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General Preface

THIS IS the first installment of what is intended to be a two-volume edition of the complete works of Spinoza, with new translations. The project is one I have been working on, intermittently, for some fourteen years now. My aim in undertaking it has not been primarily to provide English readers with translations better than the existing ones, though I would hope, of course, to have done that. My goal, however, has been more to make available a truly satisfactory edition, in translation, of Spinoza's work. Let me enumerate the features I regard as required in a satisfactory edition.

1. That it should provide good translations is only the most obvious, though no doubt the most important, requirement. No one should underestimate the difficulty of meeting it. By a good translation I understand one which is accurate wherever it is a question of simple accuracy, shows good judgment where the situation calls for something more than accuracy, maintains as much consistency as possible in the treatment of technical terms, leaves interpretation to the commentators, so far as this is possible,¹ and, finally, is as clear and readable as fidelity to the text will allow. Anyone may be excused for thinking it enough just to provide good translations. Often we have had to settle for rather less.

2. Still, we have a right to expect more of a truly satisfactory edition. One further requirement is that its translations should be based on a good critical edition of the original texts. Of the works presented in this volume, only two, *Descartes' "Principles of Philosophy"* and the *Metaphysical Thoughts*, were published during Spinoza's lifetime. The *Ethics*, the *Treatise on the Intellect*, and most of the letters were first published in the *Opera posthuma* (OP) shortly after Spinoza's death in 1677. The *Short Treatise* was discovered only in the nineteenth century, in what is generally presumed to be a Dutch translation of a lost Latin original. Inevitably these works raise many textual problems.

The first editor to produce a genuinely critical edition of the original texts was Gebhardt, whose four-volume edition of Spinoza's *Opera* appeared in 1925.² One reason Gebhardt's work was a landmark in

¹ I have tried, in general, to avoid tendentious translations, leaving it to the Glossary-Index to make most of the necessary explanations. Sometimes, however, a translator can hardly avoid taking a stand on disputed issues (e.g., in E ID4). Where it has seemed to me that important questions of interpretation might depend on the translation adopted, I have tried to indicate this in the notes.

² *Spinoza Opera*, ed. C. Gebhardt, 4 vols. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1925). In view of

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Spinoza scholarship is that before him no editor had systematically compared the Latin text of works like the *Ethics* and the *Treatise on the Intellect* with the contemporary Dutch translations which appeared in the other posthumous edition of 1677, *De Nagelate Schriften van B.D.S.* (NS). Since the translator³ of the NS appears to have been working, in part at least, from a manuscript copy, rather than from the printed text of the OP, a comparison of the two versions often helps to establish the text in doubtful cases. To see the importance of this, one need only consider how many references the geometric method forces Spinoza to make to previous axioms, definitions, propositions, etc., and how easy it is for mistakes in such references to go undetected in proofreading. But a close study of the NS translations can be useful in many ways.⁴

One of the principal initial reasons for undertaking this project was to provide translations based on the Gebhardt edition. When I began, Spinoza's masterwork, the *Ethics*, had never been translated into English from Gebhardt's text, though other, lesser works had been. Ex-

Spinoza's role in the development of contemporary standards of historical scholarship, it is ironic that this task was so long neglected.

³ Or translators. Gebhardt assumed that there was just one translator, Glazemaker, and that he began his work well before Spinoza's death (see Gebhardt II/315). The NS translations are generally careful and were already in the press five months after Spinoza's death (21 February 1677). But as Joachim (2, 3) pointed out, the evidence for ascribing the translations to Glazemaker is not very strong. And Thijssen-Schoute (1, 10) suggested (on the strength of Letter 28) that others may have collaborated. If two or more translators did collaborate on the work, then we need not postulate that they started work long before Spinoza's death, though probably portions of the NS translations of the *Ethics* date from the mid-1660s.

