

# Substances, Bodies and Monads

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## Haecceitism and the problem of individuation

Something is a substance iff it has a complete concept; a complete concept entails all properties of the thing that falls under it. It follows that “having the complete concept  $C$ ” is thus what guarantees the truth of the identity of indiscernibles, if no two substances can have the same complete concept. This follows if a complete concept ‘defines’ an individual – but what could this mean?

$$\exists F(Fx \leftrightarrow Fy) \rightarrow x = y \quad \text{non-identity of discernibles (LL)}$$

A restriction is needed for identity properties themselves: if we count Cicero’s characteristic of being identical to Cicero (or, what is the same thing: his characteristic of being identical to Tully) as a property in the range of **PII** (i.e. as an instance of the predicate variable “ $F$ ” above), then **PII** is trivialised.

## The connection with contingency

Adams (1994: 29) contrasts a “conceptual truth conception” and a “demonstrability conception” of necessity: according to the former, some statement  $p$  is necessary iff it is true in virtue of some relations between concepts; according to the latter, it is necessary iff its truth is logically demonstrable. While he criticises the latter on systematic grounds, Adams thinks that adopting it would commit Leibniz to a violation of the principle of sufficient reason.

## Adams’ “possibility in the narrow sense”

We have introduced above Robert Adams’ proposal to distinguish between two notions of possibility in Leibniz (1994: 13–14), roughly characterisable as follows:

**wide**  $p$  is necessary<sub>w</sub> iff there is a concept  $X$  such that analysis of  $X$  (finite or infinite) yields a proof that  $p$   
**narrow**  $p$  is necessary<sub>n</sub> iff there is a concept such that analysis of  $X$ , *without consideration* of any other concept, yields a proof that  $p$

## Haecceitism

Consider what Fine (2005: 30) calls “modal anti-Haecceitism” (that haecceitistic permutations do not distinguish possibilities), which Fine (1978: 126) argued “coincides” with de re skepticism, a certain version of Quine’s view that quantification into modal contexts does not make sense (cf. also Kaplan 1975: 724). This position is different from both what Fine (2005: 31) calls “metaphysical Haecceitism”, that individuals (i.e.: actually existing individuals) have non-qualitative identities, and from what Lewis (1986) calls “Haecceitism”, that counterpart relations have to be given qualitatively. It is also different from what Kaplan calls

“Haecceitism”, the doctrine that “it does make sense to ask – without reference to common attributes and behavior – whether *this* is the same individual in another possible world, that individuals can be extended in logical space (i.e. through possible worlds) in much the way we commonly regard them as extended in physical space and time, and that a common “thisness” may underlie extreme dissimilarity or distinct thisness may underlie great resemblance.” (Kaplan 1975: 722–723)<sup>1</sup>

## Leibnizian generalism

It is an old idea, stretching back to Plato, that what is known is necessarily general, possibly true at least in principle of more than one thing and that our mental powers never really reach out all the way to some object’s individuality. It is a natural, if mistaken, move to conclude from this that the objects of knowledge themselves are composite, ‘arising’ in some way out of something general that is known about them and some particularising factor which is not.<sup>2</sup>

Leibniz’s main claim about the individuation of substances is that it is not, contra Duns Scotus and Aquinas, the result of a combination of a general essence with individuating matter: “[since] there are no universals before [i.e.: antecedent to] the operation of the mind, there is no composition from the universal and the individuating [principle] ... There is no real composition, not all of whose members are real” (Disputatio §23, G IV 25, MLI 65) The principle of individuation is the whole entity itself, because *unitas* and *entitas* “in re idem est” (Disputatio §20, G IV 24, MLI 60) and “what is not *one* being is not one *being* either” (Arnauld 1687). Aquinas did, after all, accept cases where individuation was not the outcome of the coming together of two different factors: angels, according to REFERENCE, are individuated by their whole being. This is why Leibniz says that he says “of all substances” what Thomas “says about angels or intelligences (that every individual is an *infima species*)” (G IV 433, L 308).

But what does it mean that substances are self-individuating, individuated by their whole being? Leibniz glosses the crucial claim of the *Disputatio* – “every individual is individuated by its whole entity” (§4, G IV 18, MLI 100) – in terms of “one” being a transcendental: because “*one* adds nothing to *being*” (Disp §5), “that by means of which a thing is one in number is that by means of which it *is*” (Cover & Hawthorne 1999: 33).

Like Ockham,<sup>3</sup> Leibniz denies that there is any difference between the essence and the existence of an individual substance (Disputatio §15, G IV 23, MLI 47), on the grounds that this difference could only be real, and thus entail separability, which is absurd.<sup>4</sup>

## References

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- Fine, Kit, 1978. Model Theory for Modal Logic – Part I: The *De Re / De Dicto* Distinction. *The Journal of Philosophical Logic* 7(2): 125–156.

1. This latter view is better called “modal individualism” (Almog 1986: 226), and presupposed by the view that some singular terms are rigid.

2. Another option, of course, is to deny that we have knowledge of particulars at all – this is the route chosen by Plato and Shamik Dasgupta.

3. Cf.: “[I]f they [*esse* and *essentia*] were two things, then no contradiction would be involved if God preserved the essence of some thing in the world without its existence ... which [is] impossible” (*Summa Logicae* III.ii.c xxvii)

4. Cover & Hawthorne (1999: 40–43) stress the importance the doctrine nowadays known as “Humean supervenience” – no necessary connections between distinct existents, i.e.: numerical distinctness entails separability – has for Leibniz’s account of individuation in the *Disputatio*.

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