its unlimited application[74]. Leibniz is still far from such a conception in the MM and AAI, but in his productive insistence on the central role played by Euclid's axiom he has begun to lay the ground for it.

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74 See A VI, 6, 158.

Space, Individuation and the Identity of Indiscernibles: Leibniz's Triumph Over Strawson*

By

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Zusammenfassung

Im Anschluß an die Erörterung einiger Voraussetzungen der Metaphysik Strawsons benenne ich dessen Hauptargument gegen Leibniz: Sobald wir die Rolle recht verstehen, welche die Perspektive (erste Person, dritte Person, ideeller Beobachter) spielt, die individualisierenden Akten jeweils zugrunde liegen kann, erkennen wir sofort, daß Leibniz Strawsons Theorie der Individualisierung dadurch untergraben könnte, daß er jene Prämissen attackiert. Den Spieß drehe ich dann um und zeige, daß nicht nur Strawsons Einwand gegen Leibniz' Konzeption von Individualität untauglich bleibt, vielmehr die eigene Theorie auch keine adäquate Antwort auf eine Modifikation des Schachbrett-Beispiels liefern kann, das er gegen Leibniz einsetzt. Dies führt am Ende zu der Einsicht, daß Strawsons Wendung gegen Leibniz wie manche Verteidigung von Leibniz gegen Strawson (kürzlich beispielsweise hier) Leibniz' Prinzip der Identität des Ununterscheidbaren unangemessen in einer Weise interpretiert, die Strawson viel zu viel dialektischen Spielraum beläßt.

Strawson has leveled an argument having to do with chessboards and points of view against a Leibnizian theory of individuation[1]. He focuses his attack on the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles (hereafter PII) by developing his intuition that it is possible that several monads have the same perspective and experience all the same perceptual states, i. e. can be indiscernible. I will analyze this argument and two previous attempts to defend Leibniz from it (an appeal to the apperceptive abilities of monads and an appeal to the material instantiation of monads) and show that detractors and defenders alike crucially misrepresent PII. A three-fold distinction between perspectives from which the act of individuation is performed will assist in developing the most philosophically and textually defensible interpretation of PII.

I begin by examining from Leibniz's perspective Strawson's positive view that individuation is possible because material objects are basic particulars that I can locate relative to myself in space. Picking up Leibniz's banner, I argue that Strawson commits himself to a nexus of assumptions about absolute space, the concept of *place* and the epistemic abilities of persons which are untenable for

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*   Conversations with Bob Batterman, Rick Groshong, Mark Wilson and many criticisms and suggestions from Glenn Hartz significantly improved this paper. An earlier version of this paper was presented at a conference at Rutgers University in April 1999, and I give thanks to my commentator, Duncan Stewart, for helpful criticism.

1   It is technically directed at someone he has named 'Leibniz'; see P. F. Strawson: *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London 1959), Garden City 1963 (S), p. 117.

reasons Leibniz has articulated. I then show that Strawson's position cannot overcome a variation on the central objection he himself raises against Leibniz. This approach improves upon other attempts to extricate Leibniz from Strawson's web because it will be more faithful to the intent of Leibniz's analysis of PII by correctly identifying the objects it ranges over and the subject from whose perspective PII is employed.

1. The failure of Strawsonian individuation on Leibniz's terms

After describing the salient aspects of Strawson's 'descriptive metaphysics' pertaining to the task of individuation, I will state and explain his argument against Leibniz.

A. Strawson's theory of individuation

Throughout the first chapter of *Individuals* Strawson develops his position in terms of what I will refer to as 'third person' identification. A hearer individuates object X from object Y with the help of words from a speaker. Strawson's modes of individuation, descriptive and reidentificative, supervene upon demonstrative identification, which is basic. Demonstrative identification amounts to picking out uniquely a particular in my local environment via sensible discrimination. This is facilitated by locating the object's position in space and time relative to my own location. In contrast to Leibniz's view, with demonstrative identification at the ready individuation need not (and cannot) "rest ultimately on description in purely general terms" (S, 9).

The particular with respect to which I individuate others is myself. Strawson ostensibly discusses Third Person individuation, but tacitly presupposes that my ability to perform First Person individuation – that is, to be capable of individuating myself from all else – is conceptually prior to Third Person individuation. Strawson remarks that

"It is quite possible [...] to identify, e. g., events and processes without any dependence on identification of particulars of other types [Such identifying acts] involve no reference to any other particular at all, except at most for the discountable implicit references to hearer and speaker [...]" (S, 36).

However, Strawson has not provided reason to believe these "implicit references" needed to generate a privileged frame of a reference are so easily "discountable".

Strawson's account refers to the role of space in individuation, which plays a crucial role in his transcendental argument:

"It seems that we can construct an argument from the premise that identification rests ultimately on location in a unitary spatio-temporal framework of four dimensions, to the conclusion that a certain class of particulars is basic [...]" (S, 28).

