

Thomas Emerson

(American; authored *Toward a general theory of the First Amendment*, 1963)

Four values of freedom of expression in a democratic society:

1. As a method of assuring **individual self-fulfillment**
 - The proper end of man is the full realization of his character and potential (Locke): a right of an individual as an individual to express himself.
 - The role of the individual in society and the right to express himself in that role regarding social and political matters
2. As a means of **attaining the truth**
 - Freedom of expression as a social good
 - The soundest and most rational judgment is arrived at by considering all the facts and arguments, even false ones.
 - The only justification for suppressing an opinion is that those who seek to suppress it are infallible – and no one is.
3. As a method of securing **participation** by members of a society in social and political decision-making
 - Participation in decision-making through open discussion.
 - Encompasses the two previous values
 - Includes the right of all members of society to form their own beliefs and communicate them freely to others. This must be regarded as an essential principle of a democratically organized society.
4. As a means of maintaining the **balance** between stability and change in society
 - Open discussion promotes rational judgment and flexibility.
 - Suppression promotes inflexibility and stagnation.