional theory'.⁹ Thus Dutch political thought does not match classical works such as the *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* (1579), Hotman's *Francogallia* (1573), Althusius' *Politica* (1603), let alone Bodin's *Six livres de la République* (1576). It has been said that the Dutch did not develop 'political ideas of a certain coherence and a certain level of abstraction, which might have guided political practice', but that, as one of the most outstanding Dutch intellectual historians has argued recently, they were always

⁵ Quentin Skinner, *The foundations of modern political thought*, ii: *The age of Reformation* (Cambridge, 1978), 338. Skinner (wisely) added that 'the possibility of mutual influence [between Dutch and French treatises] ought not to be ruled out. A great deal more research in the Dutch sources will be needed, however, before it will be possible to pronounce with confidence on this point.'

⁶ See e.g. Carlos M. N. Eire, *War against the idols: the reformation of worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge, 1986), 304, who reasserts that 'the significance of the Dutch Revolt... lies in its application of the Calvinist theory of resistance rather than in its formulation'.

⁷ The only two previous monographs on the topic are A. C. J. de Vrankrijker, *De motiveering van onzen opstand* (Nijmegen, 1933; repr. 1979); P. A. M. Geurts, *De Nederlandse Opstand in de pamfletten 1566-1584* (Utrecht, 1983; first pub. 1956).

⁸ See E. H. Kossmann, 'Bodin, Althusius en Parker, of: over de moderniteit van de Nederlandse Opstand', in E. H. Kossmann, *Politieke theorie en geschiedenis: verspreide opstellen en voordrachten* (Amsterdam, 1987; first pub. 1958), 93-111; E. H. Kossmann, 'Popular sovereignty at the beginning of the Dutch *ancien régime*', *LCHY* 14 (1981), 1-28. For a different and much more qualified view see M. E. H. N. Mout, 'Van arm vaderland tot eendrachtige republiek: de rol van politieke theorieën in de Nederlandse Opstand', *BMGN* 101 (1986), 345-65, and also Nicolette Mout, 'Ideales Muster oder erfundene Eigenart: republikanische Theorien während des niederländischen Aufstands', in H. G. Koenigsberger (ed.), *Republiken und Republikanismus im Europa der frühen Neuzeit* (Munich, 1988), 169-94.

⁹ Kossmann, 'Popular sovereignty', 2.

behind 'the course of history'.¹⁰ Moreover, Dutch sixteenth-century political thought has been argued to be 'unmodern', not to say conservative. Unlike Bodin's theory, which turned the new state into a creative force, Dutch authors, and 'Calvinist constitutionalists' in general, merely sought 'to stabilize the dynamic of the state as it developed in power and scope, and to make the process of political decision-making objective'.¹¹

These interpretations have contributed greatly to the intellectual history of the Dutch Revolt. One of their problems is that they leave their underlying notion of 'political theory' rather unclarified. At times it seems that 'political theory' is held to be a coherent, relatively abstract set of political ideas with both explanatory and normative, if not predictive, power.¹² Undoubtedly such a view is legitimate, although it seems to narrow the study of political thought and probably leads to the conclusion that very few sixteenth- and seventeenth-century political thinkers qualify as political theorists.¹³

1.2. SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

In this book I attempt to contribute to the intellectual history of the Dutch Revolt by offering a different perspective on the political thought of the Revolt on the basis of an analysis of about 800 political treatises published between 1555 and 1590.¹⁴ My aim is threefold.

First, I focus on how Dutch authors justified first the protest and later the armed resistance against the government of Philip II and how they underpinned the latter's abjuration. The essential question

¹⁰ Mout, *Van arm vaderland*, 365.

¹¹ Kossmann, 'Popular sovereignty', 28; also Kossmann, 'Bodin', 109.

¹² Thus the leading question of Kossmann's classic study on 'political theory in the seventeenth-century Netherlands' is whether the Dutch 'have succeeded in explaining and defending the exceptional construction [i.e. the Republic], which dominated their community life, in a theory which indicated its place in the larger context of the world's forms of states? Have they been able to define precisely what their state was and how it should develop itself?' See E. H. Kossmann, *Politieke theorie in het zeventiende-eeuwse Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1960), 7. It is striking that this notion of political theory does not seem to differentiate between empirical and normative political theory.

