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Book Notice

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The editor quotes, in English translation, all of the important passages from the extant Latin and Dutch writings of Spinoza (1632-1677). This greatest of modern Jewish philosophers organized his main work, the Ethics, in geometrical form, with axioms, definitions, theorems, and corollaries, all integrated as in Euclid. He thought that this gave it logical rigor. Perhaps so; but this also made it difficult to study. Dr. Runes in reorganizing the work in alphabetical form, has produced a good handbook and one that is easier to study. It could be improved by a table of contents listing all of the topics which would help a beginner to decide what to read first. In the reviewer's opinion the book would be better if the topics were arranged logically according to the relations of the ideas, rather than alphabetically.

All of the comments are in a Foreword and an Introduction by Dr. Einstein and Dr. Runes, who hold correctly that Spinoza had a great soul and an important message, in spite of serious errors.

Spinoza rejected Judaeo-Christian orthodoxy and tried to interpret the universe scientifically, which, in the seventeenth century, meant mathematically. His mathematical religion and ethics are sometimes hardly recognizable as religion and ethics. However, this volume reveals his genuine saintliness.

Gardner Williams