I think the treatment of technical terms in the NS confirms the hypothesis of more than one translator. Interesting in this connection is the treatment of *mens* and *anima*. As Giaccotti Boscherini points out (1, 131), the Dutch translator of the *Ethics* almost invariably uses *ziel* for both *mens* and *anima*. In the other works he "has abandoned such uniformity" and uses, predominantly, *geest* for *mens* and *ziel* for *anima* (which, as Giaccotti Boscherini notes, is Glazemaker's regular policy in his translation of Descartes' *Regulae*). To me this would suggest that different translators were at work on different parts of the NS and that Glazemaker was probably not the translator of the *Ethics*. A recent and very thorough examination of this issue by Akkerman (2, 77-214) concludes that Balling probably translated E I-II and that Glazemaker was the translator of E III-V.

⁴ A good example is E IP28S (II/70/1-15). See particularly editorial note 59. I must add, however, that I think Gebhardt sometimes regards an appeal to the NS as more decisive than it really is. Cf. E IP29D (II/70/26) and editorial note 63.

It is, of course, often difficult to know what to make of a variation. Even in the case of *Descartes' Principles* and the *Metaphysical Thoughts*, where the translations appeared during Spinoza's lifetime and with his approval (cf. Letter 21), a variation may reflect a revision in which we should see Spinoza's hand (cf. I/257), an exercise in free translation (Akkerman 2, 106-107, gives numerous examples), or a mistake (cf. I/270/18-20). In the case of the *Treatise on the Intellect* and the *Ethics* we cannot be sure that the translations had his approval.

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isting translations were based on inferior nineteenth-century editions. And though Wolf's excellent translation of the *Short Treatise* had been based on a careful study of the original manuscripts, there was no doubt that his work had been superseded by Gebhardt's.

During the time I have been working on this project, much has happened. We do now have an English translation of the *Ethics* based on the Gebhardt text.⁵ But while Gebhardt's remains the best available complete edition of the texts, it has, in its turn, been superseded, to some extent at least, by a number of recent scholarly works. Of the developments relevant to this volume, the most notable are that: 1) in 1977 the Wereldbibliotheek published, as the first installment in a new Dutch edition of the complete works, an edition of the correspondence, undertaken by Professors Akkerman, Hubbeling, and Westerbrink (AHW); although this edition presents all the letters in Dutch, the editors have taken great pains to get an exact text, and their work must be treated as the equivalent of a new critical edition; 2) in 1982, the third installment of the Wereldbibliotheek series contained a new critical edition, by Professor Mignini (Mignini 1), of that most troublesome of all Spinozistic texts, the *Short Treatise*; Mignini's conclusions, as presented in the apparatus of his edition and in two long articles (Mignini 2, 3), will no doubt be controversial, but there can also be no doubt that he has shed a very different light on this work; and finally 3), Professor Akkerman is preparing a new critical edition of the *Ethics*, which will contain the many emendations of the text suggested by the extensive critique of Gebhardt's editorial work which he published in 1980 (Akkerman 2); it is clear that Akkerman has greatly illuminated the text of the *Ethics* and that his new edition will be a significant improvement on Gebhardt's. Further details of the advances made by recent textual research will be found in the prefaces to the works concerned and in the notes.

3. After the quality of the translation and of the text translated, perhaps the next most important requirement in a satisfactory edition is that it should be as comprehensive as possible. There is no doubt that the *Ethics* is the definitive expression of Spinoza's mature thought in metaphysics, epistemology, psychology, and ethics. But its elliptical style makes it an often cryptic text, which imposes great demands on the reader. Ideally, it should be read in the context of the whole of the Spinozistic corpus. Even if we do not apply to Spinoza's own work all of his principles for the interpretation of Scripture,⁶ it re-

⁵ By Samuel Shirley, published by Hackett Publishing Co., 1982.

⁶ Cf. the *Theological-Political Treatise*, vii (III/99-101). No doubt Spinoza thought these rules applied only to works which, like Scripture, are inherently obscure, not to works

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mains true that the other Spinozistic texts constitute our most important data for the interpretation of the *Ethics*. A satisfactory edition would not omit any that might be of use to the perplexed, so that they might readily find all those passages that bear on the same topic.

4. A corollary of this is that it is, if not a requirement, at least extremely desirable that all the translations be by the same hand. If we are to compare discussions of the same topic in different works (or in different passages of the same work), then it is essential that technical terms be treated consistently, an unlikely result if different translators are at work. The problem of comparison is compounded by the fact that the works are sometimes in different languages in the original.