¹³ In fact not many 20th-century political thinkers will do. For example, it is doubtful whether John Rawls, generally considered to be a leading political philosopher, can qualify as 'political theorist' since his 'theory for justice' seems at many points to be out of touch with political reality (see William A. Galston, 'Moral personality and liberal theory', *Political Theory*, 10 (1982), 492-519). It can of course be questioned whether Rawls' 'theory of justice' in fact demands normative political theory to be empirically explanatory (and if so, how far). See John Rawls, *A theory of justice* (Oxford, 1973), in particular pp. 46-54.

¹⁴ For information on the primary sources used in this study, see Appendix: a note on primary sources.

in this respect is whether, and if so how, Dutch authors articulated a right of resistance and of abjuration. Thus ideas on political obedience and resistance are central to the book.

Secondly, I reconstruct the ideas of the Revolt's advocates on the authority and character of what may be called the 'good government' for the Netherlands. In this respect I pay special attention to discussions concerning the form of government, the issue of sovereignty and the debate on the relationship between political and ecclesiastical authorities. In other words, the second focus of this book is on ideas about the character of the Dutch political order.

Finally, by way of conclusion, I locate the political thought of the Dutch Revolt, as interpreted here, in the intellectual context of some of the main streams of sixteenth-century European political thought. By relating it to monarchomach ideology and to the Italian republicanism of the Machiavellian moment, the aim is to arrive at some conclusions about the character and origins of the political thought of the Dutch Revolt, and to indicate its significance for the development of modern European political thought.

In its approach this study attempts to benefit from the profound methodological changes that have affected the history of political thought in recent times due to the debate whose origins can be traced to the 1960s when J. G. A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner in particular launched their attacks against the prevailing orthodoxies in the history of political thought.¹⁵

The first orthodoxy to be attacked was textualism, which basically claimed that the text itself forms 'the sole necessary key to its own meaning'.¹⁶ In order to understand a text one only needs to focus on the text itself. With its focus on the eternal wisdoms old texts are claimed to enshrine, this orthodoxy, so Skinner emphasized, has failed to acknowledge the historicity of texts. It has failed to recognize

¹⁵ Skinner's main methodological articles, some critical responses and Skinner's own reply have been assembled in James H. Tully (ed.), *Meaning and context: Quentin Skinner and his critics* (Oxford, 1988). In addition see John G. Gunnell, *Political theory: tradition and interpretation* (Cambridge, 1979); Andrew Lockyer, 'Traditions as context in the history of political theory', *Political Studies*, 27 (1979), 201-17; Peter L. Janssen, 'Political thought as traditional action: the critical response to Skinner and Pocock', *History and Theory*, 24 (1985), 115-46; Richard Ashcraft, 'Introduction', in Richard Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics and Locke's 'Two Treatises of Government'* (Princeton, NJ, 1986), 3-16. Pocock's main methodological articles are listed in the Bibliography. A lucid interpretation of the changes in the field of intellectual history is Donald R. Kelley, 'Horizons of intellectual history: retrospect, circumspect, prospect', *JHI* 48 (1987), 143-69.

¹⁶ Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and the understanding of speech acts', in Tully (ed.), *Meaning and context*, 29.

that a text is the embodiment of a particular use of words and sentences by a particular author at a particular time. To understand this particular, historical use of words and sentences, the student of political thought has to move beyond the text itself.

This should not, however, lead to embracing the second orthodoxy, contextualism, which held that, in order to understand a text, appropriate knowledge of its social and political context suffices. According to Skinner, contextualism failed to see that to explain why an author has written a text is not the same thing as understanding the text itself.¹⁷ Thus, whereas textualism ignored the historicity of human action, contextualism misconceived of the relationship between text and context. If the aim is to recover the historical identity of texts, the hermeneutic enterprise of intellectual history should be guided by what Skinner has labelled a 'historical and intertextual approach'.¹⁸

In attempting to construct such an approach, which acknowledges the importance of both the historicity of texts and the relationship between text and context, Pocock and Skinner have underlined the importance of linguistic and intellectual contexts. A principal starting-point for their approaches is the recognition that each political author has to be seen, as Pocock has put it, 'as inhabiting a universe of *langues* that give meaning to the *paroles* he performs in them'.¹⁹ Although this sounds rather linguistic, the essential point is in fact to recognize the highly normative, political character of *langues*, of 'languages' used in political discourse. According to Pocock, *langues* 'will exert the kind of force that has been called paradigmatic... That is to say, each will present information selectively as relevant to the conduct and character of politics, and it will encourage the definition of political problems and values in certain ways and not in others.'²⁰ Basically, this argument means that each author of political texts lives in a society where one or more modes of political discourse, or (the term preferred in this study) ideologies, are either available or in development. These 'modes of discourse', which together can be said to make up what Skinner has called the