Material bodies are necessarily the basic particulars of this framework

because they possess the requisite "fundamental characteristics": three-dimensionality, endurance through time, and observability (S, 29). Apparently these traits are "fundamental" in the sense of being necessary for a proper description of our conceptual scheme.

Such particulars will be identifiable (and reidentifiable) by me in relation to my place in the unified framework of space and time. In order for material bodies to be identifiable in relation to us, however, we must occupy a special conceptual position in this scheme along with the bodies – not only must persons be material, to have a place, but persons must also *know* the location of this place. Persons must possess this epistemic ability because, according to Strawson, we can seamlessly move from demonstrative identification of bodies to descriptive identification of bodies (since we do individuate objects that do not reside in our immediate vicinity). In order to identify an object without ostending the object, a person must know her position relative to other objects[2]. They then serve as reference points with which she can identify the original object (see S, 27-28). The key requirement is that any descriptive reference using other particulars can be reduced to demonstrative reference.

The foregoing considerations require Strawson to give persons pride of place in two ways. He takes as ontologically basic the presence of beings with both mental and physical properties, and he holds that Third Person individuation is conceptually preceded by First Person individuation. This is because reference to material bodies requires "implicit references to hearer and speaker". First and foremost, I am capable of individuating material bodies in virtue of their spatial and temporal relations to me, which leads Strawson to hold that one's self is a basic constituent in his metaphysics.

Persons are instrumentally fundamental for Strawson's solution to the problem of 'massive reduplication'. This problem was originally what motivated him to take demonstrative identification, as opposed to descriptive identification, as basic in his metaphysic. Describing the problem of massive reduplication that he would later employ against Leibniz, Strawson remarks:

"[O]ne may be very well informed about a particular sector of the universe. One may know beyond any doubt that there is only one particular thing or person in that sector which answers to a certain general description. But this [...] does not guarantee that the description applies uniquely. For there might be another particular, answering to the same description, in another sector of the universe" (S, 7-8).

To avoid this problem Strawson makes descriptive individuation supervenient on its demonstrative cousin, which leads him to hold that we know what

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2   This epistemic ability of persons is taken as basic despite the fact that, according to Strawson, descriptive metaphysics "can take far less for granted than a more limited and partial conceptual inquiry" (S, XIII). Furthermore, with that fact he attempts to find even more entailment relations between his conceptual scheme and other outstanding philosophical problems. It is in realizing "the full extent of the acknowledgment one is making in acknowledging the logical primitiveness of the concept of a person" that we can see, among other things, that the problem of other minds is solved (S, 100).

sector of space a particular occupies by relating that sector uniquely to the sector we occupy (see S, 9).

We are now in a position to appreciate the way in which Strawson uses facts about persons and space in his argument against Leibniz. He proceeds by conjoining key Leibnizian positions that, together, generate unwelcome implications for symmetrical universe cases. In contrast to Leibniz, "identifying reference to particulars rests ultimately on the use of expressions that, directly or indirectly, embody a demonstrative force" (S, 117). Strawson begins his argument by noting that according to the identity of indiscernibles,

> (P1) "it is necessarily true that there exists, for every individual, some descrip-
> tion in purely universal, or general, terms, such that only that individual
> answers to that description" (S, 120; premise from Leibniz)[3].

The remainder of the argument proceeds as follows:

> (P2) The "basic individuals" are immaterial monads (S, 121; premise from
> Leibniz).
> (P3) So, each monad can be individuated without the use of demonstrative
> terms (from (1) and (2)).
> (P4) For Leibniz, individuation per (P3) takes place in virtue of the 'point of
> view' of each monad (premise from Leibniz).
> (P5) It is possible to have "qualitatively indistinguishable" points of view in
> a symmetrical universe (S, 122; shown by the chessboard thought
> experiment).
> (P6) So, "monads cannot be individuated by the views of the world which they
> get" (S, 123; i. e., Leibniz's account of individuation in (P4) is false).

The key premise is (P5), making a description of the chessboard thought experiment necessary. Strawson asks us to conceptualize the "location" of immaterial monads as spaces on a chessboard. Strawson claims that attempts to individuate monad 22's point of view from that of monad 43 point will fail because we can imagine symmetrical universes in which the two points of view are qualitatively indistinguishable. Since monads and their points of view must be described in purely general terms, Leibniz's attempt at non-demonstrative individuation fails. Says Strawson,

"It is necessary only to imagine the universe in question being repetitive or symmetrical in certain ways in order to see that there might be numerically different points of view from which the scenes presented would be qualitatively indistinguishable even though they comprehended the entire universe" (S, 120).

3   Leibniz formulates this thought in several places, including in the following comment
    from the "Monadologie": "Il faut même que chaque Monade soit differente de chaque
    autre. Car il n'y a jamais dans la nature deux Etres, qui soyent parfaitement l'un comme
    l'autre, et où il ne soit possible de trouver une difference interne, ou fondée sur une
    denomination intrinseque" (§ 9; GP VI, 608).

