

the world. Her most curious exchange happens with a group of immaterial spirits. A large part of the discussion is conducted on the topic of the “Jewish Cabala” and the empress’s plans to create cabalas of her own. We learn from Mendelson’s notes that Cavendish’s spirits function to ridicule the Cambridge Platonist Henry Moore, who asserted that people who do not believe immaterial spirits are atheists. In a surprising development that takes place about halfway through the narrative, the Duchess of Newcastle (the author presented as character) appears and advises the empress, in effect, to stop talking to spirits about abstruse topics and, instead, to turn her attention to writing literature, in particular poetry and romances. This is not to say that the author would agree with the duchess as character, but the introduction of the duchess into the plot line provides Cavendish with an opportunity to make jokes at her own expense, something of a Cavendish family tradition. Inasmuch as the empress is frequently a stand-in for Cavendish herself, the presence of the duchess means that there are multiple representations of self in the narrative. As Mendelson points out, multiple selves also are to be found in *Cyrano de Bergerac’s Comical History*.

Perhaps I am being a bit fussy, but I would have liked to have seen a little more about the early history of the text of *The Blazing World*. Are there any corrections, additions, or deletions in printings undertaken in the years after its first appearance? Does the text remain the same? In any event, those who might merely consult EEBO for a quick and easy access to *Blazing World* would do well to take the time to find a copy of Mendelson’s edition.

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The Collected Works of Spinoza, Volume II. Benedictus de Spinoza.

Ed. and trans. Edwin Curley. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016. xxii + 770 pp. \$55.

Edwin Curley is one of the truly great experts in seventeenth-century philosophy. His books and papers on Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza, in particular, continue to be extremely influential, and we should be deeply grateful that he has finally managed to conclude his edition and translation of Spinoza’s works. Curley started this project in 1969, and after the publication of the first volume in 1985, which included Spinoza’s *Ethics*, it was clear that his was to become the standard edition in English. As it took more than three decades to complete the second and final volume, it was inevitable that in the meantime alternative translations would become available, such as Samuel Shirley’s *Collected Works* of 2002 and Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel’s translation of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (2007). If only in view of the many competing translations of Spinoza available in French and Italian, it would be silly to complain about redundancy. Instead, the possibility of comparing translations will

only incite further interest in Spinoza's original Latin. As Curley is only too happy to admit, the long gestation of this final volume allowed him to take full advantage of the important editorial work carried out in the meantime on both the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and the *Tractatus Politicus* by Fokke Akkerman, Pierre-François Moreau, and Pina Totaro. Both the rich editorial prefaces and the footnotes also testify to the recent renaissance of Spinoza scholarship. Arguably the greatest asset of this volume, meanwhile, is to be found at the end of the book, namely a glossary and a Latin-Dutch-English index, which is even better than the glossary-index added to the first volume. If there's anything to nag about, it would be the layout and organization of the list of works cited. Looking up the literature referred to in the footnotes could have been made easier.

The one serious qualm I have about this major and brilliantly executed editorial project as a whole concerns the decision to present Spinoza's writings in a chronological fashion: volume 1 contains, besides the *Ethics*, the unfinished *Treatise on the Improvement of the Understanding*, the *Short Treatise*, and *Descartes's "Principles,"* as well as the letters 1 to 28. The second volume contains the remaining letters and Spinoza's two political treatises, which means that these are indeed no complete works: Spinoza's *Hebrew Grammar* is left out as are the treatises on the rainbow and probability once spuriously attributed to the Dutch philosopher. Understandable as Curley's reasons are for omitting the *Hebrew Grammar*—which is only of limited philosophical relevance—it is a pity. Several chapters from the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* on the history of the Old Testament are not very exciting either, from a philosophical perspective, but they do belong to Spinoza's output as a scholar. Far more curious, to my mind, is that Curley presents the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* after the *Ethics*. In the general preface to the first volume, Curley states that we know that by 1665 a substantial manuscript of the *Ethics* was in existence. Nobody will care to deny this, as Spinoza's correspondence reveals the extent to which his Amsterdam pupils were studying his metaphysics as early as the early 1660s; but we also know that from 1670, when the *Tractatus* was published, to 1675, when the *Ethics* was ready for print, Spinoza returned to his manuscript. Surely the concluding parts of the *Ethics* profited considerably from his sustained reflection on politics, rendered necessary by the very subject of the *Tractatus*. What is more, the chronological setup results in a fragmentation of the correspondence, which is interspersed in batches between the main writings of Spinoza.

But this, I hasten to add, merely concerns the presentation of this terrific edition and translation. I have done my best to look for shaky or even slightly awkward passages revealing, perhaps, a moment of weakness on the part of their translator, but I failed miserably. Even his rendering of the rather treacherous seventeenth-century Dutch vocabulary is flawless.

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