

Spinoza's Ethics: A New Edition of the Latin Text¹

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Introduction

In this paper I will sketch the background and the principles of a new critical edition of Spinoza's *Ethics*, that I have been working on together with and under the guidance of my lamented teacher Fokke Akkerman, and in close collaboration with Pierre-François Moreau. Its publication is now scheduled for January 2019. Most of what I will expound here has its origins in the long introduction to that edition.²

I will first deal extensively with the textual history of the *Ethics*, because that is indispensable for a proper understanding of the problems that are to be solved. Next, I will explain our editorial choices and principles, and how our edition differs from earlier editions; I hope that will also make clear why a new critical edition of the Latin text is needed. Finally, I will briefly present the five most difficult textual issues. As a tribute to the philosopher, I named these five issues the 'thorny' readings – appropriating the literal meaning of the word 'spinosa'.

I. The Making of Spinoza's Ethics

(i) *Outline*

It took Spinoza about twelve years to write his masterpiece, *Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata*. The story of its making can conveniently be divided into eight episodes:

1. (1662–1665) Spinoza writes an *Ethics* in three parts, about God, the mind, the

¹ Text of a paper read in Tokyo, Meiji University, on 12 May 2018.

² Spinoza, *Œuvres*, IV: *Ethica/Éthique*: Texte établi par Fokke Akkerman et Piet Steenbakkers, traduction par Pierre-François Moreau (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 2019 [in preparation]).

affects. Its third part is considerably longer (some twenty propositions) than the one that has come down to us as Part III.

2. (1662–1664) Spinoza’s friend Pieter Balling translates the first two parts into Dutch, for the convenience of the Spinoza circle in Amsterdam. Balling dies in December 1664. Spinoza inquires of a close friend (possibly Johannes Bouwmeester) if he is willing to translate the third part.
3. (1665–1669/70) Spinoza interrupts his work on the *Ethics* temporarily in order to write the *Theological-Political Treatise*.
4. (1669/70–1674/75) Spinoza resumes work on the *Ethics* and finishes it. Eventually it becomes the work in five parts as we know it. The earlier third part is expanded to become the Parts III, IV and V of the completed work.
5. (End of 1674 or – more likely – early 1675) Pieter van Gent produces a manuscript copy of the finished Latin text, commissioned by Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus, who later (1677) yields it to Niels Stensen in Rome. Stensen turns it over to Roman Inquisition. The copy ends up in the Vatican Library, where it remains unnoticed until 2010.
6. (August 1675) Spinoza undertakes an attempt to publish the *Ethics*. Soon, however, he is informed that theologians are launching a defamation campaign against his book. There is a serious risk that it will be prohibited, and Spinoza abandons his efforts to publish the work.
7. (1675–1677) Spinoza starts writing the *Political Treatise* – which will remain unfinished – and also considers a new edition of the *Theological-Political Treatise*, with some clarifying annotations – a project that will remain unrealized, too.
8. (1677) Spinoza dies on 21 february. His friends set to work to publish his posthumous works, in Latin as *Opera Posthuma*, in Dutch as *De Nagelate Schriften*.³ For the *Ethics*, the Dutch translations of Parts I and II by Balling are used, supplemented with a new translation of Parts III, IV and V by Jan Hendriksz

³ B.d.S. *Opera posthuma, quorum series post praefationem exhibetur* (no place [Amsterdam]: no publisher’s name [Rieuwertsz], 1677); *De nagelate schriften van B.d.S., als Zedekunst, Staatkunde, Verbetering van ’t verstant, Brieven en antwoorden, uit verscheide talen in de Nederlandsche gebragt* (no place [Amsterdam]: no publisher’s name [Rieuwertsz], 1677).

Glazemaker. Both volumes are printed in December, and sold as from January 1678.

This outline already presents most of the relevant dates and facts, as well as the people involved. I will now fill in the picture in more detail. Not every episode is equally important, so the attention I pay to the various stages will be unevenly distributed.

(ii) *First Episode: Genesis of the Work, in Three Parts (1662–1665)*

The *Ethics* is, in fact, Spinoza's second effort to produce a systematic exposition of his philosophy. The first was an unfinished text: the *Short Treatise of God, Man and his Well-Being*. The original Latin version of that work is lost, but an early Dutch translation has survived. It cannot be dated exactly, but it is certainly older than the *Ethics*, though – at least according to most modern scholars – later than the (equally unfinished) *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. That last work was likely written between 1656 and 1661, before Spinoza settled in Rijnsburg. From the correspondence of the Rijnsburg period it appears that he was immersed in transcribing and correcting the *Short Treatise* in the years 1661–1662. Between May 1662 and January 1663, however, Spinoza set out on a new course. Instead of completing the *Short Treatise*, he decided to recast his exposition drastically, and to present it 'in geometrical order': as in the *Elements*, Euclid's textbook of geometry, the argument was to be constructed from definitions and axioms and developed in a chain of propositions and demonstrations.

