

The Rationalists: Spinoza and Leibniz
PHIL10086
2019-20

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Times and Locations

Semester 1
Tuesdays, 14-10 - 16.00
Dugald Stewart Building, room 3.10

Assessment

Mid-term essay (30%) to be submitted by 12 noon on Thursday 24th
October 2019. Word limit: 1,500 words

Final essay (70%) to be submitted by 12 noon on Thursday 12th
December 2019. Word limit: 3,000 words

Course Aims and Objectives

The course will introduce students to the philosophical systems of the Dutch philosopher, Benedict de Spinoza and the German thinker, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Responding critically to, but still working within the framework of, Cartesian dualism, Spinoza and Leibniz respectively transformed the Cartesian philosophy in two radically different directions, resulting in (i) Spinoza's absolute monism and, in critical response also to Spinoza, (ii) the dynamic, pluralist philosophical system of Leibniz. In this course, we will compare and assess the philosophical arguments that led each philosopher to hold similar but also radically divergent views on the nature of reality, mind and body, God, and the ethical life.

Lecture/Seminar Content: Provisional Outline

Lecture 1: Introduction and Substance (Spinoza)

Essential Reading: Spinoza, *Ethics* I, definitions, axioms and postulates

Recommended reading: Melamed, Yitzhak (2018). 'The Building Blocks of Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance, Attributes, and Modes'. In *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*. Ed. by M. Della Rocca (OUP), pp. 84-114
John Cottingham, *The Rationalists*, chapter 3;
Pauline Phemister, *The Rationalists: Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz*, chapters 1 and 3

Lecture 2: Proofs of God's existence (Spinoza)

Essential reading: Spinoza, *Ethics* I, up to Proposition 11

Recommended reading: Martin Lin, 'Spinoza's Arguments for the Existence of God', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 75:2 (2007), 269-297

Lecture 3: Spinoza's Monism and Determinism (Spinoza)

Essential reading: Spinoza, up to *Ethics* I, proposition 14, *Ethics* 1, propositions 26-33

Recommended reading: Don Garrett, 'Ethics IP5: Shared Attributes and the Basis of Spinoza's Monism', in J. A. Cover and Mark Kulstad, *Central Themes in Early Modern Philosophy*, pp.69-108

Lecture 4: Mind and Body (Spinoza)

Essential reading: Spinoza, *Ethics* II

Recommended reading: Michael Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, chapter 3; Pauline Phemister, *The Rationalists: Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz*, chapter 5, pp. 100-106, chapter 6, pp. 124-131, chapter 9, pp. 166-173

Lecture 5: Freedom: the intellectual love of God (Spinoza)

Essential reading: Spinoza, *Ethics* V, proposition headings, *Ethics* III and IV.

Recommended reading:
Steven Nadler (2018). 'The Intellectual Love of God'. In *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*. Ed. by M. Della Rocca, (OUP), pp. 295-313
Susan James, 'Power and Difference: Spinoza's Conception of Freedom', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 4:3 (1996), 207-228

Lecture 6: Substances (Leibniz)

Essential reading: Leibniz, *Monadology*, §§ 1-30; *Discourse on Metaphysics*, §§ 8-15; *Correspondence with de Volder, Leibniz to de Volder 20 June 1703*

Recommended reading: Anthony Savile, *Routledge Guidebook to Leibniz and the 'Monadology'*, chapters 3 and 4; Catherine Wilson, *Leibniz's Metaphysics: a comparative and historical study*, chapter 3

Lecture 7: Perfection and God (Leibniz)

Essential reading: Leibniz, *Monadology*, §§ 31-54

Recommended reading: D Blumenfeld, 'Leibniz's Proof of the uniqueness of God', 6:2 (1974), 262-271; Robert Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*, chapter 5

Lecture 8: Bodies (Leibniz)

Essential reading: Leibniz, *Monadology*, §§ 55-77; *On Body and Force, Against the Cartesians*

Recommended reading: Ohad Nachtomy, 'Leibniz on Artificial and Natural Machines; Or, What it Means to Remain a Machine to the Least of Its Parts', in J. E. H. Smith and O. Nachtomy, eds. *Machines of Nature and Corporeal Substances in Leibniz* chapter 4; P. Phemister, 'Monads and Machines', in J. E. H. Smith and O. Nachtomy, eds. *Machines of Nature and Corporeal Substances in Leibniz*, chapter 3

Lecture 9: Pre-established harmony (Leibniz)

Essential Reading: Leibniz, *Monadology*, §§ 78-90; *Correspondence with Arnauld, Leibniz to Arnauld*, 9 October 1687; *New System of the Nature and Communication of Substances, and of the union of the Soul and Body*

Recommended reading: P. Phemister, *Leibniz and the Natural World: activity, passivity and corporeal substances in Leibniz's philosophy*, chapter 9; P. Phemister, 'Are Mind-Body Relations Natural and Intelligible? Some Early Modern Perspectives', in Keith Allen and Tom Stoneham, eds., *Causation and Modern Philosophy* (2011, London: Routledge)

