and understanding illocutionary force from two individuals to an entire "culture," Lara makes it difficult to see by what standard communication should be judged. She appeals to emancipation as the factor that determines a narrative's ability to communicate and to effect change, but does not produce a convincing account of how emancipatory content itself should be judged.

The variety of sources, the degree of integration, and the detail with which Lara constructs her argument at times make it difficult to perceive its overall structure, although the Introduction, which includes a description of each chapter, is helpful. The potential in Lara's ideas and her creative use of the insights provided by recent feminist philosophy and narrative theory make the book an enjoyable read for anyone interested in developing those insights into a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenology of political and social change. While there remains much within her work to be developed, the questions raised by Lara's book do not disappoint. *Moral Texture* takes philosophy in an exciting and important direction, and is well worth reading.

**SAMANTHA COPELAND, Queen's University**

**Spinoza's Heresy: Immortality and the Jewish Mind**

STEVEN NADLER


Spinoza has not always been popular. It is a commonplace among scholars of early modern philosophy that in the century following his death, to say of an argument that it was "Spinozistic" was considered a sufficient refutation. Bayle, in his dictionary, devotes more space to Spinoza than to any other figure, but the entry is laced with invective. Voltaire dismissed Spinoza as "un petit juif, au long nez, au teint blême." By contrast, our own century begins with a flurry of interest in this difficult figure. Hackett's release in 2002 of Samuel Shirley's translation of the *Complete Works* puts all of Spinoza's writings, including his letters, along with a spare but thoughtful index, into one useful volume. Heidi Ravven and Lenn Goodman's collection, *Jewish Themes in Spinoza's Philosophy* (SUNY Press, 2002) and Antonio Damasio's *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (Harcourt, 2003) offer diverse viewpoints on Spinoza from, respectively, the disciplines of theology and, perhaps more surprisingly, affective neuroscience. None of these, however, goes as far toward forcing a revaluation of Spinoza as Steven Nadler's *Spinoza's Heresy: Immortality and the Jewish Mind*.

A sequel to Nadler's *Spinoza: A Life* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), *Spinoza's Heresy* examines the *cherem*, or expulsion, of Spinoza from the Portuguese Jewish congregation in Amsterdam in 1656. Nadler argues that it was Spinoza's rejection of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and ultimately his rejection of church and rabbinical authority in favor of a secular morality, that led to his formal ostracization by the ecumenical community of which he had been a member.
In seven brief chapters, Nadler deftly weaves explication of Spinoza’s philosophical position with biographical detail and historical evidence concerning the Jewish and Christian contexts in which Spinoza was situated. Perhaps most interesting and useful to philosophers is Nadler’s engagement with medieval and modern Jewish philosophers, scholars and clergy whose views on theodicy and the immortality of the soul may have influenced both Spinoza and his accusers. In one particularly rich chapter, Nadler pays special attention to Maimonides and Gersonides. In many respects, this chapter could stand alone as an introduction to medieval Jewish philosophy.

Despite his somewhat narrow concern with Spinoza’s views on immortality, Nadler’s account is painted with a broad brush. Doing justice to the views of three major philosophers and a number of lesser figures, while painting a rich portrait of seventeenth-century Jewish Amsterdam, is no small feat for a book of 225 pages. Nadler himself warns at the outset that he is “concentrating on the forest rather than on the trees (and the branches and twigs)” (xi). True to his word, Nadler offers not a single reconstruction of Spinoza’s arguments, nor does he engage in any of the hairsplitting that often emerges in debates among historians of early modern philosophy. As a consequence, this slender volume is eminently readable, for Spinozists and non-Spinozists alike.