Although there are no direct indications that reveal when Spinoza started working on the *Ethics*, his correspondence with Henry Oldenburg (who had visited him in Rijnsburg in the summer of 1661) and with his close friend Simon Joosten de Vries allows us to narrow down the time range to the period between, say, May and December 1662. The first six letters exchanged between Oldenburg and Spinoza indicate that by April 1662, Spinoza had not yet embarked upon the *Ethics*.

At the end of Letter 6 Spinoza writes:

As for your new question, how things have begun to be, and by what connection they depend on the first cause, I have composed a whole short work devoted to this matter and also to the emendation of the intellect. I am engaged in transcribing and emending it, but sometimes I put it to one side because I do not yet have any definite plan regarding its publication.⁴

What he refers to here is a revision of the *Short Treatise* (whether or not combined with the *Emendation of the Intellect*). Soon afterwards, though, Spinoza must have abandoned this revision in order to start writing the *Ethics*. For in February 1663, De Vries wrote him a letter in which he describes the regular meetings of a group or circle (*collegium*) of friends to discuss a text that Spinoza wrote. The references and quotations both in De Vries's letter and in Spinoza's reply leave no doubt as to what the friends had at their disposal: an early instalment of the *Ethics*, consisting of definitions, axioms, at least nineteen propositions and several scholia. Spinoza, then, must have started writing this work well before January 1663 or (more likely) even before December 1662.

In writing the *Ethics*, Spinoza initially held on to the tripartite structure of its predecessor, the *Short Treatise* – a work in three parts, dealing (1) with God or nature, (2) with the human mind, and (3) human well-being. This can be inferred from Letter 28, which has survived only as a draft, without date and without the addressee's name. Spinoza must have written that letter in early June 1665 or thereabouts, and the addressee was a very close friend, who participated in the Amsterdam circle that discussed Spinoza's *Ethics*. It is often assumed that the intended recipient was Johannes Bouwmeester, and while that is indeed possible, the attribution remains uncertain. This is what Spinoza writes:

As for the third part of our philosophy, I shall soon send some of it either to you (if you wish to be its translator) or to friend de Vries. Although I had decided to send nothing until I finished it, nevertheless, because it is turning out

⁴ *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, trans. Edwin Curley, vol. I (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 188.

to be longer than I thought, I don't want to hold you back too long. I shall send up to about the 80th proposition.⁵

So by June 1665, Spinoza had finished Parts I and II of the *Ethics* (here referred to as 'our philosophy'), and a portion of Part III that was considerably longer than the third part as we know it – that has only 59 propositions. Clearly, the work was swelling beyond his expectations. Spinoza later decided to split the initial third part, so that the *Ethics* eventually came to consist of five parts. Some oversights in the cross references confirm this rearrangement. Another indication that the *Ethics* was originally conceived as tripartite is a reference to it in the epilogue of the notorious book *Philosophy as the Interpreter of Holy Scripture* (1666), commonly attributed to Spinoza's friend Lodewijk Meyer. It announces the publication of a work, written by someone who follows in Descartes's footsteps, 'about God, the rational soul and the highest felicity of man, and other things of that sort regarding the attainment of eternal life'.⁶ Given the date, 1666, the announcement must refer to the *Ethics*, for Spinoza had abandoned the *Short Treatise* already in 1662.

(iii) *Second Episode: An Early Dutch Translation of Parts I and II* (1662–1664)

In Letter 28, just quoted, Spinoza asks his friend if he can translate the third part of the *Ethics*. Of the friends who participated in the Amsterdam circle many could read Latin, but for the convenience of those who could not (or not easily), Spinoza allowed them to translate the instalments of the *Ethics* into Dutch from the very beginning. Parts I and II were thus translated by Pieter Balling, as Fokke Akkerman has conclusively shown.⁷ But Balling died of the pest in December 1664, so another translator was needed. However, there are no traces of a Dutch translation that can be situated in the years 1665–1675, so presumably the project was suspended.

⁵ *Collected Works*, I, p. 396.

⁶ Anon. [attributed to Lodewijk Meyer], *Philosophia S. Scripturae interpres: Exercitatio paradoxa* (Eleutheropolis [Amsterdam]: no publisher's name [Rieuwertsz], 1666), last page (not numbered).

⁷ Fokke Akkerman, *Studies in the Posthumous Works of Spinoza: On Style, Earliest Translation and Reception, Earliest and Modern Edition of Some Texts* (PhD thesis, Groningen University 1980), pp. 145–176.

