

Title: *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*
Author/editor: Michael Della Rocca (ed.)
Format: HB
No. Pages: 712
Publisher: Oxford University Press
ISBN: 978-0-19-533582-8
Price: £97.00

For early modern scholars who did their graduate work after the turn of the century, it can be hard to believe that there was a time in the not-too-distant past when Spinoza was *not* a regular figure in Anglophone scholarship. After all, it seems that every major history journal publishes at least a couple articles on Spinoza every year and that major presses release numerous books on Spinoza every year. But as Michael Della Rocca notes in the introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*, it was only a few decades ago that Spinoza's philosophical worth was far from certain, at least in English-speaking countries. This book is, by its own admission, something of a celebration of the change in attitudes that transpired since the 1980s.

The book itself consists of 26 self-standing chapters that fall into roughly two categories: thematic issues and historical issues. The thematic chapters range across philosophy of mind, metaphysics, epistemology, action theory, meta-philosophy, value theory, philosophy of religion, philosophy of science, and political philosophy. The historical chapters fall into pre- and post-Spinoza categories. There are only two chapters explicitly devoted to historical influences on Spinoza (one on Descartes and another on Maimonides), but other chapters touch on historical influences to various degrees (e.g., Aaron Garrett's chapter on method and Michael Rosenthal's chapter on political philosophy both engage Hobbes at length). Most of the historical chapters are therefore devoted to the ways in which Spinoza influenced later figures. These include chapters on figures whose thought is widely recognized as being affected by Spinoza (e.g., Leibniz), as well as chapters on underappreciated connections (e.g., the chapter on Kant and the very enjoyable final chapter on Spinoza's presence in literature). There is no chapter on Spinoza's biography, which would have been a welcome addition, but there is a fair amount of biography that appears in bits and pieces across various chapters. The line-up of contributors reads like a who's-who of Spinoza studies. The result is, unsurprisingly, a collection of very high quality and one which will no doubt influence discussions for years to come. In fact, several of the chapters—such as Eric Schliesser's on Spinoza's philosophy of science—have been cited for years in various pre-print forms. Though there is no overarching theme or argument to the collection, one particular theme runs through a number of chapters: the role that Spinoza gives (or doesn't) to irreducibly subjective features of his system. For example, Ursula Renz's chapter on finite subjects, Olli Koistinen's chapter on philosophy of mind, and Karolina Hubner's chapter on the metaphysics of the will (among others) all have as one of their main questions the reality of the subjective point of view. Though this question receives a fair amount of attention in non-English literatures, I believe it is under-explored in English-speaking Spinoza circles and the literature would benefit from an increased focus on the question. There are in particular many potential connections between the issue of subjectivity in Spinoza and the more frequent discussions of the unreality of modes (a topic that is nicely summarized in Paul Franks' chapter on the German idealist reception of Spinoza).

Despite the quality of the contributions, I do wonder whom the book is intended for. Some chapters serve as high-level introductions to what I consider the standard interpretation of a given issue in Spinoza. For example, Hubner's chapter on Spinoza's metaphysics of the will and Steven Nadler's chapter on the intellectual love of God both fall into this category. If all the chapters fit this mold, then the book would amount to a lengthier and more up-to-date version of the *Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*. However, many of the chapters do not fit this mold. Some chapters function as high-level overviews of broad themes in Spinoza, but defend a non-standard interpretation. For example, Koistinen's article on Spinoza's philosophy of mind defends the view that parallelism is *not* a claim about mind-body identity, and Carlos Fraenkel's chapter on philosophy of religion defends the thesis that Spinoza is a dogmatist about the relationship between Scripture and reason. I do not mean to suggest that either interpretation is wrong—they are both examples of high-quality scholarship—but only that it does not fit as easily with chapters that defend the standard interpretations. Of course, it's rare to find an issue in Spinoza that all or even most commentators can agree on, so perhaps I am being unfair. But the book's intended audience is unclear in other ways as well. For example, some chapters are shortened versions of well-known and high-quality work that has been published before, whereas other chapters defend theses for the first time. For example, Omri's Boehm's chapter on Kant and Mogens Laerke's chapter on Leibniz are both based heavily on the arguments from their recent books (*Kant's Critique of Spinoza* and *Leibniz, lecteur de Spinoza*, respectively), whereas Della Rocca's chapter on Spinoza and Hume is, to the best of my knowledge, a novel take on their respective meta-philosophical commitments and one that could easily appear in a periodical. So, while each chapter is high quality, the intended reader seems to shift from chapter to chapter. Perhaps the reader who will benefit most is a graduate student who is familiar enough with the basics of Spinoza and who is thinking about potentially writing a dissertation on him. But everyone with some interest in Spinoza (or Hume, Kant, Descartes, etc.) will no doubt gain something from reading this book.

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