us hope against hope that these symptoms indicate only a temporary aberration and not an incurable madness.

IV. The Prodigal Son

I had been a student in German universities for seven years. Returning to them after twenty years abroad would be, I had thought, a kind of homecoming. It was anything but this. I returned a stranger to strangers. Although received with the greatest politeness by old friends and new acquaintances alike, I became increasingly aware of the deep differences which now separated me, as philosopher and teacher, from those with whom I had once spent my student years.

Perhaps the preceding pages have given an indication of these differences. They may also have confirmed the old adage that one is unjustly severe against one's own past mistakes. In that case, I apologize to my German colleagues. And I wish that many of them could come over here and observe us at greater leisure than I had to observe them.[4]

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COMMENTS AND CRITICISM

THE IDENTITY OF INDISCERNIBLES: A REINTERPRETATION

RECENTLY there has been a renewal of concern with some of the philosophical questions revolving about Leibniz's doctrine of the identity of indiscernibles. This short paper studies (in as non-technical a fashion as possible) a version of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles which is perhaps its most plausible interpretation, and which seems hitherto to have gone unexamined.

1. The thesis which is known as "the principle of the identity of indiscernibles" is this: "If *a* and *b* are different objects then there is at least one property such that *a* possesses this property and *b* does not."[1] As starting-point we accept the statement that

[4] Another article by the same author will appear in *The Journal of Higher Education,* March, 1955, under the title, "A Field Trip to German Universities."

[1] This particular statement of the thesis is taken from G. Bergmann's paper, "The Identity of Indiscernibles and the Formalist Definition of 'Identity,'" *Mind,* Vol. 62 (1953), pp. 75–79.

It should be noted that the word "object" is used in an unaccustomed, special sense. It refers not merely to actual existences—physical (chairs, "The principle of the identity of indiscernibles may be taken to mean that if two objects O_1 and O_2 are numerically different then they are qualitatively different, they differ in some mentionable *respect.*"[2] The word "mentionable" deserves special scrutiny; it contains the version of the principle which it is the object of this paper to examine, for it establishes the role which *discourse* plays in the principle. From this viewpoint the principle of the identity of indiscernibles is not ontological (dealing with things that are or might be), nor, *a fortiori,* physical (dealing with the natural phenomena of the world about us). Rather, the contention which the principle makes, in this interpretation, is *semantic;* it concerns the relation of language (a language) to its intended domain of reference. In this interpretation the principle of the identity of indiscernibles asserts that any two objects in the intended domain of reference of language (i.e., a language) which are *in fact* different can be distinguished *in the language,* in that the language contains a predicate which can truly be predicated of one object, but not of the other. Plainly, the principle is in this re-interpretation far removed from "the truism that different things are different."[3]

2. To put the character of this version into sharper relief a restriction is placed at this juncture on the languages under discussion: they must permit *abstraction.* A language permits abstraction if whenever it contains an expression "$C(o)$" expressing the fact that the object o satisfies the condition C, then it contains also an expression "$(\lambda x)\cdot C(x)$" which denotes the property of satisfying or fulfilling the condition C.[4]

For the purpose of facilitating discussion we introduce the auxiliary concept of an *unique reference expression.* An expression is thus characterized if its "logic"—that is, the system of rules, conventions, and customs regarding its proper usage—is such as to permit the expression to refer to at most one object.[5]

books) or other (claims, theories)—but to any describable thing whatever, any constituent of any "possible world." No initial limitation is to be placed on the applicability of "object."

[2] This explication is proposed by N. L. Wilson in his paper, "The Identity of Indiscernibles and the Symmetrical Universe," *Mind,* Vol. 62 (1953), pp. 506–511. It makes clear McTaggart's grounds for re-naming the principle that of "the dissimilarity of the diverse."

[3] This trivialization of the principle is contended for by the *anti* interlocutor in Max Black's dialogue, "The Identity of Indiscernibles," *Mind,* Vol. 61 (1952), pp. 153–164.

[4] In English the participle usually can serve this function: Smith runs—is running; Smith is at home—being at home.