(iv) *Third Episode – Intermezzo I: TTP (1665–1669/70)*

In the years 1665–1669, Spinoza appears to have interrupted or at least decelerated his work on the *Ethics*. In fact, we know little about what he did in the years 1667 to 1669: curiously, there is a gap of twenty-nine months in his correspondence between Letters 40 (25 March 1667) and 41 (5 September 1669). This may indicate that he was immersed in finishing the *Theological-Political Treatise*, a book that he began to write in the summer of 1665. Again, it is his correspondence with Oldenburg that reveals when and why he undertook this project: in Letter 30 (July 1665) Spinoza states his intention to ward off the – very dangerous – accusation of atheism levelled against him by the theologians, and to stand up for the freedom to philosophize. For four years he was absorbed in writing the *Theological-Political Treatise*. He finished it in 1669; the book was published early in 1670. Nothing indicates that he kept on working on the *Ethics* simultaneously. It does pop up in his letters now and then; thus Letter 34 of 6 January 1666, to Johannes Hudde, quotes extensively from the second scholium to proposition 8 of Part I.

(v) *Fourth Episode: Expanding the Ethics into a Five-Part Work (1669/70–1674/75)*

Only after having finished the *Theological-Political Treatise* did Spinoza resume work on the *Ethics*. The new insights he had been developing in the meantime – in particular with regard to the affects, the imagination and human relations – found their way into the *Ethics*, notably Parts III, IV and V. Spinoza will not only have cut up the third part, but in doing so he also must have rearranged portions of the text and inserted new material. If we take into account that at least some twenty propositions were taken out of the older third part and moved elsewhere, it is most likely that the appendix to the definitive Part III, with the definitions of the affects, as well as the preface, the eight definitions and the single axiom of Part IV are later additions. Note, too, that Part V is the only one without definitions of its own. This may well indicate that it once belonged to Part IV and was subsequently

separated from it. So the cutting up of the older third part may have been executed in two stages, resulting first in a new fourth part, and after that in a fifth part.

We have no direct information about the progress of the work between 1670 and 1675, but we do know that Spinoza must have completed the *Ethics* in its definitive form late in 1674 or early in 1675. This will become clear in our discussion of the next two episodes.

(vi) *Fifth Episode: The Vatican Manuscript (1674/1675)*

The young German nobleman Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus had lived in the Netherlands from 1669 to 1674. As a student in Leiden he became friends with Georg Herman Schuller and Pieter van Gent, and through them he got in touch with Spinoza. In the spring of 1674 Tschirnhaus went back home to Kieslingswalde in Lower Silesia (now Ślawnikowice in Poland), but he returned to the Netherlands again in November. Amsterdam was the first stop of a grand European tour he was going to undertake. He stayed there until the beginning of May 1675. He learned that Spinoza had finished the *Ethics* and was going to have it printed. Tschirnhaus then obtained permission from Spinoza to have the text copied by Pieter van Gent. (An explicit remark about Tschirnhaus's copy in Letter 72 proves that Spinoza himself was well informed.⁸) In early May 1675, Tschirnhaus had the manuscript in his luggage when he left for London, the next destination of his European journey.

The sequel: three years later, in August 1677, Tschirnhaus was in Rome. There he met Niels Stensen (Nicolaus Steno), the Danish anatomist and geologist, who had converted to Roman Catholicism. They soon found out that they had things in common: both had been students in Leiden, and both were acquainted with Spinoza. Stensen tried to convert Tschirnhaus, and in a heated debate the latter yielded his precious manuscript copy of the *Ethics* to him – presumably not as a gift, but in a vain attempt to back up his arguments. Stensen brought the manuscript to the Roman Inquisition, in order to serve as a piece of evidence in a process to have

⁸ *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, trans. Edwin Curley, vol. II (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 465.

the work placed on the Index even before it was published. It remained in the archives of the Inquisition until the early twentieth century, when it was transferred to the Vatican library. There it was discovered only in 2010, by Leen Spruit.⁹

Because the manuscript by Pieter van Gent is a copy of Spinoza's autograph of the completed *Ethics* as it was in 1674/1675, it is of paramount importance as a first-hand witness of Spinoza's Latin text.

(vii) *Sixth Episode: An Abortive Attempt at Publication* (August 1675)

A letter from Oldenburg dated 22 July 1675 informs us that Spinoza had told him about his intention to publish 'a treatise in five parts'. In September or October Spinoza wrote to Oldenburg (Letter 68):

Just as I received your letter of 22 July, I set out for Amsterdam, intending to commit to the press the book I wrote to you about. While I was dealing with this, a rumor was spread everywhere that a certain book of mine about God was in the press, and that in it I tried to show that there is no God.¹⁰

Because theologians were preparing to take action against the book, Spinoza decided to put off the publication. He returned home and put the manuscript away, awaiting more favourable conditions. His assessment of the danger was realistic enough; other sources confirm this. On 14 August 1675, a Leiden professor wrote a letter to a friend who was a politician.¹¹ He had heard that Spinoza was about to publish a book about God and the mind, much more dangerous than the *Theological-Political Treatise*, and he urges the politician to take appropriate measures. Around the same time, the consistory of the Walloon church in Utrecht gives similar instructions to the delegates it sends to a synod that is to be held in