The point of view from a certain position on the board (when made appropriately symmetrical) will thwart any attempt to individuate particulars because the view from this position and its mirror image will be identical[4].

As yet the argument is incomplete because Strawson has not explicitly identified the perspective from which the individuating acts are to be performed. We must draw distinctions between types of individuation, without which we will be guilty, like Strawson, of conflating importantly different perspectives. Within the confines of the Strawson-Leibniz dialectic the following three perspectives have the most currency:

> *Third Person individuation*: individuation of X from Y by Z, where Z's
> point of view is in the world with X and Y (where X and Y can be either
> persons or objects).

> *Ideal Observer individuation*: individuation of X from Y by an ideal ob-
> server whose point of view is outside the world composed of X and Y.

> *First Person individuation*: individuation of X from Y by X (where X and Y
> are both persons).

The above argument concludes that Leibniz does not provide *First Person individuation* for monads. In other words, the assumption is that objects under analysis falsify PII so long as those objects are indiscernible for the person performing the analysis. On the chessboard, monad 22 cannot distinguish itself from monad 43.

That the truth of PII is necessarily indexed to the perspective of he who does the individuating is a deeply mistaken assumption in regard to the importance of perspective in this context. Both detractors and defenders of Leibniz make this assumption and so focus on evaluating the applicability of PII rather than its truth *simpliciter*. By doing so these authors entangle the epistemological task of individuating objects with the metaphysical status of objects *per se*[5].

Strawson's strategy is to presuppose a frame of reference from a first-person perspective, assume that persons are primitives, and then individuate three-dimensional objects on the basis of their relationships to persons (or at least to one person) in a frame of reference described relative to my position in it. Some may be convinced that simply showing Strawson must presuppose a privileged frame of reference and the three-dimensionality of bodies for the

4   Clifford Brown (*Leibniz and Strawson: A New Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*, Mün-
    chen 1990) does not think that this alone forces Leibniz to capitulate to Strawson because
    Brown admits the possibility of bodiless monads yet maintains that they can be individua-
    ted relationally. He does this by a distinction between a monad possessing a body (which
    is not necessary) and a monad possessing the *function* of body (which is necessary).
    Brown seems to think that, since monads must at least have the *function* of a body, they
    are individuatable in a way Strawson thinks they are not (pp. 49-51). I will explain the
    reason this fails to do the work Brown intends it to below, in Part II.
5   Roderick Chisholm's exposition of Saint Thomas's views on individuation brings wel-
    come clarity to this distinction. See "Individuation: Some Thomistic Questions and
    Answers", in: *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 1 (1975), pp. 25-41.

success of his transcendental argument is itself sufficient to crown Leibniz the winner of this exchange. This amounts to a confession that to improve upon Leibniz, Strawson needed to help himself to an extensive array of powerful, yet dubious, metaphysical primitives. However, there are several devastating arguments against Strawson's position which exploit the presuppositional contours of his transcendental metaphysics that we might adduce with Leibniz's blessing.

B. A Leibnizian argument against Strawsonian individuation

From Leibniz's perspective the most serious problem plaguing Strawson's attempts to individuate is that persons will have no hint about which frame of reference they occupy. Suppose my sector of space, the Earth, is duplicated and the duplicate is placed in a universe which is qualitatively identical to this one. Suppose I am on this duplicate but do not know I am. The computer I am using is qualitatively identical to the one I was using on Earth, my children behave in just the ways they always have, etc. Now when I demonstratively identify the desk before me as my desk, I err. My desk bears the same demonstrative relation to me, *by my lights*, that it did minutes ago. The proposition expressed by my utterance: 'This desk is the same one I was using moments ago' is false, but the important point is that demonstratives are at a loss to aid me in knowing that it is false.

Strawson is ostensibly doing 'descriptive' metaphysics in an attempt to explain how we actually individuate objects in our conceptual scheme[6]. The only kinds of individuation in which the descriptive metaphysician (as opposed to the revisionary, Leibnizian metaphysician) is interested are First and Third Person individuation. The insuperable problem for Strawson is that *the "common axes"* (S, 10) *Strawson thinks so helpful for individuation within the domain of descriptive metaphysics are only helpful for Ideal Observer individuation – an ideal observer who is able to know which universe and which sector of space he occupies.*

Whether Strawson is using "common axes" to refer to a coordinate system implemented into a relational space or to the grid-like divisions in a metaphysically real absolute space[7], we in the world have no access to these "common

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6   See the introduction to *Individuals* (see note 1).
7   I credit Glenn Hartz with suggesting that Strawson requires absolute space for individuation. However, perhaps Strawson is not guilty of the charge after all. Though Strawson comments about "a unitary spatio-temporal framework" (S, 29) and appeals to "a common reference point and common axes of spatial direction" (S, 10), perhaps he merely needs a privileged frame of reference. In any event, the case against Strawson does not depend on this point. – The key tenet of Newton's conception of space is that it exists independently of bodies, and this Leibniz denies. Differentiating his view from Newton's, Leibniz explains that "L'Espace est quelque chose d'uniforme absolument, et sans les choses y placées, un point de l'espace ne differe absolument en rien d'un autre point de l'espace" (Clark Correspondence, Third Paper; GP VII, 364). The individuation of objects occurs via analysis of their location relative to other bodies (see Letter to Huygens, 12/22 June 1694, on this point; GM II, 184-185).

