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Préface

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Préface

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E. W. Beth's contributions to philosophy reveal an uncommon blend of fields of interest : civilization and cultural criticism (anti-irrationalism, open society vs. claims to "wisdom"), education, epistemology, (anti-evidentialism, anti-traditionalism), history of thought, (mentalities), logic in theory and practice, metamathematics, philosophies of mathematics and physics, and schools in ancient and modern philosophy – all of them examined with a particular emphasis on the logical point of view.

In 1995, a detailed *Inventory* of Beth's archive (in the *Rijksarchief* in Haarlem) made his large philosophical and scientific correspondence easily accessible. In 1998, a number of European philosophers were invited to study, and then to discuss the work of one or more of Beth's closest colleagues, so as to cover one or more of the sub-fields of the fields of interest to which Beth actively contributed. Their findings are published here.

The editors, who were also the conference organizers, wanted to contribute to a broader knowledge and understanding of Beth, who aimed at the redress of philosophical chasm that seems to indicate that one thinker cannot seriously address all these fields in one life. We wanted to do this by drawing in a number of thinkers who can be said to have contributed to the outlook – which was Beth's – that is necessary for philosophy to jump across this artificial and harmful abyss.

This emphasis is on Beth's European colleagues. This means that we are looking at European philosophy in the quarter-century from 1933 to Beth's death in 1964. The aim is, however, only partly historical. Basically, the chosen approach should be seen as instrumental to an adequate understanding of Beth's separate publications and what he hoped for them to achieve.

It is our hope that this volume will go some way to uncover, and to recover, vital connections and themes that have for a long time been ignored, though they are of central philosophical importance.