Consider, for example, the term *admiratio* in the *Ethics*. This has been variously rendered by “astonishment” (White) and “wonder” (Elwes). The translator of the *Ethics* in the *Nagelate Schriften* used *verwondering*, a term which also occurs in the *Short Treatise*, where Wolf rendered it by “surprise.” None of the three English translations is unreasonable, but their variety obscures the fact that a discussion of *verwondering* in the *Short Treatise* is concerned with the same topic as a discussion of *admiratio* in the *Ethics*.

The Dutch *gebeurlijk* (= *contingens*) provides another example. This comes out as “accidental” in Wolf, whereas its Latin equivalent is translated by “contingent” in Elwes and White. A good student, of course, will probably guess that what Spinoza says about the accidental in one work bears on what he says about the contingent in another. But a better student will worry that perhaps some subtle distinction is intended. And he may also be puzzled by the fact that Spinoza seems sometimes to imply that there are accidents and sometimes to deny it; his puzzlement might be relieved if he checked the original, where he would discover that Wolf uses “accidental” for *toevallig* in the one context, and for *gebeurlijk* in the other. But he also might not know what to make of that information. The complexities of the Glossary-Index are intended to give the reader some appreciation of the Latin and Dutch realities which lie behind the English appearances.

5. If the Spinozistic corpus is to be seen in its proper perspective, it is also desirable, if not essential, that the works be arranged in chronological order. Spinoza’s writings span a period of some twenty years. It is inevitable that over the course of that length of time Spinoza would change his mind about *something*. I think in fact that he

which, like Euclid’s geometry, are inherently intelligible (III/111). No doubt, also, he would have classed his own work with Euclid’s. But three hundred years of Spinoza scholarship have amply demonstrated that he was too optimistic about the intelligibility of his work.

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changed his views about quite a number of things, and that a chronological arrangement should help to bring that out.⁷ Spinoza scholars have often sought to unfold “the latent processes of thought” that lay “behind the geometrical method.” If we are not satisfied with literary romances masquerading as scientific history, we may find some value in examining the works that actually did lead up to the *Ethics*.

To some extent my arrangement of the texts is arbitrary. The decision which will probably be most surprising to nonspecialists seems to me eminently defensible. The *Ethics* was first published after Spinoza’s death in 1677. The *Theological-Political Treatise* was first published in 1670. But we know from the correspondence that a substantial manuscript of the *Ethics* was in existence by the middle of 1665. We do not know how much revision that manuscript may have undergone in the next twelve years before it was published, but it seems best to treat the *Ethics* as coming before the *Theological-Political Treatise* and to see a shift in Spinoza’s interests in the late 1660s.⁸

More controversial among specialists, no doubt, will be my decision to present the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* before the *Short Treatise*, which until very recently has invariably been thought to be Spinoza’s earliest work. Now, however, Mignini has challenged that assumption, arguing with considerable force that the *Treatise on the Intellect* is earlier, not only in its date of composition, but also in the stage of development it represents. I am inclined to agree with that judgment, at least as regards the date of composition. To me the correspondence makes it clear that the *Treatise on the Intellect* must have been written before September 1661, and that Spinoza was still working on a manuscript of the *Short Treatise*, which he then had thoughts of publishing, early in 1662.

6. Finally, it seems to me that a satisfactory edition of Spinoza’s works ought to contain a good deal more in the way of scholarly aid than English readers are accustomed to find in editions of modern philosophers. Students of modern philosophy must generally settle for much less help than students of ancient philosophy are used to.⁹ At a minimum a satisfactory edition should have: a thorough index;¹⁰ pref-

⁷ My model here is Alquié’s superb edition of Descartes’ works.

⁸ See the prefaces to the *Ethics* and to Letters 17-28 and the discussions in Freudenthal 5, 1:147ff. and Giancotti Boscherini 2, I, xx-xxii.

⁹ Though things are changing for the better. We might note here the new translation of Leibniz’s *New Essays* by Bennett and Remnant (Cambridge), the new edition of Locke’s *Essay* by Nidditch (Oxford), and the translations of Leibniz’s *Discourse on Metaphysics*, *Correspondence with Arnould*, and *Correspondence with Clarke*, published by Manchester University Press.