[5] Instances of expressions which refer to at most one thing are: coordinates (as on maps, urban addresses, and theatre seats); proper names;

We will say that a language possesses the attribute of *reference adequacy* if for each object of its intended domain of reference it contains an appropriate unique reference expression. Accordingly, a language has reference adequacy if it is sufficiently rich to permit singling out any member of its intended domain of reference; that is, if *o* is a member of the intended domain of reference of a language L, then L will contain an expression of a condition which is fulfilled by *o*, but can be satisfied by no other member of D.[6]

We can now establish the following thesis: If L is a language of our restricted type, permitting abstraction, then the question of the validity for L of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles amounts to that of L's reference adequacy. For if L has reference adequacy, then each of the objects of L's intended domain of reference D satisfies a uniqueness condition in L, and so L must, by abstraction, contain for each member of D a predicate uniquely applicable to the member. Conversely, if the principle of the identity of indiscernibles holds for L, then any member *o* of D must differ in predicates (of L) from each of the remaining members, and hence, by conjunction, there exists a predicate (in L) characterizing *o* alone. Thus languages which permit abstraction will possess reference adequacy if, and only if, objects having all predicates in common are identical.

3. The question of the validity of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles in the interpretation provided by the foregoing analysis is a complex one. In the case of artificial languages (logical calculi) this question can, in some cases, be settled, either in the affirmative (by a demonstration in the semantical meta-language), or in the negative (by a counter-example, again, given in the meta-language).

In the case of a living natural language, say English, there is, however, no possibility of settlement, principally because the concept of an intended domain of reference can not be applied to such a language in any tidy way. Plainly there is no way of establishing that English has reference adequacy to all possible objects nameable in all possible languages. On the other hand, should some specific counter-example be proposed—say, in another language, or by adducing some instance of sensory novelty, such as

definite descriptions; ostensive designators such as "the former," "this table" (pointing), and pronouns; such special logical devices as "$(\iota x)\cdot F(x)$" (where F is a function), "$(\lambda x)\cdot x = a$" (where *a* is some individual).

[6] The reader may find it amusing to think through the question: Does Latin have reference adequacy to the set K of objects nameable in English?

a new sound—this may readily be invalidated, and the supposed deficiency removed, by a growth or extension of English.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Dilemmas. THE TARNER LECTURES, 1953. GILBERT RYLE. Cambridge: At the University Press [New York: Cambridge University Press] 1954. 129 pp. $2.00.

In these lectures Professor Ryle sets out to examine a series of philosophical dilemmas which supposedly illustrate a thesis about their nature, a thesis which might well be characterized as one about appearance and reality, "about what seems to be at stake in those disputes [between philosophers] and what is really at stake" (p. 12). A philosopher who advances a theory seemingly in conflict with "a piece of common knowledge" is talking at cross-purposes with one who defends it. Disputing philosophers are at loggerheads over what they suppose to be rival answers to the same question, whereas, according to Ryle, they are giving answers to different questions, "which, none the less, seem to be irreconcilable with one another" (p. 1). That they do this is largely because of the trickiness of non-technical concepts common to everyone's thinking: ". . . we get our accounts in a muddle when we try to do wholesale business with ideas with which in retail trade we operate quite efficiently every day of our lives" (p. 31). The muddle is of that particular sort which he has elsewhere characterized as a "category-mistake." These mistakes I believe Ryle thinks are integral to posing the dilemmas, so that the dilemmas could not exist but for the mistakes.

One rather expects each dilemma discussed to follow the model given by an example in the first lecture, where two claims whose seeming consequences conflict with each other are related to two different questions—thereby illustrating the thesis that philosophers talk at cross-purposes through supposing their claims conflict whereas they do not even bear on the same question. The statements, "Training makes a person what he is" and "People sometimes behave reprehensibly" (i.e., ought to behave otherwise), instead of bearing on the same question are truistic answers to the two different questions, "What difference does training make in a given person's behavior?" and "Was what he did wrong or was it done under duress or during an epileptic seizure?" Then one expects it to be shown how the apparent conflict between the two