

# SPINOZA: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ASSIGNMENT

## EXEMPLAR



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### Articles:

Koistinen, Olli. "Spinoza's Proof of Necessitarianism." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 67.September (2003): 283-310. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 Nov. 2011.

Olli Koistinen is the head of the department of philosophy at the University of Turku in Finland and is particularly interested in the topics of early modern philosophy, the theory of action, and metaphysics. Koistinen's paper is split into four sections which explain what the proof of necessitarianism in Spinoza's philosophy needs and other philosophers' (such as Jonathan Bennett and Don Garrett) theories on Spinoza's proof of necessitarianism. Koistinen argues that Spinoza is a necessitarian and that Spinoza's basic metaphysics relates to necessitarianism. Koistinen approaches the topic of necessitarianism from four different views (therefore maintaining a balanced and neutral view) and supports his arguments and analysis well. Koistinen not only offers his own ideas on Spinoza's proof of necessitarianism but he also takes a look at other perspectives on the subject as well; thus, the book is useful in that it offers a wide range of opinions (although Koistinen argues his own opinion.)

Friedman, Joel. "How the Finite Follows from the Infinite in Spinoza's Metaphysical System." *Synthese* 69.3 (1986): 371-407. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 Nov. 2011.

Joel Friedman is a philosophy professor who has taught at Princeton University and has conducted research on the relationship between the philosophy of science and the philosophy of math. His paper "How the Finite Follows from the Infinite in Spinoza's Metaphysical System" analyzes Spinoza's works (namely "Ethics") and organizes Spinoza's basic metaphysical system into seven fundamental doctrines. Friedman argues that many notions from Spinoza's "Ethics" are ambiguous (ex. "necessity", "existence", "actuality", "infinite intellect", etc.) and this ambiguity comes from the difference between Spinoza's unchanging realm and the changing realm. Friedman acknowledges himself that many Spinoza scholars will disagree with some of his opinions because it is a very different interpretation. Friedman works with the text from the "Ethics" frequently to support his arguments which is very helpful, but his paper can also be confusing and almost regarded as inconsistent.

Fradkin, Hillel G. "The "Separation" of Religion and Politics: The Paradoxes of Spinoza." *The Review of Politics* Autumn 1988: 603-27. *JSTOR*. Web. 13 Nov. 2011

Hillel Fradkin has conducted extensive research on ethics, foreign policy, Islamic thought, Jewish thought, relationship between religion and politics, and war and ethics, taught at Yale University, the University of Chicago, and Columbia University, and been a member of the Ethics and Public Policy Centre and the National Council on the Humanities. In The Separation of Religion and Politics: The Paradoxes of Spinoza, Fradkin comments on the United States of America's role in religion and politics and answers questions on the relationship by turning to Spinoza's writing. He argues that Spinoza was the first philosophical advocator of liberal democracy and is therefore the founder of "liberal democracy". Fradkin approaches Spinoza's works the *Ethics*, the *Political Treatise*, and the *Theological-Political Tractate* from a purely religious and political perspective and forms his points and thesis based on the text from all three of Spinoza's works which therefore creates little bias. This article is helpful because it focuses on the topics of politics and religion, both of which Spinoza has commented on.

Sharp, Hasana. "The Force of Ideas in Spinoza." *Political Theory* 35.6 (2007): 732-55. *JSTOR*. Web. 13 Nov. 2011.

Hasana Sharp is a professor at McGill University who teaches the history of political theory, feminist theory, and early modern philosophy, and her research focuses primarily on Spinoza. In The Force of Ideas in Spinoza, Sharp considers how humans should critique and live as powerfully and happily as possible while knowing the fact that humans have a power of thought that exceeds their own minds. She claims that Spinoza wishes readers to contemplate the vitality, force, and power of an idea instead of merely the truth or falsity of the idea. The Force of Ideas in Spinoza is biased in that Sharp approaches Spinoza from Spinoza's metaphysics and does not consider Spinoza's political writings. This article contains a strong thesis, approaches Spinoza from a very different and refreshing perspective, and is definitely worth reading.

Deveaux, Sherry. "The Divine Essence and the Conception of God in Spinoza." *Synthese* 135.3 (2004): 329-38. *JSTOR*. Web. 13 Nov. 2011.

