



# childhood & philosophy

núcleo de estudos de filosofias e infâncias [nefi/uerj]  
international council of philosophical inquiry with children [icpic]

e-issn: 1984-5987 | p-issn: 2525-5061

## *review 2*

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## spinoza on procreation

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### **how to quote the article:**

LAHAV AYALON, Noa. spinoza on procreation . **childhood & philosophy**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 21, p. 01-21, 2025. DOI: [10.12957/childphilo.2025.90626](https://doi.org/10.12957/childphilo.2025.90626).



The paper argues, on the basis of Spinoza's philosophy, for the claim that children born in a rationally founded and loving family as a result of a rational desire can contribute to the parents' empowerment. Having children can do that by forcing the parents to face their own prejudices and thereby contributing to their self-knowledge and rationality.

The basic question of the paper is original and interesting: what views follow on Spinozist principles about procreation. Unfortunately, the paper in its current form is not fit for publication. First, I list the major issues that lead to this judgment, then I present suggestions that can help the author to revise the paper for a future submission.

(1) The paper does not state clearly whether its aim is hermeneutical or systematic, does it want to state what are Spinoza's stated views (or implied by his stated views) or uses Spinoza's stated views as inspiration for making a claim in the context of contemporary philosophy. In the first case, the claims are justified by textual evidence, in the second case, by their truth. There should be clarity about this issue; hermeneutic claims should be clearly separated from systematic claims. No inference can be made from Spinoza's stated views to systematic claims without further justification (i.e., just because Spinoza says so, nothing can be accepted as true, unless it is clearly stated, why should we trust Spinoza on the issue)/

(2) The article deals with hermeneutic issues very loosely. The reference to E2d3 is clearly a typo. Many claims about Spinoza's philosophy are without any textual support or reference. This is not necessarily fatal if the article pursues systematic aims, but it is if it pursues hermeneutic ones.

(3) It is striking that the text does not utilize the little Spinoza has to say about family and child rearing. Spinoza's letter on the father's imagination being united with the child's soul is not discussed. Spinoza's claims about the role of women in society in his political works are not mentioned either, which would probably render his views less palpable for a contemporary audience. This is even more striking given the relatively long and unmotivated discussion of the views of various authors on procreation in the history of philosophy.

(4) Equally striking is the complete lack of engagement with the existing literature on Spinoza's notion of love that plays a central role in the article's

argumentation, as well as with the existing literature on Spinoza's views on family and gender roles. This must be amended.

In summary, the paper needs to make clear whether its aim is historical or systematic, pursue a corresponding methodology, engage in a more precise discussion of the primary texts with the help of the relevant secondary texts.

Now, I come to suggestions for further improvements:

(a) It would be interesting to clarify, in what sense do children contribute to the self-preservation of the parents. Spinoza claims that more individuals of the same nature can form a bigger individual that is more capable in self-defence than each individual alone. He then uses this in order to explain the formation of political communities. Given the author's view that children have the same nature, one might expect a similar line of reasoning, but the author only cites self-knowledge and not self-defence as a possible benefit of having children.

(b) It would be worth considering that activity/passivity and increase/decrease in power do not map into each other, there is passive joy. This raises the question, what is the bonus of having children rationally rather than through passive joy?

(c) One should note that the claim that children are rational effects of the parent might invite unwelcome consequences. Spinoza claims that the effect of an adequate, i.e., rational cause is completely intelligible through the cause. But the claim that the child's essence is completely intelligible through the parents' essence might be seen as detrimental for the child's autonomy, we are more than just derivatives of our parents, even in the ideal case.

(d) It would be nice to spell out what the difference is between blind instinct and rational choice. As Spinoza's description of the illusion of free will indicates, we are prone to self-deception and can consider desires as rational choices when they are in fact not.

(e) Spinoza's theory might have interesting ramifications for the ethics of genetic screening and abortion. Spinoza claims repeatedly that illness is an inadequate idea that depends on the human mind making illegitimate comparisons between individuals, thus a child having kidney stones is just as perfect as another healthy child. Would Spinoza reject abortion on the basis of genetic testing? How would that square with the increase in the parents' conatus?

(f) It would be nice to know why does procreation offer opportunities to reflect on our limitations, biases, unconscious habits etc. in a way that any odd social interactions does not. In other words, is procreation one way of increasing my conatus that is as good as playing PS5, or is it in some sense constitutive to human way of life, i.e., I miss out something important if I don't procreate in a way that I do not miss anything important if I never had a PS5.