⁹ The Vatican manuscript can now be consulted online, URL: http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.12838. Edition: Leen Spruit and Pina Totaro (eds), *The Vatican Manuscript of Spinoza's Ethica* (Leiden: Brill, 2011). On the discovery see also Pina Totaro, Leen Spruit and Piet Steenbakkers, 'L'Ethica di Spinoza in un manoscritto della Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Vat. lat. 12838)', *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae* 18 (2011), pp. 583–610.

¹⁰ *Collected Works*, II, p. 459.

¹¹ Theodoor de Ryck (Ryckius) to Adriaan Blyenburg, 14 August 1675. The letter was published in G.D.J. Schotel (ed.), *Theodori Ryckii, Joh. Georg. Graevii, Nicolai Heinsii ad Adrianum Blyenburgum, et Adriani Blyenburgi ad diversos Epistolae ineditae* (The Hague: Noordendorp, 1843)

Kampen.¹²

Putting together the information about Tschirnhaus's stay in Amsterdam (between November 1674 and early May 1675) and about Spinoza's abortive attempt to publish the *Ethics* (in August 1675), we can infer that Spinoza finished the *Ethics* definitively early in 1675; an earlier date is less likely, in view of the preparations he made in August to get it printed.

(viii) *Seventh Episode – Intermezzo II: TP (1675–1677)*

Spinoza did not live to see his *Ethics* published. In the last two years of his life, the manuscript remained in his writing desk. As I shall illustrate in more detail at the end of this paper, he did not undertake a revision nor a final correction of the text after 1675. What the friends had at their disposal after his death was, basically, the same text that Pieter van Gent had copied two years earlier. Of course Spinoza will have looked up a passage now and then. Thus in Letter 72, to Schuller, he wonders whether there is a mistake in Tschirnhaus's copy of the *Ethics*, either in the fourth axiom of Part I or in proposition 5 of Part II.¹³ Tschirnhaus had suggested that these two passages were inconsistent.

Instead of going through the *Ethics* again, Spinoza focused on a new project: a systematic exposition of his political theory, the *Political Treatise*. Since that is firmly based on his philosophy as set forth in the *Theological-Political Treatise* and the *Ethics* (as he himself explicitly states at the beginning of Chapter II), he must regularly have consulted the manuscript of the *Ethics* in his writing desk. The idea propounded by Carl Gebhardt¹⁴ that Spinoza was the kind of author who incessantly kept rewriting and improving his texts, throughout his life, is wholly mistaken. In fact, as far as the evidence goes, we may say that he never looked back: his way of working was efficient and single-minded – so much so that it

¹² See Albert Gootjes, 'Spinoza between French Libertines and Dutch Cartesians: The 1673 Utrecht Visit', *Modern Intellectual History* (accepted for publication).

¹³ *Collected Works*, II, pp. 465–466.

¹⁴ Carl Gebhardt, *Inedita Spinozana* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1916), p. 22; and 'Textgestaltung', in Spinoza, *Opera*, ed. C. Gebhardt (Heidelberg: Winter, 1925), vol. II, p. 317.

sometimes verged on monomania.

(ix) *Eighth Episode: Spinoza's Death, and Posthumous Publication of his Works* (1677)

Spinoza died on 21 February 1677, after a short but fatal illness. He had made arrangements with his landlord in The Hague, Hendrik van der Spyck, and with his friends in Amsterdam (among them his publisher Jan Rieuwertsz) about what was to be done with the manuscript of the *Ethics*. Very shortly after the philosopher's death, Van der Spyck dispatched the writing box with Spinoza's papers by barge from The Hague to Rieuwertsz in Amsterdam. Eventually, the group of dedicated friends who took care of Spinoza's philosophical legacy decided to publish not only the *Ethics* (as he had asked them), but also a selection of his letters and three unfinished treatises that they found among his papers: the *Political Treatise*, the *Emendation of the Intellect*, and a Hebrew grammar. Among the people involved were at any rate Jan Rieuwertsz, Johannes Bouwmeester, Lodewijk Meyer, Jarig Jelles, Jan Hendriksz Glazemaker, Georg Herman Schuller and Pieter van Gent. In about nine months, they managed to bring out the posthumous works in Latin (*Opera Posthuma*) and in Dutch (*De Nagelate Schriften*, without the Hebrew grammar). The Latin text of the *Ethics* was subedited and prepared for the press, most probably by Bouwmeester and Meyer.