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axes". He nearly admits this, though without appreciating its consequences: "When we become sophisticated, we systematize the framework with calendars, maps, co-ordinate systems; but the use of such systems turns, fundamentally, on our knowing our own place in them" (S, 12-13). To this he adds: "[...] nothing in what I say has the consequence that a man is unable to identify a particular unless he can give precise spatio-temporal locations for it" (S, 13). But this is to miss an important point. We are not requiring of Strawson's persons that they uniquely describe a coordinate location in absolute space in order to individuate objects. (Such a criticism would, I concur, miss the mark.) My point instead is that faced with reduplication cases, a person will be "unable to identify a particular" if he cannot determine which spatio-temporal network *he himself* occupies. If a *sector* of space itself is duplicated, as opposed merely to a particular in that sector (a possibility Strawson suggested in his argument against Leibniz), then the only way I will be able to know where that sector is, is by first knowing where I am. Description fails, and demonstrative identification presupposes epistemic access to facts to which I am necessarily not privy.

The way in which Bernard Williams weighs in on this score aids us in seeing the force of this point. Williams[8] argues that Strawson's assumptions about the epistemic ability of persons to determine their location are inadequate. He believes that Strawson's appeal to indexicals and demonstratives will not assist in individuation unless those considerations can uniquely relate the person doing the individuating to the environment in which the objects exist. The consequence is that "this relating will rely on reference to some other particulars, such as the Greenwich meridian"[9]. By using this and other standards of measurement, I will be able to calculate the temporal distance I have traveled from the meridian, thus calculating the hour.

Williams believes, however, that taking this step would not significantly aid Strawson. If I must demonstratively identify my own location via the Greenwich meridian in order to identify when and where I am, why can I not instead "get on just as well by merely identifying the Greenwich meridian"[10]? In other words, there is no obvious theoretical need for an intermediary in our attempt to individuate a place or time. If we can successfully identify a standard of measurement demonstratively, then why can we not successfully identify objects, positions and times demonstratively? We should not need other particulars in order to identify our own location in space and time since Strawson believes we are capable of identifying other earthly particulars *solely* on the basis of demonstratively individuating ourselves in the framework of space and time. Williams' appeal to temporal and spatial reference-fixing conventions, on Strawson's behalf, makes idle the special status of persons.

These considerations are persuasive in their own right, but it is important for understanding my grievance with Strawson to observe a way in which

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8   "Mr Strawson on Individuals", in: *Philosophy* 36 (1961), pp. 309-332.
9   Ibid., p. 317.
10 Ibid.

Williams might have pushed Strawson further. I argue that *even if* I were conferred the ability to identify a temporal or spatial reference-fixing standard in my world, this would still fail to provide Strawson a means of overcoming the massive reduplication problem. To illustrate, suppose I and, in a nearby world, my doppelgänger point to the Greenwich meridian (and its twin) and utter 'I am pointing at the Greenwich meridian'. We will not know whether we are successfully pointing to *the* Greenwich meridian. Even with Williams' suggested emendation, Strawson will not be able to surmount the reduplication problem he foists on Leibniz. Securing First Person and Third Person individuation is insufficient to solve that problem. Strawson is forced, unwillingly to be sure, into providing only an account of Ideal Observer individuation.

This problem arises from a modification of Strawson's chessboard thought-experiment. In Strawson's chessboard scenario, monad 22 cannot successfully perform First Person individuation, and so cannot determine whether its point of view is shared by monad 43 because it is in a symmetrical universe. Strawson thinks he can avoid such cases by allowing himself the use of demonstratives, but he believes Leibniz succumbs to the chessboard case because PII forces Leibniz to use only general terms. But some person X in the chessboard-like grid of a "unitary spatio-temporal framework" (S, 29) will be incapable of performing First (or Third) Person Individuation, despite proficiency with demonstrative terms. This is because X will not be capable of determining where she is on the chessboard when we switch her from place to symmetrical place while maintaining the qualitative identity of her perspective. The only means by which X can pick out and reidentify one of two qualitatively identical objects requires her to know which frame of reference she occupies – a task impossible for a finite mind. This leaves Strawson precisely where he left Leibniz. Only God can successfully individuate objects (with any measure of certainty), because only someone standing outside of (or within) all the possible universes will be able to chart the movements of objects and persons between them. Strawson believes this result serves as a reductio on Leibniz's interpretation of PII. Far from being a reductio of PII, this merely confirms *Leibniz's interpretation* of PII. To this I will shortly return.