¹⁷ See Quentin Skinner, 'Motives, intentions and the interpretation of texts', and 'Social meaning and the explanation of social action', both in Tully (ed.), *Meaning and context*, where it is argued that there is a 'sharp line' to be drawn between the motives of an actor to do action *x* and the intentions the author has in doing act *x*. Contextual factors can show the reasons, the motives, for performing act *x*. They do not, however, unveil the 'point' of act *x*.

¹⁸ Quentin Skinner, 'A reply to my critics', in Tully (ed.), *Meaning and context*, 232.

¹⁹ J. G. A. Pocock, 'Introduction: the state of the art', in J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, commerce and history* (Cambridge, 1985), 5.

²⁰ Pocock, *Virtue, commerce and history*, 8.

‘normative vocabulary’ of a society, will contain certain fundamental assumptions about human nature, about politics and about society. They will stress certain problems, they will use certain concepts with a more or less fixed meaning to discuss these problems, they will have certain modes of argument and certain ways of proceeding to do this and they will come up with certain solutions.²¹

Recapturing the normative vocabulary of the society and culture to which an interpreted text belonged is one of the basic steps in the process of interpretation.²² Having recovered this normative vocabulary of ideologies, it may become possible to see what an author was historically ‘doing’ in a certain text, that is, it may become possible to ascertain what sort of intellectual moves he was making in his text, compared to the available ideologies. Thus, the study of political ideas very much becomes focused on the moves authors make within ideologies, on how authors endorse, refute, elaborate or ignore ‘the prevailing assumptions and conventions of political debate’²³ or, in other words, on how authors accept, modify and innovate ideologies. The history of political thought thereby changes its nature. In being focused on the formation and transformation of modes of political discourse, the history of political thought is turned into a history of continua of political discourse, as Pocock has called it,²⁴ or, to quote Skinner, into the history of the growth and development of ideologies.²⁵

In this new history of ideologies, ideology is conceived of as ‘a language of politics’, which means that an ideology will contain a number of basic assumptions about human nature, politics and society, that it will focus on certain political problems, that it will employ certain concepts to discuss these problems, that it will have certain modes of argument to do so and that it will come up with certain solutions. As such, ideology entails a belief system and can still be described as ‘a more or less coherent conglomerate of assumptions, attitudes, sentiments, values, ideals and goals accepted and perhaps

²¹ Quentin Skinner, ‘Hermeneutics and the role of history’, *New Literary History*, 7 (1975–6), 221.

²² According to Pocock, *Virtue, commerce and history*, 9, ‘it is a large part of our historian’s practice to learn to read and recognize the diverse idioms of political discourse as they were available in the culture and at the time he is studying: to identify them as they appear in the linguistic texture of any one text and to know what they would ordinarily have enabled that text’s author to propound or “say”’.

²³ Quentin Skinner, *The foundations of modern political thought*, vol. i, p. xiii. In making this point Skinner is greatly indebted to recent developments in the theory of speech-acts and to the work of Austin in particular.

²⁴ Pocock, *Virtue, commerce and history*, 28.

²⁵ Skinner, *The foundations of modern political thought*, vol. i, p. xiii.

acted upon by a more or less organized group of persons'.²⁶ At the same time, however, the intrinsic connections between ideology and language are emphasized in Skinner's conception of ideology, which is built on the recognition that meaning is primarily constructed within language, and as such has the crucial advantage of bringing the social character of ideology to the fore. By focusing on the links between normative vocabulary, social context and individual ideological moves, the collective aspects of ideology are underlined. In many ways the relationship between ideology and individual ideological moves is seen in terms of a duality. On the one hand, the normative vocabulary enables individuals to structure and interpret the world they live in, both in an empirical and in a normative sense; it allows them to make sense of and to evaluate the changing world around them.²⁷ Thus individual ideological moves are generated, which, on the other hand, reproduce or transform particular ideologies. Thus, a study of what an author was 'doing' in a text is to an important extent a study of how an author reproduces or transforms ideologies.²⁸