The Dutch translation of the *Ethics*, begun by Balling, was now completed by Glazemaker. They both had their own style of translating, and as a result there are quite a few differences between Parts I–II on the one hand and Parts III–V on the other. Glazemaker was a professional translator, who worked very rapidly but made more mistakes than Balling. Again, Glazemaker was more literal in his translations and more of a purist in his choice of Dutch words; Balling is much freer, and does not hesitate to expand a translated term with a gloss. This can also be understood by taking into account the different functions of their translations: Balling provided a working paper for the discussion in the circle of friends, in which explicit explanations were welcome; Glazemaker translated a finished authorial text, and

though he was not averse to amplifying a translation, he would not insert anything that lacked a basis in the source text, explicitly or implicitly.

How did the editors of *De Nagelate Schriften* handle such divergences? Most of the differences were left untouched, but sometimes a certain harmonization did take place. Thus, one of the central notions of the *Ethics*, *mens* ('mind') may be rendered in Dutch as either *ziel* or *geest*. Balling avoided the term *geest*, and always translated *mens* with *ziel*, but Glazemaker in other translations generally has a preference for *geest*. In *Ethics* I and II we find exclusively *ziel*, but the word also often occurs in the other parts. Possibly Glazemaker respected Balling's preference and stuck to it in the parts he himself translated, or else the editors harmonized the translation of *mens* throughout, because of the importance of this technical term.

II. The New Critical Edition of the Ethics

(i) *The French Project*

The decision to embark upon a new and truly critical edition of the *Ethics* was taken several decades ago. With the growing popularity of Spinoza in France, a group of scholars under the direction of Pierre-François Moreau saw the need for a fresh set of new translations of the texts. Owing to the critical work of Akkerman, Moreau realized that not only new French translations were in order, but scholarly editions of the Latin (and occasionally Dutch) texts as well. Thus a series was started in the collection *Épiméthée*, published by the Presses Universitaires de France. In the meantime, three volumes have appeared: *Theological-Political Treatise*, Latin text edited by Akkerman, French translation by Moreau and Jacqueline Lagrée (1999); *Political Treatise*, Latin text edited by Omero *Political Treatise*, ed., translated by Charles Ramond (2005); early writings (*Emendation of the Intellect, Short Treatise*), Latin and Dutch texts edited by Filippo Mignini, translated by Michelle Beyssade and Joël Ganault (2009).¹⁵ We are now preparing a fourth volume for publication, the *Ethics*,

¹⁵ Spinoza, *Œuvres*, édition publiée sous la direction de Pierre-François Moreau (Paris: Presses Universitaires de

Latin text edited by Akkerman and Steenbakkers, translated by Moreau. It is scheduled to appear in January 2019.

(ii) *Choice of Copy Text*

Until the discovery of the Vatican manuscript in 2010, the only Latin text of the *Ethics* that could serve as the source on which to base an edition (the so-called ‘copy text’) was the one that Spinoza’s friends published in the *Opera Posthuma* in 1677. All editors (from Paulus in 1803 up to Gebhardt in 1925 and beyond¹⁶) necessarily depend on that earliest printed text. Since the end of the nineteenth century, following the critical studies of the Dutch philologist J.P.N. Land,¹⁷ scholars have also paid attention to variant readings in the Dutch version as found in *De Nagelate Schriften*. Since Balling and Glazemaker both translated from manuscripts, and not from the printed version of the *Opera Posthuma* (which was being prepared simultaneously for publication), their variants may occasionally reflect a Latin manuscript reading that departs from the reading found in the *Opera Posthuma*. Gebhardt even thought he could reconstruct a primitive version of Parts I and II from these variants. The 1677 Dutch translation itself, however, was never critically edited,¹⁸ and only systematically studied in the 1970s by Akkerman.

In 2011, Spruit and Totaro published an edition of the Vatican manuscript, the first one that did not take the *Opera Posthuma* for its copy text. Clearly, a new critical edition will have to take into account, systematically and entirely, all variant readings from each of the three seventeenth-century sources: *Opera Posthuma*,

France); vol. III: *Traité théologico-politique* (1999), vol. V: *Traité politique* (2005), vol. I: *Premiers écrits* (2009).

¹⁶ *Benedicti de Spinoza Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Henr. Eberh. Gottlob Paulus, 2 vols (Jena: in bibliopolio academico, 1802–1803); *Benedicti de Spinoza Opera philosophica omnia*, ed. A. Gfrörer (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1830); *Renati des Cartes et Benedicti de Spinoza Praecipua opera philosophica*, ed. Carolus Riedel, 2 vols (Leipzig: Hartung, 1843); *Benedicti de Spinoza Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Carolus Hermannus Bruder, vol. I (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1843); *Die Ethik des Spinoza im Urtexte*, ed. Hugo Ginsberg (Berlin: Erich Koschny, 1874); *Benedicti de Spinoza Opera quotquot reperta sunt*, ed. J. van Vloten & J.P.N. Land, 2 vols (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1882–1883); *Spinoza, Opera*, ed. Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg: Winter, vol. 1–4: 1925; 21972).

