

DEPARTMENT OF

PHILOSOPHY

Spinoza on truth

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Surprisingly little has been written about Spinoza's theory of truth, and there is no general consensus about how he should be understood. After a period during which he was most often portrayed as a coherence theorist, today he is usually thought to advance a correspondence theory of truth. In this talk I propose a new account of how Spinoza understands the nature of truth – one that makes a more unified and comprehensive sense of Spinoza's doctrines and texts. More specifically, I propose that Spinoza endorses a version of the *identity* theory of truth. Very roughly, on identity theories, the nature of truth consists in the identity of the truthbearer with the truthmaker. I argue that Spinoza holds an identity conception of truth insofar as, on his view, true "ideas" are identical with the "things" they are about. More precisely, a true Spinozistic idea of a thing is that thing itself, albeit existing in a distinct – purely mental – manner. This conception of truth, I show, grows directly out of Spinoza's general theory of representation – his theory of what it is for any idea to be *about* or *of* something in the first place. On my reading, Spinoza's theory of truth also turns out to be inseparable from certain ontological commitments – in particular, a commitment to a pluralism of ways of having being. Arguably, then, the identity conception of truth stands or falls with much of the rest of Spinoza's metaphysical and epistemological edifice.



Karolina Hübner is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the Sage School of Philosophy, Cornell University. Her work on the metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of mind in the early modern period has appeared in such journals as *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, the *Philosophical Quarterly*, the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* and *Philosophers' Imprint*. Until 2019, she was Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Toronto. Her 2022 article in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, "Representation and Mind-Body Identity in Spinoza's Philosophy," is the winner of the JHP's prize for the best article of 2022. She is the co-editor of the forthcoming *Spinoza Cambridge Lexicon*, and the editor of *Human* (Oxford Philosophical Concepts series). She is currently working on a monograph on Spinoza's metaphysics of thought.