Sherry Deveaux is a professor at Stanford University and has written articles on the history of early modern philosophy and contemporary metaphysics. In The Divine Essence and the Conception of God in Spinoza, Deveaux outlines the meaning behind the essence of God and various interpretations on the matter, including the ones belonging to Spinoza scholars. She argues that God's essence is absolute infinite and eternal power and that instead of the idea that attributes are identical with God's essence, attributes are only expressions of the God's eternal power. The article is biased in that Deveaux uses mostly Spinoza's 2d2 (Spinoza's definition of the essence of a thing) to argue her thesis. The article is useful because Deveaux expertly argues her thesis by analyzing Spinoza's work patiently and step by step which makes it easy for the reader to understand.

### **Books:**

Wolfson, Harry Austryn. *The Philosophy of Spinoza*. New York: Meridian, 1958.

Harry Austryn Wolfson (1887 – 1974), an award-winning American scholar and professor of philosophy at Harvard University, is the author of many books and articles on Spinoza and Crescas which demonstrate his ability to analyze and his thorough knowledge concerning these philosophers. In The Philosophy of Spinoza, Wolfson touches on the historical background of Spinoza's works in order to better understand them and Spinoza's many concepts including the geometrical method, the simplicity of substance, and Spinoza's four proofs. After introducing the context of Spinoza's works, Wolfson then analyzes and argues his view; for example, Wolfson believes that Hebrew and Latin literature were the sources of Spinoza's knowledge on philosophy. Although Wolfson's views are well argued and persuasive, it has been said that his arguments are too psychological rather than philosophical. Other than this, The Philosophy of Spinoza has been given great reviews and is a fantastic guide to Spinoza's works because the analysis is very thorough and precise.

Smith, Steven B. *Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1997.

Steven Smith has worked as a Director of Graduate Studies in Political Science, Director of the Special Program in the Humanities, and Acting Chair of Judaic Studies, and has carried out research on Jewish philosophy and the history of political philosophy. Smith focuses on Spinoza's connection with his Jewish identity and Spinoza's "Treatise" in the book Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity. He argues that there is a connection between the fact that Spinoza is one of the founders of modern political philosophy and he is also the first modern Jewish philosopher. As an expert who has researched extensively on Jewish philosophy, Smith's arguments are concrete and justifiable. This book provides an interesting connection between Spinoza's philosophy and Spinoza's origins.

Nadler, Steven M. *Spinoza's Ethics: an Introduction*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2006.

Steven Nadler has taught at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Stanford University, and the University of Chicago and regularly delivers seminars on medieval Jewish philosophy and philosophers from the seventeenth century (especially Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz.) In his book Spinoza's Ethics, Nadler analyzes Spinoza's "Ethics" and compares Spinoza to Descartes. Nadler argues that the "Ethics" is relevant because it influenced later thinkers and that Spinoza was influenced by philosophers like Hobbes, Cicero, and Maimonides. Nadler's take on Spinoza's philosophy is positive and attempts to "weaken the harmful influence of these passions" as critic Michael LeBuffe claimed. This book on Spinoza's "Ethics" is easy to comprehend because Nadler approaches many different subjects from the "Ethics" in many ways to ensure that the book is understandable to a variety of readers.

Damasio, Antonio R. *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2003.

Antonio Damasio is one of the most highly recognized neuroscientists who is known for his investigations on human emotions, decision-making, creativity, memory, and creativity. In Looking for Spinoza, Damasio attempts to link the scientific and the philosophic way of thinking in order to determine who we are and why we are here. In the chapters relating to Spinoza, Damasio argues that there are four different Spinozas, the last of which is a protobiologist and that Spinoza is relevant to neurobiology. Damasio specializes in neurobiology and thus his arguments regarding Spinoza from a purely philosophical standpoint could be seen as an example of faulty reasoning known as misplaced authority. Nonetheless, this book provides an interesting scientific perspective of Spinoza's reasoning.

Caird, John. *Spinoza*. United States: Kessinger, 2006. Print.

During his lifetime, John Caird (1820 – 1898) was a theologian, a professor of divinity, and the principal of the University of Glasgow. Dr. Caird's book, Spinoza, speaks of the sources Spinoza could have possibly drawn from for his philosophy and attempts to analyze and explain Spinoza's "Immortality". Dr. Caird argues that Spinoza was not influenced by Maimonides and was not a Pantheist like it is commonly believed. Dr. Caird wrote from a biased perspective based on Hegel's reasoning. The book was written from an interesting point of view but because the standpoint leans toward Hegel, readers should not draw information on Spinoza from this book alone.