Perhaps also as a consequence of this broader view, Nadler is able to make a great deal of sense of passages from Part Five of the *Ethics* (“Of the Power of the Intellect, or of Human Freedom”) which have eluded even such eminent Spinozists as Jonathan Bennett, who terms them “rubbish” (105), and Edwin Curley, who claims that neither he nor anyone else understands them (105). On Nadler’s account, Spinoza’s rejection in Part Five of the immortality of the soul in favor of the eternity of the mind is “central to [his] entire philosophical project: not just the metaphysics and moral philosophy of the *Ethics*, but also the agenda for political and religious reform in the ‘scandalous’ *Theological-Political Treatise*” (154). Opposed to the vulgar mentality of bribes and threats concerning the afterlife which subverted individuals to religious authority, Spinoza naturalized God and collapsed substance dualism precisely in order to demonstrate “that the true value of virtue is in this life” (153). For Spinoza, “[b]lessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself” (153).

For Nadler, the *Ethics* is not, as is sometimes alleged, a book about metaphysics that happens to be called the *Ethics*. Rather, it is first and foremost a book about ethics in which metaphysical ideas are crucially brought into the service of moral ideas. It is the very part of this work (Part Five) that is most often passed over as incoherent that Nadler uses as a lens through which to view the entire book. As such, Nadler’s project is not only to evince Spinoza’s views on immortality, but (much more ambitiously) to demonstrate the systematicity and coherence of Spinoza’s thought.

Of course, it does not hurt that this important recasting of Spinoza’s thought occurs in the context of an intriguing and well-paced story. However, if this book has a weakness, it is precisely in its historical aspect. In light of the seemingly more radical heresies of such figures as Uriel da Costa and Juan de Prado, Nadler never succeeds in making clear what it is about Spinoza’s particular heresy that was sufficiently remarkable to warrant “the harshest writ of *cherem*, or expulsion, ever pronounced upon a member of the Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam” (2). One is
left entirely convinced of Nadler's interpretation of *Ethics V*, but not at all convinced of his interpretation of the *cherem*.

Moreover, there is reason to be somewhat anxious about Nadler's use of historical sources. Nadler repeatedly cites the account of early Spinoza biographer Jean Maximilian Lucas without any mention of the factual errors in the Lucas text that have been identified by (Spinoza scholar) Richard Popkin, and which demand some degree of skepticism vis-à-vis Lucas. Conversely, Johan Colerus's early biography of Spinoza, which considers the details of the *cherem*, rates only one mention and, although extant, is not listed in Nadler's bibliography.

Details like these, however, are mere trees within the forest of Nadler's book. While Nadler's historical reach may slightly exceed his grasp, his excellent grasp of Spinoza is sufficient to recommend this book. In addition to being a genuine pleasure to read, *Spinoza's Heresy* offers an insightful reading of Spinoza's ethics and metaphysics which should help shape future interpretations of this important figure.

SHANNON DEA, *University of Western Ontario*

**On Stories**

RICHARD KEARNEY


The role of narrative, not long ago considered a tangential element to philosophy and theology, has seen a marked resurgence in recent decades. Perhaps it is the "obituarists of storytelling" that have been the most important catalysts for this revival of narrative thinking. Though positivists and later poststructuralists have loudly dismissed narrative and imagination as fantasy and whim, particularly in the light of blossoming technology, Richard Kearney joins a significant movement against this trend. The marginalization of the story is, for Kearney, the marginalization of humanity. From the outset Kearney claims that stories are "what make our lives worth living.... They are what make our condition human" (3). Kearney's project, while similar to other champions of narrative in many fashions, relies primarily on hermeneutics rather than ontological or epistemological theory. He leans not on Wittgenstein, Frei, Lindbeck, or MacIntyre, all of whom have made significant contributions to the revival of narrative. Rather, Kearney's approach appears to be fueled less by narrative "theory" than by the raw phenomenon of narrative living. The drive and need for "stories" appears to be an unquenchable necessity for human beings, without which "life is not worth living" (14).

It is stories that transform our lives from a chaotic flux of events into social identity, both individual and communal. To some, the advent of postmodernism means that stories have receded into a language that "speaks only to itself" (5). But Kearney argues that the opposite is true, that postmodernism has opened up new ways of viewing the power and possibilities of storytelling. The movement from event to communication requires the interpretive and linguistic process of narration, and this ability to make stories of our lives is precisely what makes us human. Throughout