¹⁷ Jan Pieter Nicolaas Land. ‘Over de eerste uitgaven der brieven van Spinoza’, *Verslagen en Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde*, 2nd ser., vol. 9 (Amsterdam: Muller, 1880), pp. 144–155; J.P.N. Land. ‘Over de uitgaven en den text der Ethica van Spinoza’, *Verslagen en Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie der Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde*, 2nd ser., vol. 11 (Amsterdam: Muller, 1882), pp. 4–24.

¹⁸ It can now be consulted online (in facsimile and in a transcription) in the ‘Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren’ (URL: http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/spin003nage01_01/).

Nagelate Schriften and Vatican manuscript. Still, only the *Opera Posthuma* can serve as copy text for a critical edition, that is to say: a critical edition must take the *Opera Posthuma* for its starting point, and correct its text on the basis of an exhaustive comparison with the the other two versions.

The Dutch language had not yet developed a standard philosophical terminology then, and *De Nagelate Schriften* therefore offers Latin glosses in the margins, to show the Dutch reader how certain technical terms were translated. But the Dutch translation does not offer a complete Latin text, so the choice of the copy text is limited to the two Latin sources. Van Gent's copy contains many errors: was written in great haste, and the scribe himself did not take the time to reread and correct his apograph. There are few corrections in the manuscript: Van Gent himself made only immediate corrections, while he was writing; afterwards, Tschirnhaus did make a few adjustments based on a comparison with Spinoza's autograph, but he did so neither systematically nor always correctly. Again, Van Gent followed his own preferences as a scribe, so the spelling, accentuation, punctuation, word order, abbreviations, layout and even the Latin grammar of the Vatican manuscript reveal as much – if not more – about his habits than about the state of Spinoza's original manuscript. And finally, the Vatican manuscript was Tschirnhaus's personal copy: it was not intended for circulation nor prepared for publication.

The *Ethics* as found in the *Opera Posthuma*, on the other hand, has been published by a conscientious team of editors, who followed the author's instructions. They respected most of Spinoza's choices, but they also felt that they had the responsibility to correct errors and ambiguities, and (where necessary) to improve the wording when this could be done without any change in meaning. Yet, they also made mistakes, and they sometimes interfered with the text without good reason. As long as Spinoza's own final autograph does not come to the surface, it is impossible to reconstruct exactly what he wrote, and how he wrote it. But the *Opera Posthuma* has the only text that can serve as an authoritative witness, and its

corrupted passages can be emended with the help of the two other sources.

(iii) *Differences from Other Editions*

So we choose the 1677 edition as our copy text, like all other editions before us – but not in the same way. The differences can be summed up under four headings.

1. The *Opera Posthuma* are the result of an editorial effort that was carried out scrupulously, but not without flaws. Unlike the nineteenth-century editions before 1883 (Paulus, Gfrörer, Riedel, Bruder, Ginsberg), we do not simply reprint the text as it appears in the *Opera Posthuma*, but we take into account variant readings in the other sources, as well as conjectures proposed by other editors, translators and scholars.
2. Like his contemporaries, Spinoza did not follow the strict academic rules of writing classical Latin that was to become the norm in the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding a widespread prejudice, his command of Latin was considerable and effective. He drew on a variety of literary and rhetorical examples, and he employed Neolatin as a versatile tool. Forms that depart from the standards developed in the nineteenth century are retained by us: they are legitimate variants, not errors in need of correction.
3. The Dutch translation of the *Ethics* in *De Nagelate Schriften* does not belong to a separate tradition. The differences between the two 1677 editions of the posthumous works are not authorial variants that reflect different stages of the composition of the work: they stem from mistakes or interventions by translators and editors, or from the specific status of Balling's early version. The assumptions of Land, Gebhardt and other scholars that *De Nagelate Schriften* offer literal translations, and that its Latin marginal glosses were taken from Spinoza's manuscript, are mistaken. Throughout, we have used *De Nagelate Schriften* as a reference text, but not as though it were a witness of a different authorial text.

4. Closely connected to the misunderstanding that *De Nagelate Schriften* reflect a different textual tradition is the idea that Spinoza left several distinct manuscript versions. The differences between Parts I–II and III–V in the Dutch translation have been of cardinal importance for Carl Gebhardt’s hypothesis that Spinoza kept rewriting his works all his life; a fateful misjudgement, that has unfortunately been very widely accepted in Spinoza scholarship. We now know that Spinoza did not look back once he had finished a work, unless there was a specific reason to correct or qualify a certain passage (as in the case of the *Annotations to the Theological-Political Treatise*). This means that *Opera Posthuma*, *Nagelate Schriften* (both with their lists of corrigenda) and the Vatican manuscript are to be considered as witnesses of a one single source: Spinoza’s autograph.

