

The Search for Mind–Body Flourishing in Spinoza’s Eudaimonism

New Research in the History of Western Philosophy

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The Search for Mind–Body Flourishing in Spinoza’s Eudaimonism

By

Brandon Smith



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Acknowledgements

As an undergraduate student in philosophy, there were two subjects that strongly resonated with me: the ancient Greek conception of happiness (*eudaimonia*) as the highest good and the seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher Benedict de Spinoza's *Ethics*. With respect to eudaimonism, I was struck by the notion of grounding ethics in the pursuit of happiness as something substantially more than a fleeting or intermittent feeling of pleasure. Furthermore, I was fascinated by the idea of drawing on non-ethical doctrines concerning reality, the natural world, knowledge, and psychology to arrive at and inform our conception of what it means to live a happy life. In Aristotle, I found an approach to happiness that takes seriously the complexities of human nature and life. Epicurus offered me new ways in which to think of pleasure. The Stoics encouraged me to reflect on how empowering it can be to understand the intimate relationship between our emotions and judgments, as well as the strict necessity of events in life.

Finally, with Spinoza I found a similar general concern with the close relationship between philosophy and happiness, and particular parallels with Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics on the strong impact of external things on flourishing, the intrinsic goodness of pleasure, and the psychotherapeutic power of understanding the deterministic nature of all things, respectively. However, some of what I learned about Spinoza confused me. I was told that Spinoza was a great rationalist, intellectualist, and Neo-Stoic, a thinker who restricted virtue and happiness to a life of reason, all other things being subordinated to the intellectual. I certainly saw the importance of reason and understanding in Spinoza's ethical framework, but I also saw the importance of the body and pleasure (and thus, the Epicurean parallels) in his conception of virtue and happiness – such things being not mere servants to reason, but constituents in their own right. My scholarly journey up to that point in time had consistently been driven by my observation of Spinoza's close kinship with various ancient eudaimonists and my desire to push against a purely or hierarchically intellectualist reading of Spinozistic moral philosophy. I felt that, freed from this narrow intellectualism, Spinoza (like his ancient predecessors) had valuable insights to offer in promoting a happy and philosophically grounded life. This book is the fruit borne out of this 12-year historical and philosophical journey.

Of course, a project such as this is in no way a solitary endeavour. It requires the inspiration, support, and perspectives of a diverse set of people. I first want

to thank Charles Sager, my high school philosophy teacher. When I entered his class, all I knew about philosophy was that some old historical men said some wise-sounding things. Through philosophy, he opened up whole new worlds and systematic modes of thinking to me. Next, I must thank my fellow Carleton alum, lover of wisdom, and dear friend, Courteney Crump, whose passion, stubbornness, rich knowledge, and sharp mind made my undergraduate and graduate days infuriating and invigorating. There is no one I would be happier to co-teach a course on eudaimonism with again. This brings me to Annie Larivée and Melissa Frankel, the most brilliant and supportive MA supervisors that an aspiring scholar could ever have I asked for. Chapter 2 of this book began with (i) a short summer research internship on Aristotle and Spinoza kindly supervised by Annie last minute and (ii) my Master's thesis *The Un-Stoic Spinoza: An Analysis of Spinoza, Aristotle, and Epicurus's Accounts of Pleasure*. The "Un-Stoic" and "Aristotle" parts of this project are very much the result of Melissa asking me "Why do you care about Spinoza's views on pleasure?" and "Why do you need Aristotle in this discussion of pleasure?"

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Abbreviations

Aristotle

C	Categories
GA	Generation of Animals
GC	On Generation and Corruption
Meta	Metaphysics
NE	Nicomachean Ethics
OH	On the Heavens
OS	On the Soul

Citations of these texts refer to book number, chapter number, and Bekker pagination. For example, *NE* VII.13.1153b10–16 refers to *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 7, chapter 13, lines 1153b10 to 1153b16.

All references to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, unless stated otherwise, are translated by Christopher Rowe, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. All references to his *Metaphysics* are translated by C.D.C. Reeve, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2016. All other references to Aristotle's works are taken from *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, edited by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Descartes

Med	Meditations on First Philosophy
PP	Principles of Philosophy
PS	The Passions of the Soul
CSMK	Correspondence (as translated by Cottingham, Stoothoff, Murdoch, and Kenny)

All references to Descartes's works are taken from *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, translated by John Cottingham, et al., 3 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984/1991. *Meditations on First Philosophy* and *Objections and Replies* are found in volume 2, Descartes's correspondence in volume 3, and all other sources in volume 1.

Epicureanism/Stoicism

DL	<i>Diogenes Laertius's</i> Lives of Eminent Philosophers
DRN	<i>Lucretius's</i> De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things)
DVB	<i>Seneca's</i> De Vita Beata (On the Happy Life)
HB	<i>Epicetus's</i> Handbook (Enchiridion)
LH	Letter to Herodotus
LI	Letter to Idomeneus
LM	Letter to Menoeceus
LP	Letter to Pythocles
L&S	<i>Long and Sedley's</i> The Hellenistic Philosophers
OM	<i>Cicero's</i> On Moral Ends
ONG	<i>Cicero's</i> On the Nature of the Gods
VS	Vatican Sayings

All references to Epicurus's works are taken from *The Epicurus Reader*, edited by Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994.

Hobbes

EL	The Elements of the Law
L	Leviathan

All references to Hobbes's works are taken from *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, edited by Mark C. Rooks, Charlottesville: InteLex, 1992.

Leibniz

DM	Discourse on Metaphysics
M	The Principles of Philosophy, or, the Monadology
PNG	Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason

References to Leibniz's *New Essays on Human Understanding* are translated by Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett, Cambridge University Press, 1996. All other references to his works are taken from *G.W. Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*, translated by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989.

Plato

All references to Plato's works are taken from *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

Spinoza

E	Ethics, Demonstrated in Geometrical Order (Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata)
app	Appendix
ax	Axiom
c	Corollary
da	Definitions of the Affects/Emotions
def	Definition
dem	Demonstration
expl	Explication
lem	Lemma
p	Proposition
post	Postulate
pref	Preface
s	Scholium

Roman numerals refer to one of the five parts of the treatise. For example, IIp49s refers to Part II, proposition 49, scholium.

Ep	The Letters (Epistolae)
G	Benedict de Spinoza: Opera
KV	Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being (Korte Verhandeling van God, de Mensch en des Zelfs Welstand)

Citations refer to part and chapter number. For example, I.II refers to Part I, chapter 2.

TIE	Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect (Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione)
TP	Political Treatise (Tractatus Politicus)

Citations refer to chapter and section number. For example, II.8 refers to Chapter 2, section 8.

TTP Theological-Political Treatise (Tractatus Theologico-Politicus)

Roman numerals refer to chapter numbers, while Arabic numerals refer to section numbers. For example, IV.11 refers to Chapter IV, section 11.

All references to Spinoza's works are, unless stated otherwise, taken from *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, edited and translated by Edwin Curley, 2 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985/2016. When referring to a particular passage in a long section of text or making a point about translation, I will also cite the Dutch and Latin in *Benedict de Spinoza: Opera*, edited by Carl Gebhardt, 4 vols., Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1925.

