

On to some comments. First, it is stated in the introduction that Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum* cites the *Secret of Secrets*: while many modern scholars have said the same, making it understandable why the claim would be repeated here, it is simply not true. Second, one important name is missing from the bibliography's list of *Principales études*: Willy Hermenau, who published a dissertation on the French translations in 1922. Third, Monfrin's article of 1982 points to another MS of Version C that was sold at a Sotheby's auction: at a minimum, mention of this MS should have been made; additionally, a description of the MS based on the sale catalogue might have been provided. Fourth, a similar point obtains for the catalogue descriptions of the two MSS destroyed last century: we only see their shelfmark numbers. Fifth, a transcription of the Walters MS that Lorée has made available online (15, n. 15; 108, n. 24) is listed neither with the description of the MS nor in the bibliography. Sixth, there are two early printed editions (1497, 1517) of Version C: both, we are told, were not studied. This omission is odd on its own terms, given that there remain significant gaps in the proposed stemma and that the 1497 publication was certainly based on a MS dating from the same time as the MSS used for the present edition; it is also odd because the first printing is available online and the other is sitting in the city (Paris) where eight MSS were consulted. The upshot is that one and maybe two potentially important MS witnesses have been neglected. Seventh, opting to present an edition based on a subfamily of MSS deemed to be the farthest in time from the original is a rather surprising choice, especially given the reasonable number of MSS to be collated—not too many and not too few, both of which, to be sure, can make preparing a stemma extremely difficult. But these are all minor criticisms: they certainly do not detract from the high scholarly quality and value of this publication.

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*Briefwechsel.* Baruch de Spinoza.

Ed. and trans. Wolfgang Bartuschat. Philosophische Bibliothek 699; Sämtliche Werke 6. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2017. xxviii + 332 pp. €48.

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Finally, it is out: Wolfgang Bartuschat's new German translation of Spinoza's *Letters*—and with this, the last piece of Spinoza's work that was still lacking a modern and philosophically adequate German translation since Bartuschat took up the gigantic task of retranslating all of Spinoza's work into German in 1993. Like his previous translations, Bartuschat's new translation of Spinoza's letters is a success. It provides a philosophically accurate, yet well-readable German translation of Spinoza's correspondence, originally written in Latin and Dutch. What is more, Bartuschat's new translation masterfully preserves the variation of Spinoza's original tone: his enthusiasm when he is

confronted with serious inquiries that express the correspondent's desire for truth and understanding, his recalcitrance when it comes to explaining things that he takes to have already sufficiently explained elsewhere, and even the rare flashes of his dry humor. Due to this, Bartuschat's translation is not only helpful for the Spinoza scholar, but also for those merely interested in the intellectual atmosphere of the seventeenth-century Netherlands where critical libertines, defenders of the *science nouvelle*, and missionizing Catholics struggled with how to conceive of the world and our place within it.

Above all, however, the new German edition of Spinoza's letters bears the hallmarks of its philosophical translator. Wolfgang Bartuschat is one of the most distinguished Spinoza scholars in Germany, and his translation profits a lot from his outstanding expertise. The same holds for his introduction and his detailed comments: in altogether 154 comments on thirty-eight pages, Bartuschat reminds us of important background information of Spinoza's philosophy and fills in the details of many of Spinoza's rather sketchy remarks. In doing so, Bartuschat goes well beyond usual editorial commentaries. His comments are full of valuable historical information about persons, books, and institutions mentioned in the letters, but in addition to this they are philosophically revealing. Drawing from his expertise, Bartuschat provides a lot of background to Spinoza's explanations which otherwise had to be compiled from a range of scattered remarks in Spinoza's oeuvre. This is enormously helpful, especially for those who have not read through Spinoza's works (yet). At the same time, the reader should bear in mind that Bartuschat's comments are all but exegetically neutral. They often reflect his distinctive exegetical views, some of which are hotly debated in the secondary literature on Spinoza. Let me illustrate this by mentioning just two examples:

In his comment number 10, for instance, Bartuschat points out the unclear nature of Spinozist axioms and notes that the only commonality between them consists in the fact that they are "unprovable sentences" (293). This view has not only been contested (cf. Jonathan Bennett, *A Study on Spinoza's Ethics* [1984], 18f.), but also faces a textual problem. It seems to run against Spinoza's own explication of axiom 5a2 of his *Ethics*, where Spinoza says that this axiom is evident from 3p7.

In comment number 124, Bartuschat takes up the intricate question as to how the finite modes follow from God's infinite attributes. Not at least due to Hegel's famous objection that in Spinoza the assumption of finite modes "is not deduced, it is found," this question is widely discussed. Without mentioning this discussion, Bartuschat simply holds that there is no causal connection between the derivative infinite mode ("the face of the universe") and the finite modes that it comprises. Though I am very sympathetic with Bartuschat's view, it is surely not that exegetically innocent that it can be accepted without further comments or qualifications.

As helpful then as Bartuschat's comments are, they should be taken with their due grain of salt: they are rich, thoughtful and philosophically illuminating, but they are also opinionated. Occasional room for disagreement, however, only bespeaks their phil-

osophical substance. And given Bartuschat's superb modern translation of Spinoza's *Briefwechsel*, the German audience has now—in conjunction with Bartuschat's formidable translation of the rest of Spinoza's work—all means to critically assess them.

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*Grundriss Philosophie des Humanismus und der Renaissance (1350–1600).*

Thomas Leinkauf.

2 vols. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2017. xxvi + 1,938 pp. €198.

Thomas Leinkauf, a professor of philosophy in Münster and the director of the Leibniz-Forschungsstelle, presents a monumental work on history of philosophy between 1350 and 1600. The work is divided into two big volumes, each containing almost 2,000 pages. The two volumes are organized according to the thematic focus, first on *studia humanitatis* with the emphasis on Petrarch, then on prominent authors of Renaissance philosophy (Nicholas of Cusa and Marsilio Ficino), and finally on the dominant topics of Renaissance philosophy (beauty and love, natural philosophy, new physics and methodologies).

The first volume, which is an outline of the main topics of humanism, is structured into six parts. The book starts with an extensive introduction where the author explains four so-called irritations which shaped the epoch between 1350 and 1600. According to the author, the four irritations (namely the *potentia absoluta* of God and the contingency of the world; death [plague, epidemics] and anxiety; the Copernican turn and the discovery of the New World; Protestantism and the schism) are starting points or discourse for our understanding of the various topics of Renaissance philosophy and the main philosophical personalities of the epoch. These irritations are interconnected, and the book is essentially an attempt to present their mutual dynamics. The author deals with the subject of humanistic understanding of dignity (*dignitas*), language, nature, knowledge, science, technology and the meaning of innovations in the field of optics (perspective), book printing, medicine (anatomy), and astronomy (telescope) for the development of humanistic culture. The next chapter focuses on the main representative of humanism, Petrarch, as an innovative thinker who comes with a new understanding of individual experience because every moment in human life is an unfixed, uncertain, unstable expression of the self-movement of the human subject. In comparison to Dante's vertical, hierarchical, theological-cosmological structure of medieval mind, Petrarch's landscape is horizontal; it lies in the space of a real individual experience.

The following chapters are organized along the subjects of the humanist scholars, the *studia humanitatis*: language (grammar, dialectics, rhetoric, poetics), ethics, politics, and history. In the chapter on language, attention is paid to grammar and dialectics (Coluccio Salutati, Lorenzo Valla, Rudolph Agricola), and the dialectics between nom-