

CORRESPONDENCE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE *Journal of Philosophical Studies*.

DEAR SIR,

Professor Joachim's review of *The Oldest Biography of Spinoza* seems to call for some remarks, although I have no desire to interfere with the liberties of reviewers. Since Professor Joachim describes the Text, Introduction and Annotations as excellent, and says that even the alleged inaccuracies in the translation are small or even trivial, I have not much ground for complaint. Professor Joachim is rather over-confident about the alleged mistranslations (and misprints even). My translation was intended to be a close translation, not a free one. This will explain the differences between our versions, and mostly justify my renderings. Even my rendering of *à la vérité* by 'forsook' (p. 101, l. 9) is quite right, for the very reasons urged in the review against it! Professor Joachim does not seem to realize that a writer who says in one sentence that the author is unknown, and adds in the very next sentence that he was certainly Lucas, is ironical; in fact, the whole preface is ironical. Again, Professor Joachim prefers 'unprejudiced' to my 'disinterested,' but I can still see no reason for avoiding the cognate of the original term. Moreover, *The Oldest Biography* lays great stress on Spinoza's disinterestedness, and there is some evidence in favour of the supposition that the French translation of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was made by the same writer. Nor, again, is anybody likely to misunderstand such an expression as "Hamburg, by Künrath," when it occurs in a very short catalogue of books explicitly headed *Works of Mr. de Spinoza*. And so I might go on with the defence of other alleged mistranslations. But I do not think it is worth while, although I shall certainly consider Professor Joachim's suggestions when the time comes for a new edition. The principal object of this note is different. Professor Joachim's review is so much taken up with small things that it does not deal at all with the real significance of *The Oldest Biography of Spinoza*; in fact, some of his remarks might easily have been misconstrued as a disparagement of it. Let me therefore state briefly wherein its importance lies. (1) It is the *only* biography written by one who knew Spinoza personally, and would therefore still be important even if it were only half as interesting as it is. (2) It fully confirms the deep impression which the study of Spinoza's writings has produced on great minds like those of Lessing, Goethe, Huxley, and others. No one can now dismiss it as mere fancy. It is just the same impression as was produced on the mind of this biographer by personal contact with Spinoza. This is a fact of supreme importance. (3) It contains a brief statement of the gist of Spinoza's philosophy, which, to judge from the partial use of inverted commas, and also for other reasons, may be regarded as based on one of the documents which Spinoza is known to have circulated among his friends. (4) It also throws a new light on some biographical details. To my mind, *e.g.*, it disposes of the legend of the attempted assassination of Spinoza. But I do not think it necessary to say more on this occasion.

Yours faithfully,

A. WOLF.

VILLA AUGUSTA, HAHNENKLU (HARZ).