Summing up: in principle our text is that of the *Opera Posthuma*, corrected wherever it is either manifestly corrupt, or when it is contradicted by one of the other sources if – and only if – the reading that source offers is superior to what we find in the *Opera Posthuma*, that is to say: if it fits in better with Spinoza’s linguistic usage and with his conceptual system. All of our interventions are accounted for in the critical apparatus below the text, and, if more explanation is required, dealt with in more detail in an additional endnote.

III. Five Thorny Readings

To conclude, I will deal with five problematic passages in the *Ethics*. They merit closer inspection; in all these cases both the Vatican manuscript (1675) and the *Opera Posthuma* (1677) offer incorrect readings, which suggests that it was Spinoza’s own autograph that gave rise to confusion.

(i) E2p39

The first passage is proposition 39 of Part II. In our edition, we have adopted a

conjecture suggested by the Dutch poet and classical scholar J.H. Leopold in 1902:¹⁹

Id, quod corpori humano et quibusdam corporibus externis, a quibus corpus humanum affici solet, *commune est et proprium, quodque in cujuscunque horum parte aequae ac in toto est*, ejus etiam idea erit in mente adaequata.

(If something is common to, and peculiar to, the human body and certain external bodies by which the human body is usually affected, and is equally in the part and in the whole of each of them, its idea will also be adequate in the mind.²⁰)

Leopold here takes his cue from *De Nagelate Schriften*. Both Latin sources have a different order:

Id, quod corpori humano et quibusdam corporibus externis, a quibus corpus humanum affici solet, *quodque in cujuscunque horum parte aequae ac in toto commune est et proprium*, ejus etiam idea erit in mente adaequata.

An English translation of the sentence in this arrangement is impossible: the syntax is so twisted that it makes no sense. It need not surprise that *De Nagelate Schriften* came up with an intelligible solution: a scribe and a compositor can simply reproduce the Latin as found in their exemplar, but a translator must turn it into a meaningful sentence.

(ii) E3p30s

In the scholium to proposition 30 of Part III, the following emendation had already been proposed in 1877 by the German scholar Theodor Camerer:²¹

Sed quia amor et odium ad objecta externa referuntur, ideo hos affectus aliis

¹⁹ Jan Hendrik Leopold, *Ad Spinozae Opera posthuma* (La Haye : Nijhoff, 1902), pp. 73–74. Part of Leopold's study has been published in a French translation by M. Beyssade: 'Le langage de Spinoza et sa pratique du discours', in Fokke Akkerman and Piet Steenbakkens (eds.), *Spinoza to the Letter* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 9–33, but that selection does not include Leopold's emendation.

²⁰ *Collected Works*, I, p. 474.

²¹ As transmitted by Van Vloten and Land in their *Opera* edition, vol. I, p. 148; see also their preface, p. X.

nomnibus significabimus; nempe laetitiam, concomitante idea causae *internae*, gloriam, et tristitiam huic contrariam pudorem appellabimus. Intellego, quando laetitia vel tristitia ex eo oritur, quod homo se laudari vel vituperari credit; alias laetitiam, concomitante idea causae *internae*, acquiescentiam in se ipso, tristitiam vero eidem contrariam poenitentiam vocabo.

(But because love and hate are related to external objects, we shall signify these affects by other names. Joy accompanied by the idea of an *internal* cause, we shall call love of esteem, and the sadness contrary to it, shame – I mean when the joy or sadness arise from the fact that the man believes that he is praised or blamed. Otherwise, I shall call joy accompanied by the idea of an *internal* cause, self-esteem, and the sadness contrary to it, repentance.²²)

Here both Latin sources twice read *externae* instead of *internae*. A comparison with de definitions of the affects 24 (with its explanation), 30 and 31 shows that *internae* is correct here, and that is also what *De Nagelate Schriften* translated.²³

(iii) E4p9s

In our edition, the opening lines of the scholium to proposition 9 of Part IV run as follows:

Cum supra in propositione 18. partis 3. dixerim, nos ex rei futurae vel praeteritae imagine eodem affectu affici, ac si res, quam imaginamur praesens esset, expresse monui id verum esse, quatenus ad solam ipsius rei imaginem attendimus; est enim ejusdem naturae, *sive res <quam> imaginati simus <praesens> sit, sive minus.*

(I said above (in IIP18) that when we imagine a future or past thing, we are affected with the same affect as if the thing we imagine were present; but I expressly warned then that this is true insofar as we attend to the thing's image

²² *Collected Works*, I, p. 511 (modified)

²³ NS, p. 136: 'innerlijke oorzaak', 'inwendige oorzaak'.

only. For it is of the same nature *whether the thing we have imagined is present or not.*²⁴)