2. The failure of Leibnizian individuation on Strawson's terms

Strawson's positive view on demonstrative individuation is incapable of surmounting a problem intimately related to the argument he uses against Leibniz's PII, but this has left as an open question whether Strawson's argument shows that Leibniz's PII is false.

There is a noteworthy attempt to rescue Leibniz from Strawson's argument that has appeared, if in inchoate form, in the literature[11]. With a proper appreci-

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11   Actually, there is another *prima facie* plausible option. One might think that if we are able to argue that monads are in space and time and put meat on immaterial bones, we might

ation for the apperceptive abilities with which Leibniz endowed monads, one can contend that in symmetrical universes a monad would be capable of uniquely identifying itself reflexively. My interest in this option, one not considered by Strawson, is increased because there is persuasive evidence that the historical Leibniz was favorably disposed to this maneuver. Nonetheless, I argue that this defense of Leibniz conflates First Person individuation with Ideal Observer individuation, misidentifying Leibniz's intentions in this regard. This discussion will point us to a crucially important confusion in Strawson with regard to PII.

A. Apperception

Strawson notes that monads are individuated by (and equivalent to) their perception of the entire universe, their 'point of view'. But it is natural to think that some monad, Y, appears in its own point of view. Alexander Pruss[12], in a recent contribution to this journal, and Clifford Brown both believe this move succeeds in showing that Strawson's argument can be overcome.

Clifford Brown argues that, for Leibniz, the "individuality of my perception of my body thus establishes the individuality of my perception of every particular body in my world"[13]. Two embodied monads cannot be indiscernible because self-identify automatically differentiates them[14]. He thus combines an

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thwart Strawson's attack. This view is engendered by Strawson in his repeated claims that there is no spatially extended world of objects for Leibniz. "All that is real in the Leibnizian system is just the monads", he announces (S, 123). *Contra* Strawson, this is false. There are (at least) three ontological levels for Leibniz at which we can say something is 'real'. These are composed of, respectively, monads, corporeal substances, and aggregates of monads, i. e. phenomena. (The distinction between levels of being is drawn explicitly by Brown (see note 4) at p. 21. The distinction seems implicit in Robert Adams' "Phenomenalism and Corporeal Substance in Leibniz", in: *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 8 (1983), pp. 217-257, here p. 229.) Leibniz clearly thought that (1) the existence of monads in the actual world is intimately tied to material bodies, and (2) when such physical bodies make up an organism (i. e., when a physical body is unified and governed by a dominant monad) there are then individuals at the level of corporeal substances. This is affirmed in the "Nouveaux essais" (NE; see NE II, XXI § 73; A VI, 6, 212). – Though this contrasts sharply with Strawson's insistence on the description of monads in general terms, not indexing them to space or time, the fact that monads are always somehow embodied does not imply that Strawson's argument is bankrupt. Strawson's claim that the point of view of two monads may have points of view "qualitatively indistinguishable" is true even if we suppose that monads are necessarily embodied. After all, in an immaterial monad's point of view resides embodied objects, and there seems to be only a small change made in the stipulation that a monad can see its own body, its arms and legs, from its perspective.

12   "Leibniz's Approach to Individuation and Strawson's Criticisms", in: *Studia Leibnitiana* XXX/1 (1998), pp. 116-123. Pruss presents this response appealing to what he refers to as "knowledge of my own self" (p. 119), without marshaling available Leibnizian texts for support.

13   Brown (see note 4), p. 93.

14   Ibid.

appeal to the material instantiation of monads with reference to their appercep-
tive abilities – an argumentative strategy also shared by Pruss.

Placing the percipient in his own perception in this way is a move Leibniz
himself emphasizes. Consider this passage:

"Ainsi quoyque chaque Monade creée represente tout l'univers, elle represente plus distincte-
ment le corps qui luy est affecté particulierement et dont elle fait l'Entelechie: et comme ce
corps exprime tout l'univers par la connexion de toute la matiere dans le plein, l'ame
represente aussi tout l'univers en representant ce corps, qui luy appartient d'une maniere
particuliere"[15].

Whether an appeal to apperception can do the argumentative work Pruss
and Brown both believe it can, though, is a separate matter.

Through an appeal to a type of apperceptive ability among monads, Brown
tacitly claims that Leibniz can justify First Person *and* Third Person individua-
tion. In other words, apperceptively locating myself in my point of view not
only enables me to identify myself as distinct from others, but it also allows me
to differentiate one object from another. If this is accurate, then Leibniz can
overcome Strawson's argument by denying (P5).