¹⁰ Pollock, in introducing the index to his *Spinoza*, aptly cites the following lovely remark, attributed by Henry Wheatley to John Baynes: “The man who publishes a

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aces to each work indicating something of that work's history and special problems; notes that call attention to the more significant variant readings, ambiguities, obscurities, apparent contradictions, and debates among the commentators; and some systematic way of warning the reader about terms that may be difficult to render into English.¹¹ To make it easier for readers to consult the original and to trace references in secondary sources, it should adopt a standard pagination based on the Gebhardt edition.

Such is the kind of edition I have aimed at producing. Whether I have succeeded is for others to judge. But I should like to forestall two possible criticisms. First, it has not been my intention to produce a translation and commentary. Desirable as that might be, it seemed to me that it was more important, at this stage in the history of Spinoza studies, to present as much of the primary text as possible, as well as possible, and that I could not produce as comprehensive an edition as I would like to if I attempted to note *every* passage that is ambiguous, obscure, or apparently contradictory. If I am to produce a comprehensive edition in which all the work is by the same hand, I must try to complete it in my lifetime, and there is no way of knowing how long that may be. My notes also do not attempt much cross-referencing. The index should make notes of that kind largely superfluous. Second, I recognize that it would have been very desirable to have the original texts on the facing pages. Perhaps someday it will be possible to produce an edition using these translations (or some of them) and having that feature. But for now it seems more important to make the translations available in as inexpensive a format as possible.

Let me close by commenting on certain formal features of the translation and on certain peculiarities of the Latin language, which is most often the language of the texts translated in this volume. I have generally tried to be faithful to the capitalization of the Gebhardt edition, which reflects that of the original editions. I do this, not because I think the use of the capitals in those editions has any philosophical significance, but simply out of deference to those scholars who do attach significance to matters of capitalization. I incline to the view that the use of capitals in works like the *Opera posthuma* probably reflects the tastes of Spinoza's printers rather than his own considered preferences. Certainly the autographs of Spinoza's letters suggest that. But it seemed to me that it would do no harm to accommodate the views of those with whom I differ on this point.

book without an index ought to be damned ten miles beyond Hell, where the Devil could not get for stinging nettles."

¹¹ For more on this theme, see the Glossary-Index.

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As for punctuation and paragraphing, on the other hand, I have taken considerable liberties, breaking up long sentences and long paragraphs whenever it seemed to me that to do so would make Spinoza's argument clearer. This necessarily involves a certain element of interpretation, but it seemed to me that the potential gain in intelligibility justified the risk. I have also interpolated occasional section numbers, phrases, and terms, in square brackets and without explanation, where they seemed helpful. Square brackets are also used, with an explanation, to indicate textual variations and doubtful passages. This happens quite frequently with footnotes in the *Short Treatise*. I have used italics to indicate those occasions when "or" represents *sive* or *seu*. Generally,¹² *sive* and *seu* mark an equivalence, rather than an alternative. Lettered notes are Spinoza's; numbered notes are mine.

This is perhaps the proper place to warn readers who have no Latin at all about certain features of that language. There are no articles, definite or indefinite, in classical Latin.¹³ So whenever the translation of a Latin passage has either a definite or an indefinite article, the reader should be aware that this involves an element of interpretation on the part of the translator. Sometimes, of course, it will be quite clear which should be used. Sometimes it will not matter philosophically. But sometimes it both matters and is not clear. The NS are of some help here, to the extent that one thinks it likely that Spinoza carefully reviewed those translations. But I am not sure how much weight to attach to their usage.