As a language of politics, an ideology has some specific characteristics. It has, to begin with, a specific subject. Although the assumptions on human nature, society, politics etc. on which ideology is grounded will be embedded in everyday practices, ideology connects them with a specific domain, the reflection on 'the binding and authoritative allocation of values in society', to invoke a classic definition of politics.²⁹ It means that an ideology is praxis-oriented. On the one hand, political praxis 'sets the main problems for the political theorist';³⁰ on the other hand, ideology tries to come to terms with these problems. Moreover, ideological writings explicitly advocate certain solutions and it is their aim to persuade an audience to adopt these solutions. Therefore, ideological writings will anticipate the audience they intend to persuade. In these respects

²⁶ Donald R. Kelley, *The beginning of ideology: consciousness and society in the French Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), 4.

²⁷ See Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics*, 5.

²⁸ According to Pocock it should be noted that acts of 'rule or paradigm innovation may be performed explicitly or implicitly, overtly or covertly, intentionally or unintentionally, and much depends upon reception and reader response; the reader and interpreter may have the resources of rhetoric at his disposal too. Many an author has found himself a more radical innovator than, or even than, he intended to be or ever admitted he was.' J. G. A. Pocock, 'The concept of language and the *métier d'historien*: some considerations on practice', in Anthony Pagden (ed.), *The languages of political theory in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1987), 34.

²⁹ David Easton, *A framework for political analysis* (Chicago, Ill., 1979), 50, 57.

³⁰ Skinner, *The foundations of modern political thought*, vol. i, p. xi.

ideological treatises can be said to form a distinctive genre of publications, with a proper subject, a specific strategy and a strong alignment to the practical necessities of society.

Skinner has emphasized that this alignment between ideology and political praxis should be seen in terms of a dynamic mutual dependence. Political thought is not simply a mirror, reflecting the whims of political action. Take the 'hardest case' where professed political principles will only serve as a mere legitimization of political action. No matter how revolutionary this action may have been, if its agent wants to legitimize it, he has 'to show that a number of the existing range of favourable evaluative–descriptive terms can somehow be applied as apt descriptions of his own apparent untoward actions'.³¹ His legitimization, that is, has to take the normative vocabulary as its starting-point, which the agent can then try to manipulate. This means that any course of action which cannot be legitimized out of the existing normative vocabulary will be strongly inhibited. Consequently, the scope of the possible courses of action is limited by the normative vocabulary. Even if the agent in question is as shrewd in manipulating this normative vocabulary as can be, he still

cannot hope to stretch the application of existing principles indefinitely; correspondingly, he can only hope to legitimate a restricted range of actions. It follows that to study the principles which the agent finally chooses to profess must be to study one of the key determinants of his decision to follow out any one particular line of action.³²

The restructuring of the history of political thought as propounded by Pocock and Skinner (and many others) has been a source of major intellectual and methodical inspiration for this study. Thus this study not only presents and analyses the important political treatises of the Dutch Revolt, it will also specifically focus on how they are interconnected. It is a principal objective to explore if, and how far, the political treatises of the Dutch Revolt shared basic assumptions on human nature, politics and society, formulated similar problems, employed similar modes of argument, reasserted and innovated arguments and developed similar (or contrasting) solutions for key political problems. In other words, this is essentially a study of the growth and development of ideologies of the Dutch Revolt.

³¹ Quentin Skinner, 'Some problems in the analysis of political thought and action', in Tully (ed.), *Meaning and context*, 112.

³² *Ibid.*, 117.

This has important consequences for the selection of material presented here. As it is physically impossible to include all the treatises which have, in one way or another, contributed to the political thought of the Dutch Revolt, I concentrate on those treatises which have contributed significantly to the formation and transformation of political ideologies of the Dutch Revolt, either by developing, substantially reasserting, refuting or innovating arguments on the issues which are central to this study, such as obedience, resistance, forms of government, sovereignty and the relationship between church and political authorities.³³

1.3. OUTLINE

If, as Pocock has put it, 'political speech is of course practical and informed by present necessities'³⁴ it will be useful to start by offering a synthesis of the political context of the political thought of the Dutch Revolt, not only because it will provide the reader with information about the actual circumstances in which treatises were written but also because it will show which practical political necessities and problems treatises were responding to, and, finally, because it will provide necessary background information about institutional and political arrangements and developments to which treatises might allude. Thus this study opens with an introductory chapter on the Dutch Revolt, sketching the basic features of the political culture and the institutional framework of the Burgundian Netherlands and outlining the main political developments of the Revolt.