Pace Pruss and Brown, such a ploy will not overcome Strawson's argument
once it is suitably refurbished. The irony here is that Brown and Pruss attempt
to defend Leibniz by interpreting him in such a way that his considered view is
remarkably similar to Strawson's position[16]. Brown combines the fact that
monads are embodied in the actual world with the fact that monads possess
internal perceptual abilities in order to make his case against Strawson's argu-
ment[17]. He points us to a text in which Leibniz criticizes Locke's theory of
personal identity with a counterexample strikingly similar to Strawson's sym-
metrical universe case. Leibniz asks us (well before Kant, Max Black and
Strawson did the same) to imagine a universe that is 'in no way sensibly
different' from this one – the people of this universe seem identical to us. Since

15 "Monadologie" § 62; GP VI, 617.
16 For Strawson, the individuation of particulars involves "possession of [...] a unified
    framework of knowledge of particulars, in which we ourselves and, usually, our immedi-
    ate surroundings have their place, and of which each element is uniquely related to every
    other and hence to ourselves" (S, 12). (Here I sidestep needless Kantian complications
    regarding what the apperceiving subject cognitively contains.) The fact that Leibniz does
    use apperception in a way similar to that in which Strawson employs our ability demon-
    stratively to identify ourselves in space and time, marks a reason to place another jewel in
    Leibniz's crown. He has seeded Strawson with the very philosophical strategy Strawson
    uses to grow his own metaphysics.
17 For an analysis of some of the recent work on apperception in Leibniz, see Murray Miles'
    "Leibniz on Apperception and Animal Souls", in: *Dialogue* 33 (1994), pp. 701-724. I
    doubt there is any suitable notion of apperception in Leibniz to service Brown's needs,
    even with all the bewildering distinctions between forms of apperception made in the
    literature on Leibniz's behalf. Nonetheless, though Miles offers a fine review of the
    textually micro-managed work of Kulstad and McRae, he, like these two, does not see fit
    to bring the discussion of Leibniz's views on apperception into the philosophical market-
    place and apply it to the problem of individuation.

my consciousness will be manifested in two bodies, I must be identical with my
double, but this is absurd, says Leibniz. What is missing in Locke is an
appreciation for an 'internal *principle of distinction*'. 'Although time and place
(i. e. the relations to what lies outside) do distinguish for us things which we
could not easily tell apart by reference to themselves alone', Leibniz contends
that 'things are nevertheless distinguishable in themselves'[18]. Brown's case is
confusing because he seems to think that embodiment is primarily responsible
for the individuation of monads, but embodiment alone is otiose in responding
to Strawson's argument. (See note 11.)

Strawson would surely grant that monad 22 is not identical with monad 43,
and he will grant that 22 sees itself in its point of view of the universe. What he
would deny is that this fact allows Leibniz to individuate the two. This is so
because the result of using this apperceptive ability is not something that can be
specified in "purely universal, or general, terms". An appeal to apperception
relies on facts that antecedently and uniquely identify at least one monad
without using merely general terms – the monad that is me. Strawson would
then accuse Leibniz of giving up his commitment to being able in principle to
individuate any two monads or monadic aggregates on the basis of their intrin-
sic qualities, which is tantamount to giving up the Identity of Indiscernibles as
formulated in (P1). Brown identifies Leibniz's goal as arguing for *First Person
individuation*, yet the costs are too high if Leibniz must forsake the Identity of
Indiscernibles[19].

B. First-person epistemology and PII

Strawson's exposition of his descriptive metaphysics tacitly asserts that,
when X and Y are individuatable, I will be able to individuate them. I have
argued his justification for attributing this ability to us relies on assumptions
against which Leibniz argued. Pruss believes I, a human being, am able to
individuate any two objects "in principle", no matter how qualitatively similar

18 "[A]insi quoique le temps et le lieu (c'est à dire le rapport au dehors) nous servent à
    distinguer les choses. que nous ne distinguons pas bien par elles mêmes, les choses ne
    laissent pas d'etre distinguables en soi" (NE II, XXVII § 1; A VI, 6, 230). See also Brown
    (see note 4), pp. 94-95.
19 Here is another way to put this counterexample. Suppose that my world, W_1, is composed
    of a mirror and me. Suppose that in this world my thoughts rise up, in linguistic form,
    above my head in cartoon-like bubbles. With the mirror before me, I can read all my
    thoughts in the mirror image. The thoughts that interest us are those of an apperceptive
    nature in which, for example, I think, 'I am here now' or 'The unity of my apperceptive
    perspective uniquely locates me within my conceptual scheme'. Now suppose I am
    unwittingly switched into a different world, W_2. Rather than a mirror in front of me, I am
    in a universe where my doppelgänger is perfectly symmetrical to me. When I appercep-
    tively think, 'I am here now', I see a person qualitatively indistinguishable from myself
    with the words 'I am here now' rising above his head. The point is that I will not be able
    to tell, with apperception as my master tool. whether I am in W_1 or W_2. (Though Leibniz's
    theory admits this lapse. Stawson's does also.)

they appear to me. This is because "my complete individual concept" includes "the whole state of the universe", which in turn includes the differences between the pair of objects in question[20].