A related matter concerns the use of personal pronouns. It is sometimes observed that the use of personal pronouns is less common in Latin than in English, since the subject of the verb is often implicit in the verb ending. And often when personal pronouns are used, the masculine and neuter forms are the same. So unless a translator is prepared to violate the conventions of English, his translation is much more likely than the Latin original to convey the impression that God is being thought of as a person (and a male person at that). This would

¹² But not, I think, invariably. Cf., for example, II/57/13, 79/23. Sometimes Spinoza uses *aut* or *vel* where we would expect *sive*. Cf. II/51/23, 52/8, 146/2

¹³ In medieval Latin, however, *ille* came to be used as a definite article and there appear to be some traces of that usage in Spinoza. Cf. II/89/4. Analogously, it seems to me that *aliqui* is sometimes best rendered by the indefinite article, e.g. at II/50/25, 28, 30, 31, 34 and II/83/31. In the latter case, this may have some philosophic significance, since that passage provides us with a gloss on one of the central propositions of Part I of the *Ethics* (P16).

Spinoza's Latin has sometimes been stigmatized as that of the late medieval scholastics. No doubt much of the technical vocabulary is borrowed from the scholastics. But the reader will find a juster appreciation of Spinoza's Latin in Akkerman 2, 1-35.

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certainly be a mistaken impression, but I know no good way to remove it.

IT REMAINS only for me to acknowledge my indebtedness to the many persons and institutions who have helped to bring this project to its present stage. First, I must thank the Institute of Advanced Studies of the Australian National University in Canberra, where the bulk of the work was done, under virtually ideal conditions. I am equally indebted to Professor John Passmore, who was the head of the Philosophy Department during most of my years in Australia, who encouraged this project, commented critically on a draft translation of the *Ethics*, and provided me with a model of historical scholarship which has sustained my spirits through many hours of hard work. I should like to dedicate this edition to him, and only hope that he will be pleased with the finished product.

Many others have been extremely kind and helpful in many ways: Hermann de Dijn (who read a draft translation of the *Short Treatise* with great care), Jonathan Bennett (who provided me over the years with innumerable excellent suggestions about my translation of the *Ethics*), Paul Eisenberg (who shared with me a copy of his own meticulous translation of the *Treatise on the Intellect* and commented helpfully on the whole project), Frederick Copleston (who gave me some very useful comments on the *Metaphysical Thoughts*), Fokke Akkerman (who communicated to me the emendations to be incorporated in his forthcoming critical edition of the *Ethics*), G. van Suchtelen and F. Mignini (who made available to me a prepublication copy of the new critical edition of the *Short Treatise*), Marie Boas Hall and Thomas Falco (who answered queries that I had about the correspondence between Spinoza and Oldenburg), and Stephen Voss, Margaret Wilson, Alan Donagan, and Genevieve Lloyd (all of whom made constructive suggestions of one kind or another about certain aspects of the translation).

Of previous translators and editors whose works I have consulted, I am indebted most, of course, to Gebhardt, but also to Abraham Wolf, for his translations of the *Short Treatise* and the *Correspondence*; to Charles Appuhn, Roland Cailliois, Madeleine Francès, and Robert Misrahi, for their excellent French translations of the works; to Fokke Akkerman, H. G. Hubbeling, and A. G. Westerbrink, whose recent Dutch edition of the correspondence is a major contribution to Spinoza studies. I have also found Professor Giancotti Boscherini's *Spinoza Lexicon* a tremendously valuable tool.

I should also like to thank Sandy Thatcher of the Princeton Uni-

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versity Press, for his initial interest in this project and his patient prodding over the years; Jean Norman, for her research assistance; and Isabel Sheaffe, Anna van der Vliet, and Audrey Thiel, for their secretarial assistance.

In spite of all the help I have received, and my own best efforts to avoid error, I am sure that mistakes must remain. As Spinoza himself remarks, *nullus liber unquam sine mendis repertus est*. (III/149) I would ask readers who detect anything that needs correction—typographical or translation errors, omissions from the index or from other scholarly aids—to send me notice of it, c/o the Princeton University Press.

Index of Proper Names

THIS INDEX covers only references (direct and indirect) to Spinoza's predecessors and contemporaries, made by Spinoza, his correspondents, or the editor, in the text, notes, and prefaces. It excludes editorial references in the Glossary-Index and to subsequent philosophers and commentators in the notes and prefaces. References in the text are indexed by the Gebhardt page numbers. Editorial references are prefixed by "(ed.)" and are indexed by the pagination of this edition.

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