The italicized phrase occurs in very different shapes in the sources as well as in the later editions:

sive res imaginati simus, sive non simus (*Opera Posthuma*)
(whether we have imagined the thing or not)

sive res imaginata sit, sive minus (*Vaticanus*)
(whether the thing has been imagined or not)

't zy d'ingebeelde zaak tegenwoordig is, of niet (*Nagelate Schriften*)
(whether the imagined thing is present or not)

sive res ut praesentes imaginati simus, sive non simus (ed. Gebhardt)
(whether we have imagined the things as present or not)

This confusion arose because Spinoza wrote *res imaginata* – an objectionable formulation, that uses the past participle of the deponent verb *imaginari* as though it were a form of the passive voice. While Pieter van Gent just copied the phrase, the editors of the *Opera Posthuma* changed it to *res imaginati simus*. So far so good; but they did not pay attention and mixed up the sentence. We adopted the grammatical correction *imaginati simus*, inserted the relative pronoun *quam* that was needed to make the correction complete, inserted *praesens* on the basis of the Dutch translation and the context, and finally took over the rest of the sentence in the shape in which it occurs in the Vatican manuscript. Thus emended and reconstructed, the sentence is clear and correct.

(iv) E4p12c-dem

Gebhardt corrected the first sentence of the demonstration of the corollary to proposition 12 of Part IV as follows:

Affectus erga rem, quam in praesenti existere imaginamur, intensior est, quam si eandem ut futuram imaginaremur (per coroll. prop. 9. hujus), et multo vehementior est, <quam> *si tempus futurum a praesenti multum distare imaginaremur.*

²⁴ *Collected Works*, I, p. 551, adapted.

(An affect toward a thing which we imagine to exist in the present is more intense than if we imagined it as future (by P9C), and much more violent than if we imagine the future time to be far from the present (by P10).²⁵)

The second *quam* is missing in all sources, so this must be an oversight on Spinoza's part. The resulting sentence is illogical and the editors of the posthumous works (both Latin and Dutch) have attempted to remedy this by inserting a negation (*non* in Latin, *niet* in Dutch) before *multum*, but that only makes matters worse. We follow Gebhardt's reading.

(v) E4p66

The thorniest problem is provided by the transmitted reading of proposition 66 of Part IV. We emended it thus:

Bonum majus futurum prae minore praesenti, et malum praesens minus <*prae bono*>, quod causa est futuri alicujus mali, ex rationis ductu appetemus.

(From the guidance of reason we shall want a greater future good in preference to a lesser present one, and a lesser present evil *in preference to a good* that is the cause of some future evil.²⁶)

The sources offer widely differing readings, and later editors have been unsuccessful in their attempts to emend this passage:

malum praesens minus, quod causa est futuri alicujus mali (*Opera Posthuma, Vaticanus*)

(a lesser present evil that is the cause of some future evil)

een minder tegenwoordig quaat, 't welk oorzaak is van enig toekomstend groter goet (*De Nagelate Schriften*)

(a lesser present evil that is the cause of some future greater good)

malum praesens minus, quod causa est futuri alicujus boni (ed. Gfœrer)

(a lesser present evil that is the cause of some future good)

malum praesens minus prae majore futuro (ed. Vloten-Land, Gebhardt²⁷)

²⁵ *Collected Works*, I, p. 552, adapted.

²⁶ *Collected Works*, I, p. 583, adapted.

²⁷ Gebhardt reads *majori* instead of *majore*.

(a lesser present evil in preference to a greater future one)
 Our insertion of *prae bono*, which is lacking in both Latin sources, is based on a detailed analysis of the rather complicated argument of the wider context, and explained in detail in an annotation. For a complete account I must refer you to our forthcoming edition.

IV. Concluding Remarks

We think all these ‘thorny readings’ have now been solved. They do, however, raise a pressing question: why did Spinoza himself not bother to correct them? After all, he still had access to the manuscript for about two years after he finished the *Ethics*. We think the answer is simple: these five passages show that in the period between 1675 and 1677 Spinoza did not systematically revise the manuscript he had prepared for the press in 1675. If he had, it is inconceivable that he would have retained these five erroneous readings, some of which make the argument incomprehensible. This indicates beyond a shadow of a doubt that he left the manuscript essentially as it was in early 1675.

As you will have gathered from the last part of this paper, an explanation of the way in which we have established the Latin text of Spinoza’s *Ethics* involves a lot of highly technical, philological details. Still I hope that the main general features and the principles of our new critical edition have become clear. A reliable edition of the text must take the *Opera Posthuma* for its starting point, and make judicious use of the other sources (the Vatican manuscript, the first Dutch translation, the errata) as well as of the results of philological Spinoza scholarship. With the current flourishing of Spinoza studies all over the world, a new, truly critical edition of Spinoza’s masterwork is urgently called for.