Chapter 3 is an attempt to reconstruct the answers that Reformed Protestants articulated with regard to the questions of obedience and resistance with which they were increasingly confronted during the 1550s and 1560s due to the policy of severe persecution of protestants. The purpose of this chapter is to establish whether there was a more or less distinct Reformed approach to the questions of obedience and resistance, and, if so, what the Reformed ideas on political authority, obedience and resistance amounted to.

Chapter 4 explores the political justification of the Dutch Revolt. It reconstructs the political arguments that were developed to justify and motivate the protest and resistance against Philip II and his

³³ The result of this process of selection has been that, of all 800 treatises studied, about 250 titles are presented in this study.

³⁴ Pocock, *Virtue, commerce and history*, 13.

government, which finally led to the 1581 abjuration. Thus, Chapter 4 reconstructs the political ideologies of resistance of the Revolt.

Chapter 5 is devoted to an analysis of the quest for 'the best state of the commonwealth' as undertaken by Dutch political treatises from about 1578, when, more and more, the break with Philip II was recognized to be inevitable. This chapter probes and analyses the answers of Dutch political treatises with regard to the problems and future of the political order of the Netherlands.

Chapter 6 again focuses on politics and religion. It examines the debates in the Dutch Provinces of the 1570s and 1580s on the key issues of religious peace, the relationship between church and political government and the paramount issue of toleration.

Chapter 7, finally, attempts, by way of conclusion to relate the political thought of the Dutch Revolt to some of the main streams of sixteenth-century European political thought. By confronting the political thought of the Revolt with the Huguenot monarchomachic ideology and the Italian republicanism of the Machiavellian moment in particular, this chapter sums up the main findings of the book and gives an interpretation of the significance of the political thought of the Dutch Revolt for the development of modern European political thought.

It should be emphasized that this interpretation of the political thought of the Dutch Revolt obviously neglects a number of important dimensions of the intellectual history of the late sixteenth-century Low Countries. For example, since this book deals with the political thought of the *proponents* of the Dutch Revolt, the political ideas of those who, at one point or another, wanted to remain faithful to Philip II are (if only for reasons of economy) much neglected. Thus I will not examine in detail whether there was any substantial intellectual debate between proponents and opponents of the Revolt. Evidently some treatises of proponents of the Revolt were explicitly directed against adversaries but most of these were distinguished by accusation and insinuation rather than by intellectual debate. Occasional references to 'Spanish-minded' authors occur, but do not indicate an extensive intellectual debate. None the less, it should be recognized that the material, as presented here, makes it unwarranted to draw definite conclusions with regard to the magnitude of intellectual debate between proponents and opponents of the Revolt.

Moreover, in studying the political thought of the proponents of

the Dutch Revolt this book certainly does not cover all of its dimensions. Although questions on obedience and resistance and the character of the Dutch political order were undoubtedly of overwhelming concern, some other topics such as the social thought of the advocates of the Dutch Revolt would, considering the tradition of Christian humanism on this point,³⁵ certainly be worth studying. In fact, some treatises dealt exclusively with social issues; others, especially the treatises of Reformed Protestant ministers, included sections on such issues as charity.

Finally, even though the study of the political treatises published between 1555 and 1590 is essential for the interpretation of the Revolt's intellectual history, the importance of other sources for the history of political thought, conceived as a history of ideologies, should not be underestimated. Coins, letters, paintings, plays, printings, sermons and songs were all important as means of political expression and as vehicles of developing and transmitting political ideas.³⁶ I have made complementary use of some other forms of primary sources, though not systematically. A principal example is the analysis of Reformed Protestant thought on the issues of obedience and resistance (Chapter 3), which makes extensive use of church protocols. None the less, it is probably fair to say that to focus on the Revolt's political treatises is but to study 'the tip of an ideological iceberg'.³⁷

³⁵ See e.g. Margo Todd, *Christian humanism and the Puritan social order* (Cambridge, 1987), ch. 2, which offers a reconstruction of 'Christian humanism as a social ideology', with singular attention for Erasmus and Vives.

³⁶ For a similar argument, see Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics*, 6–7.

³⁷ Kelley, *The beginning of ideology*, 41.