Were the gentleman to whom Leibniz refers in an anecdote from the Clarke correspondence to have found two leaves in a garden 'perfectly alike', that discovery would *not* imply the falsity of PII[21]. Because two objects are indiscernible by the human eye, it does not follow that the objects are identical. Pruss mistakenly believes that if two objects are not 'in principle empirically recognizable' by "any entity in the universe other than God", Leibniz's views about PII are inconsistent[22]. This is to misunderstand Leibniz in a way that gives Strawson far too much ground.

As a matter of historical fact, Leibniz thought that human beings often cannot discriminate between individuals. Indeed, Leibniz firmly goes further:

"Car (quelque paradoxe que cela paroisse) il est impossible à nous d'avoir la connoissance des individus, et de trouver le moyen de *determiner* exactement l'individualité d'aucune chose, à moins que de la garder elle même; car toutes les circomstances peuvent revenir; les plus petites differences nous sont insensibles et le lieu ou le temps bien loin de determiner d'eux mêmes, ont besoin eux mêmes d'estre determinés par les choses qu'ils contiennent. Ce qu'il y a de plus considerable en cela, est que *l'individualité* enveloppe l'infmi, et il n'y a que celuy qui est capable de le comprendre qui puisse avoir la connoissance du principe d'individuation d'une telle ou telle chose"[23].

This decides the matter: Leibniz did not intend PII to be constrained by the epistemic and perceptual abilities of human beings. That *I* cannot distinguish between two leaves on the basis of their intrinsic features (and not, for instance, on their location relative to me) is irrelevant for evaluating the truth of PII.

The prevalence of this misinterpretation is lamentable, but the fact that Strawson's chessboard example has the same fate is more important for present purposes. Even if I am unable empirically to differentiate myself from my

20 Pruss (see note 12), p. 118. Note that the interpretation of PII to which Pruss is disposed is not the straightforward metaphysical one with which he begins his paper, where he says "Leibniz's Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibiles (PII) states that there cannot be two distinct entities which have exactly the same properties, with the properties being stated in universal terms" (p. 116). In this he parrots Strawson's version in (P1). Appearances to the contrary, Pruss has in mind a version that ties the identity conditions of those objects with our abilities to discern differences between (the properties of) objects, which is why his discussion of the evaluation of PII is couched in the first-person. He wants to know whether he could "possibly determine" or 'could ever tell' or 'empirically recognize' the property by which some A differs from some B (pp. 118-119). – This mistake is not restricted to these two; Max Black is guilty of the same error in his "The Identity of Indiscernibles" (*Mind* 61 (1952), pp. 153-164). For a penetrating discussion of this error in Black, see Thomas Foster's "Symmetrical Universes and The Identity of Indiscernibles" (*Philosophy Research Archives* 8 (1983), pp. 169-183).
21 This occurs at GP VII, 372. G. H. R Parkinson, among others, has made this observation (*Logic and Reality in Leibniz's Metaphysics*, Oxford 1965; see pp. 133-134).
22 Pruss (see note 12), p. 119.
23 NE III, III § 6; A VI, 6, 289-290.

doppelgänger in a symmetrical universe, PII is not falsified. These examples would only be forceful if they show that not even God, he 'who is capable of grasping the infinite', is able to individuate objects. They fall short of doing this.

I argued above that Strawson is unable to account successfully for First and Third Person individuation without making presuppositions Leibniz argues against, and that Strawson is only able to explain Ideal Observer individuation. This is unfortunate given that the project of descriptive metaphysics is to "describe the actual structure of our thought about the world" (S, XIII). Indeed, Strawson as descriptive metaphysician scorned attempts to account for individuation in any other way. He bitingly indicts Leibniz for PII's dependence on God, saying that the individuals of Leibniz's system "are particulars who can only by the grace of God be, even theoretically, identifyingly referred to" (S, 123). Leibniz's position "makes the possibility of individuation rest upon a *theological* principle", Strawson adds (S, 124).

Strawson attacks Leibniz's account of PII with the problem of symmetrical universes only to see that when this problem about is resurrected, it buries his own account of individuation[24]. By duplicating entire sectors of space, demonstrative reference will not succeed in showing how a person in one of the sectors

24 Strawson's failure to respond to the argument under discussion is perhaps not as philosophically objectionable as his insistence that he need not respond to such arguments, given the theoretical presuppositions of descriptive metaphysics. He briefly ponders whether his own view encounters a difficulty parallel to the symmetrical universe case he uses against Leibniz. He claims that it does not because "Persons, having corporeal characteristics, perceptibly occupying space and time, can be distinguished and identified, as other items having a material place in the spatio-temporal framework can be distinguished and identified" (S, 131). This is a *non sequitur*. Strawson insistently invokes the materiality of persons to save his view from this problem, but reliance on that trait of persons is ill-advised. The fact that creates the most serious difficulty for Strawson in his attempt to avoid the problem of massive reduplication is not the ontological status of the object to be individuated (though Leibniz would take issue with Strawson there – see note 11), but rather *successfully specifying the correct spatio-temporal framework within which the persons and objects reside.* – Strawson would reply, at this juncture, that symmetrical universe (or possible world) cases in which I cannot determine whether I am in world$_1$ or world$_2$ are metaphysically or conceptually impossible. Such skepticism makes sense only if the two systems are not independent, if they are parts, in some way related, of a single system which includes them both. But the condition of having such a system is precisely the condition that there should be satisfiable and commonly satisfied criteria for the identity of at least some items in one subsystem with some items in the other. – The reason why this skeptic can be ruled out of court is because the revisionary metaphysician accepts a conceptual scheme, but rejects some of its preconditions. Strawson's dismissal of Leibniz culminates in his charge that the doubts of the revisionary metaphysician "are unreal, not simply because they are logically irresoluble doubts, but because they amount to the rejection of the whole conceptual scheme within which alone such doubts make sense" (S, 24). Here Strawson unwarrantedly revises the rules midway through the match. What is it in virtue of Leibniz's system that such skeptical question 'make sense', and in virtue of his that they do not? For as we have seen, Strawson's position cannot on its own terms answer the massive reduplication problem he poses to Leibniz.

would know he is in sector A rather than sector B. Ironically, the standards for individuation set by Strawson for Leibniz cannot be met by Strawson's own account.

Leibniz differs radically on the methodology of the metaphysician and not without reason. The nature of monadic reality leads Leibniz to give humankind and the 'actual structure' of our thought little creative role in the process of individuation. We can see reasons for this in the failures of Strawson. The explanatory inadequacies in the Strawsonian, descriptive metaphysics point to the astonishing staying power of the Leibnizian system.

3. Scoring the exchange

The historical assessment of the dialectic is clear. We must declare Leibniz the winner. First, the domain of types of objects for Leibniz is at the outset much smaller than for Strawson. In this sense, Strawson is forcing Leibniz into an unfamiliar game. For instance, tables and chairs are mere aggregates and, though the status of aggregates in Leibniz's mature period is a matter of some controversy, by most accounts these are not the sorts of objects that are in principle individuatable[25]. The objects Leibniz considered aggregates are precisely those that, for Strawson, are the paradigms of Third Person individuation. Leibniz rightly thought to ask the prior question: Do such non-organic bodies possess a principle of unity which makes them things, as opposed to mere phenomena? Leibniz, try as he might, could not find a reason to answer in the affirmative; Strawson takes for granted that there is such a principle. Monads cannot be serious contenders for individuation performed by finite minds, so only corporeal substances remain. Perhaps here Strawson can take Leibniz to task for his failure to account for the individuation of aggregates. Nonetheless, there is much more to Leibniz's metaphysics than individuatable objects. Of considerable importance is the fact that most *entia* for Leibniz are not the sorts of things that can be individuated by humankind[26]. That is not the case for Strawson. Indeed, the central focus of Strawson's book is to argue for individuation of bodies and as I have argued, this he cannot do.

Lastly, not only does Strawson fail at accounting for individuation (at the descriptive, First and Third person levels) of bodies and persons, he also fails despite using more (and more questionable) primitives than does Leibniz. Bodies, three-dimensional and in time, are real and basic according to Straw-

25 In his letters to Arnauld he states that *"je croy que là, ou il n'y a que des estres par aggregation, il n'y aura pas même des estres reels"* (GP II, 96).
26 The formulations of PII by both Pruss and Strawson are unclear in this regard. Strawson believes that PII applies to "every individual" (S, 120), which is redundant, while Pruss holds that it applies to "entities" (Pruss (see note 12), p. 116). Leibniz is more discriminating. For example, in the "Discours de métaphysique", PII applies only to 'substances' (§§ 8, 9; A VI, 4B, 1539-1542), while in the fifth paper to Clarke PII is said to apply to 'real, absolute beings' (GP VII, 393).

son. His use of persons is also presumptive, both with regard to the fact that their basic status is derived from abstruse considerations about transcendental conditions, and because, according to Strawson, the same object can have both mental and physical properties.

Though Leibniz finishes with an exceedingly intricate metaphysical system replete with corporeal substances and monads, God and entelechies, aggregates and phenomena, he was not in the business of taking rich, substantive entities as primitive. And the existence of the class of entities he did take as primitive, the monads, he thought best explained several features of mereological and mathematical analysis. Strawson's bloated metaphysics does less with more for reasons Leibniz seems to have anticipated.

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