Lecture 10 Rational Freedom and Contingency

Essential reading: Leibniz, *On Freedom and Possibility*; Remarks on Arnauld's Letter about My Proposition That the Individual Notion of Each Person Includes Once and for all Everything That Will Ever Happen to Him; *On Freedom*

Recommended reading: Lois Frankel, 'On Being Able to do Otherwise: Leibniz on Freedom and Contingency' *Studia Leibnitiana*, 16 (1984), 45-59; P. Phemister, *The Rationalists: Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz*, chapters 10 and 11; Robert Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*, chapter 1

Lecture 11: Overview and concluding debate

Readings

Required (Core Texts: Essential)

Spinoza, *The Ethics*. In Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, tr. and ed. by E. M. Curley, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). Available online via University Library Databases, 'Past Masters' ('Continental Rationalists'). The text is also available in accessible print edition:

Spinoza, *Ethics*, tr. & ed. by G. H. R. Parkinson (London: Dent, 1989)

Leibniz, *The Principles of Philosophy, or Monadology; Discourse on Metaphysics and Correspondence with Arnauld; New System of the nature and communication of Substances; Principles of Nature and of Grace, and various other short pieces.*

In G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, tr. and ed. by D. Garber and R. Ariew (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989). Available online via University Library Databases, 'Past Masters' ('Continental Rationalists').

Also available in print edition:

G. W. Leibniz: Philosophical Essays, tr. & ed. by D. Garber and R. Ariew (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989)

Recommended (Secondary Literature)

— on Spinoza

Della Rocca, Michael, ed. (2017). *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Della Rocca, Michael (2008). *Spinoza* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge)

Garrett, Don (1996). *Cambridge Companion to Spinoza* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Hampshire, Stuart (2005). *Spinoza and Spinozism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press)

Huenemann, Charlie, ed. (2008). *Interpreting Spinoza: Critical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Kashap, S. Paul, ed. (1972). *Studies in Spinoza: Critical and Interpretive Essays* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press)

Koistinen, Olli, ed. (2010). *Cambridge Companion to Spinoza's 'Ethics'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Koistinen, Olli and John Biro, eds. (2002). *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Lloyd, Genevieve (1996). *Spinoza and the 'Ethics'* (London: Routledge).

Lord, Beth (2010). *Spinoza's 'Ethics': an Edinburgh Philosophical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press)

Nadler, Steven (2006). *Spinoza's 'Ethics': An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

(and Leibniz) Nadler, Steven (2010): *The Best of all Possible Worlds: A Story of Philosophers, God, and Evil in the Age of Reason* (Princeton: Princeton University Press)

Popkin, Richard H. (2004). *Spinoza* (Oxford: OneWorld Publications)

— on Leibniz

Antognazza, Maria Rosa, ed. (2018). *The Oxford Handbook of Leibniz* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Arthur, Richard (2014). *Leibniz* (Oxford: Polity)

Broad, Charles Dunbar (1979 [1975]). *Leibniz: an introduction*. Ed. by Casimir Levy. Corrected reprint. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

- Jolley, Nicholas (1994). *Cambridge Companion to Leibniz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Jorgensen, Larry M. and Samuel Newlands, eds. (2014). *New Essays on Leibniz's 'Theodicy'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Look, Brandon (2011). *Continuum Companion to Leibniz* (London: Continuum)
- Rutherford, Don (1995). *Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Rutherford, Don and J. A. Cover, eds. (2005). *Leibniz: Nature and Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Savile, Anthony (2000). *Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Leibniz and the 'Monadology'* (London: Routledge)
- Smith, J. E. H. and Nachtomy, O. (2011). *Machines of Nature and Corporeal Substances in Leibniz* (Dordrecht: Springer)
- Wilson, Catherine (1989). *Leibniz's Metaphysics: a critical and comparative study* (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

— **general overviews**

- Cottingham, John (1988). *The Rationalists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Phemister, Pauline (2006). *The Rationalists: Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz* (Oxford: Polity)

Further reading (more advanced)

— **on Spinoza**

- Kisner, Matthew (2011). *Spinoza on Human Freedom: Reason, Autonomy and the Good Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Lin, Martin (2019). *Being and Reason: An Essay on Spinoza's Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Marshall, Eugene (2013). *The Spiritual Automaton: Spinoza's Science of the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Melamed, Yitzak (2013). *Spinoza's Metaphysics: substance and thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Viljanen, Valtteri (2011). *Spinoza's Geometry of Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

— **on Leibniz**

- Adams, Robert Merrihew (1994). *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Garber, Daniel (2009). *Leibniz: Body, Substance, Monad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Nachtomy, Ohad (2007). *Possibility, Agency, and Individuality in Leibniz's Metaphysics* (Dordrecht: Springer)
- Phemister, Pauline (2005). *Leibniz and the Natural World: activity, passivity and corporeal substances in Leibniz's philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer).