

LEIBNIZ ON INNOCENT INDIVIDUAL CONCEPTS AND METAPHYSICAL CONTINGENCY

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Abstract

Leibniz claims that for every possible substance *S* there is an individual concept that includes predicates describing everything that will ever happen to *S*, if *S* existed. Many commentators have thought that this leads Leibniz to think that all properties are had essentially, and thus that it is not metaphysically possible for substances to be otherwise than the way their individual concept has them as being. Against this common way of reading Leibniz's views on the metaphysics of modality, this essay develops a model in which individual concepts are *innocent*; that is, individual concepts are divine ideas that permit God to know everything that will ever happen to all possible substances, if created, but these individual concepts neither require that all properties are had essentially nor require that it is metaphysically necessary for substances to be the way their individual concepts have them as being.

Keywords: Leibniz, individual concepts, modality

INTRODUCTION

In an important work titled "Primary Truths" Leibniz writes: "The complete or perfect notion of an individual substance contains all of its predicates, past, present, and future" (C 519/AG 32).¹ More generally, Leibniz believes that for every possible substance *S* there is an individual concept that includes predicates describing everything that will ever happen to *S*, if created (see C 519; DM 13, 14; G 2.39–41). This is Leibniz's notorious doctrine of complete individual concepts (CIC).

Leibniz endorses the CIC doctrine for several fundamental philosophical considerations: his conceptions of the nature of truth and of the nature of substance are central motivations (DM 8), but these theoretical motivations will be largely set aside for the purposes of this paper. What is of interest here is the way in which the CIC doctrine shaped Leibniz views on the metaphysics of modality,² beginning with the middle period of his career, roughly around the 1680s.

It seems reasonable to think that if all truths about a substance are included in its individual concept, then the substance *cannot* be otherwise than the way its individual concept has it as being. If so, CIC entails that all properties had by substances are *essential* to those substances, an interpretation of Leibniz virtually unchallenged before the 1990s,³ and very much still dominant nowadays, known as ‘superessentialism.’⁴ Textual support for superessentialism is often garnered from passages like the following:⁵ “But someone else will say, why is it that this man [Judas] will assuredly commit this sin? The reply is easy: otherwise, it would not be this man” (DM 30/AG 61). Leibniz justifies this claim about Judas’s identity thus: “For God sees from all time that there will be a certain Judas whose notion or idea (which God has) contains this free and future action” (DM 30/AG 61). The proponent of a superessentialist reading of Leibniz has a ready interpretation of these passages: Judas will certainly commit a particular sin, and it would not be Judas were things otherwise, *because* committing this sin is *essential* to Judas: it is *not metaphysically possible* for Judas to do otherwise because sinning is included in his CIC.

Unfortunately for the proponent of superessentialism, as is often the case in Leibnizian exegesis, things are not as straightforward as they seem. Only a few sentences before the passage on Judas’s identity, Leibniz boldly states that “the will is in a state of indifference, as opposed to one of necessity, and it has the power to do otherwise or even to suspend its actions completely; these two alternatives are possible and remain so” (DM 30/AG 61). Not only does Leibniz *not* say, in the passage on Judas’s identity, that “otherwise it would not be this man” *because* it is not metaphysically possible for Judas to do otherwise, but Leibniz seems to in fact deny this basic superessentialist interpretative move only a few sentences prior.

Furthermore, Leibniz recognizes that some philosophers may think that his CIC doctrine may entail that all truths are necessary: “But it seems that this would eliminate the difference between contingent and necessary truths, that there would be no place for human freedom and that an absolute fatalism would rule” (DM 13/AG 44–45). He insists, however, that his CIC doctrine has no such implication (DM 13, 30). Moreover, responding to Arnauld’s accusation that CIC entails “more than fatal necessity” (A 2.2.9/LA 9), Leibniz pens: “However I have protested

explicitly . . . that I do not allow such a consequence” (A 2.2.16/LA 21). Leibniz even expresses amazement at Arnauld’s accusation and insists that his view is perfectly innocent: “I cannot comprehend that there is anything wrong in this. . . . Far from finding something shocking . . . in my opinion one must be very hard to please or very prejudiced to find in sentiments so innocent . . . makings for exaggerations as strange” (A 2.2.18–9/LA 23–5) as those advanced by Arnauld. Leibniz insists that Arnauld is guilty of making a simple mistake: “as though concepts or foreseeings made things necessary; and as though a free action could not be comprehended in the perfect concept or view that God has of the person to whom it is to belong” (A 2.2.15/LA 19–21). Leibniz’s response here implies that individual concepts are mere divine ideas that serve as that in virtue of which God foreknows what will happen to a given substance if created.⁶ Following Leibniz, this reading of individual concepts will be dubbed the ‘innocent’ reading; this reading is *innocent* in the sense that it does not entail that all truths about substances included in CICs be *metaphysically necessary*.

Proponents of a superessentialist reading of Leibniz must provide reasons for thinking that his CIC doctrine is not innocent,⁷ and find ways of accommodating the passages in which Leibniz insists that it is metaphysically possible for substances to be otherwise than they are. Several have attempted this.⁸ It is not the goal of this paper to engage with the intricate ways in which proponents of superessentialism try to accommodate these seemingly dissenting passages. The present point is, rather, that this need for textual accommodation reveals that superessentialism is best understood not as a straightforward exegetical reading of Leibniz’s texts, but rather as a type of rational reconstruction of seemingly conflicting and partly underdetermined texts, a rational reconstruction that gives up reading Leibniz’s CIC doctrine as innocent. It is the main goal of this paper to sketch an alternative rational reconstruction, one that preserves an innocent reading of individual concepts and thus allows for metaphysical contingency.

Here is the plan. Section one presents more details about Leibniz’s CIC doctrine, and the way in which this doctrine may seem to lead to superessentialism. Section two develops an alternative rational reconstruction that preserves individual concepts as innocent.

SECTION ONE: COMPLETE INDIVIDUAL CONCEPTS

1.1 Individual Concepts as Divine Ideas

Before sketching a rational reconstruction that preserves innocent individual concepts, a few words about Leibniz’s understanding of CICs are in order. As Leibniz sees it, CICs are divine ideas. Early in his

career, Leibniz sketches a re-combinatorial account of the formation or construction of CICs in the divine intellect. He talks about ‘primitive’ divine positive attributes,⁹ and how divine ideas can be understood as *predicates* that are in some ultimate sense *about* these primitive divine attributes and their negations—henceforth dubbed ‘primitive predicates’; these primitive predicates and their negations are combined in different ways to form more complex predicates or divine ideas, and the resulting complex predicates and their negations are themselves combined in different ways to make even more complex predicates, and so on.¹⁰ Complete individual concepts *just are* the maximal set of predicates that result from these series of these re-combinatorial steps. These maximal sets of predicates are reached once no predicate can be added to an individual concept without making it *impossible* for a substance to instantiate all the properties or attributes described by these predicates or without making the set *inconsistent*.

The details of Leibniz’s re-combinatorial account need not detain us here. What matters for our purposes is that the end results, the individual concepts, are individuated by their contents or predicates: for any predicate *p* and for any individual concept *C*, if *C* includes *p*, then it is not possible for *C* not to include *p* and be the numerically identical concept that *C* is.¹¹ Furthermore, a necessary condition for something to be a possible world is for it to be a maximal set or collection of compossible complete individual concepts,¹² and as such possible worlds are also individuated by their contents: no truth in a world could be different than it is and the world remain the numerically identical possible world that it is.¹³ Furthermore, because of several philosophical commitments not relevant for the purposes of the present discussion, Leibniz thinks that each individual concept includes predicates describing everything that happens in the entire history of the universe (DM 9). Thus, for Leibniz, CICs are world-bound:¹⁴ they are members of only one maximally consistent set of compossible individual concepts that is a possible world. For Leibniz, then, concepts are divine ideas which are essentially intentional: they are *about* something else, namely the possible substances that would be created if these concepts were *instantiated* or *actualized*.¹⁵ God knows *all modal space* by having these divine ideas in his intellect which *represent* all metaphysical possibilities.

Another important feature of CICs is the way they purportedly denote or designate possible substances. As Leibniz sees it, the predicates included in individual concepts denote or designate their corresponding possible substances in a purely attributive way.¹⁶ More precisely, a possible substance *S* is the *corresponding* possible substance of complete individual concept *C* if and only if *S satisfies* all the predicates included in *C* (or *S would satisfy* all the predicates included in *C* if *S* were created

or existed). For Leibniz, then, individual concepts do *not* denote their corresponding substances *directly* or by tagging them in the fashion that, say, Kripkean names purportedly do (Kripke 1980). For Leibniz, as Mondadori aptly puts it, an individual concept is “exhaustive and uniquely applicable” (Mondadori 1973, 83); that is, for Leibniz complete individual concepts are the Fregean senses of proper names which, using only descriptions, denote or designate possible substances by distinguishing them from all other possible substances. This is, then, the basic sketch of Leibniz’s CICs: i) they are divine ideas that represent all possible substances; ii) they are maximal sets of complex predicates and their negations, which are in some sense ultimately about primitive divine attributes; iii) they are world-bound; and iv) they denote or designate their corresponding possible substances in a purely attributive way.

This Leibnizian picture of CICs is often presented by Leibniz during the middle period of his career, roughly the 1680s.¹⁷ However, it can also be discerned in Leibniz’s mature period, for example, in a well-known passage from the *Theodicy*:

Here are representations not only of that which happens but also of all that which is possible. Jupiter, having surveyed them before the beginning of the existing world, classified the possibilities into worlds . . . These worlds are all here, that is, in ideas. I will show you some, wherein shall be found, not absolutely the same Sextus as you have seen (that is not possible, he carries with him always that which he shall be) but several Sextuses resembling him, possessing all that you know already of the true Sextus, but not all that is already in him imperceptibly, nor in consequence all that shall yet happen to him. You will find in one world a very happy noble Sextus, in another a Sextus content with a mediocre state, a Sextus, indeed, of every kind and endless diversity of forms. (T 414)

All the basic elements of Leibniz’s account of CICs are present here. In this passage, the various ‘Sextuses’ are best understood as *divine ideas*, constitutive elements of possible worlds and distinguishable from each other by their different purely attributive predicates. God knows all possibilities by knowing all these qualitatively different possible substances, and all their possible arrangements, that fill modal space.

This picture of Leibnizian CICs and possible worlds does not settle the dispute regarding a superessentialist reading of Leibniz, for, as we shall see below, it is compatible with different accounts of metaphysical individuation of substances that have different implications *vis a vis* superessentialism. It is the goal of this paper to present a rational reconstruction in which these Leibnizian CICs retain their innocence, that is they permit for metaphysical contingency. To preserve an innocent

reading of CICs, the various arguments from this doctrine to superessentialism must be addressed, if only briefly. This is the task for the next subsection.

1.2 From CICs to Superessentialism

Beginning with Arnauld, many readers have thought that Leibniz's CIC doctrine leads to superessentialism. It seems that if a substance's individual concept includes predicates describing everything that will ever happen it, then everything that *will* ever happen to it *must* happen to it; that is, it seems *metaphysically impossible* for a substance to be otherwise than how its individual concept has it as being. To be sure, in general, the mere fact that something *will be* is not sufficient grounds for thinking that it also *must be*. Leibniz's CIC doctrine, however, seems to provide the required intermediary premises to deduce metaphysical necessity from mere future truth.

There are several ways of filling in the details of this argument. Here are three such possibilities. Possibility 1: one can argue that modal language should be analyzed in terms of possible world semantics; that possible worlds are maximally consistent sets of compossible individual concepts; that individual concepts are world-bound; and that it is not possible for a substance to have an individual concept other than the one it has;¹⁸ from these claims superessentialism follows.¹⁹ Possibility 2: one can argue that all the truths that are contained in individual concepts are conceptual truths; that all conceptual truths are analytic; that the opposite of any analytic truth implies a contradiction; and that propositions whose opposite implies a contradiction are metaphysically necessary; superessentialism again follows.²⁰ Possibility 3: one can argue that concepts are individuated by their contents or predicates; that substances are metaphysically individuated by their complete individual concepts; and that metaphysical individuation implies metaphysical necessitation; and once again superessentialism follows.²¹

A rational reconstruction that aims to preserve innocent individual concepts must provide answers to these arguments. Without getting into the details, it is reasonable to read Leibniz as endorsing the following responses. Contra possibility 1, modal language need not be analyzed in terms of possible world semantics²² and, as we shall see below, it may be a bit quick to insist that it is not possible for a substance to have a different CIC than the one it has. Contra possibility 2, depending exactly on one means by 'analytic,' either one need not think that for Leibniz all conceptual truths are analytic, or one need not think that for Leibniz the opposite of all analytic truths implies a contradiction. Contra possibility 3, one need not think that for Leibniz substances are

metaphysically individuated by their CICs. Setting aside the response to the second argument, the responses to the first and third arguments play a role in the rational reconstruction advanced in the next section, so defense and elaboration of these responses will have to wait until then. What matters for this point in the dialectic is that the argument from Leibniz's CIC doctrine to superessentialism is not inescapable; there is at least some interpretative space for maneuvering.

1.3 CICs and Metaphysical Individuation

A central topic in this paper is Leibniz's account of metaphysical individuation and the role that this account plays in Leibniz's modal metaphysics. Mondadori, for example, claims that for Leibniz it is the CIC that metaphysically individuates a given substance (1973, 83). He brings forth two pieces of textual support for this claim. One is the type of passages we have already encountered in which Leibniz claims, for example, that Judas's CIC ensures the truth of his future sin in such a way that "otherwise it would not be this man" (DM 30/AG 61). These types of passages can be read as Leibniz insisting that a given substance is metaphysically individuated by its CIC. We shall return to these passages below. The second piece of textual support is the following passage: "we can say that the nature of an individual substance . . . is to have a notion so complete that it is sufficient to contain and to allow us to deduce from it all the predicates of the subject to which this notion is attributed" (DM 8/AG 41). This is a central passage, often understood as Leibniz's official articulation of his notion of substance-hood during the middle period of his career.

What matters for our purposes are the implications regarding Leibniz's commitments on metaphysical individuation of substances, and here this passage is ambiguous. Leibniz claims both that individual concepts "contain" *and* "allow us to deduce" all the predicates truly attributable to a substance. These are importantly different; and distinguishing them will have central implications for the project of this paper. Following the usage of this paper up until now, the expression "complete individual concept" or "CIC" is used for individual concepts that *explicitly* contain predicates for everything that will ever happen to a substance, a conception of individual concepts that best fits with Leibniz's early re-combinatorial account of the construction of divine ideas in the divine intellect. For reasons that will become apparent shortly, the expression "explanatory individual concept" or "EIC" is used for individual concepts that do not explicitly contain all predicates truly attributable to substances but from which such predicates can in some sense be derived. Finally, "individual concepts" is here used more generally, incorporating both more precise characterizations.

What, then, metaphysically individuates a substance? Mondadori's reading is that it is the CIC. This interpretation fits nicely with the re-combinatorial construction of CICs previously sketched, and with Leibniz's early views on individuation stated in his work *Disputatio metaphysica de principio individui* (1663). There Leibniz insists that "every individual is individuated by its total entity [*omne individuum sua tota entitate individuatur*]" (A 6.1.11).²³ A substance's CIC is just a divine idea of this 'total entity' that metaphysically individuates the substance, according to Mondadori's interpretation.

However, as is often the case in Leibnizian exegesis, matters are more complicated than they first appear. Throughout his career Leibniz also claims that it is a substance's *substantial form* that metaphysically individuates it. In an important text from the late 1660s, for example, Leibniz insists that: "I demonstrate the numerical identity of substance from the numerical identity of substantial form" (A 6.1.511/LGR 39). In the middle period itself, Leibniz also repeats this view. In the *Discourse* Leibniz insists that "we must necessarily recognize . . . something related to souls, something we commonly call substantial form . . . [which serve as the] principle of identity [of substances]" (DM 12/AG 44). So, in the middle period Leibniz appeals to substantial forms to ground a type of substantial unity, or *unum per se* (DM 34), required for something to be a substance. An essential role for this substantial unity is precisely that of unifying the predicates, or properties described by these predicates, that can be truthfully predicated of a single subject. Leibniz writes: "the very idea or essence of the soul carries with it the fact that all its appearances or perceptions must arise spontaneously from its own nature" (DM 33/AG 64). Leibniz provides the following example: "from all time in Alexander's soul [i.e., substantial form] there are vestiges of everything that has happened to him and marks of everything that will happen to him" (DM 8/AG 41). It is thus the soul, or substantial form, that gives a substance its substantial unity which grounds a multiplicity of predicates being attributable to *that substance*. This is just one way of saying that it is the substantial form that metaphysically individuates the substance.

According to the reading presented herein, at least from the middle period onward, Leibniz's considered view is that it is the substantial form that metaphysically individuates a substance, and not its CIC. For Leibniz, substantial forms are the *individual natures* of substances, and as such they are *not* individual concepts or even parts of individual concepts; they are *not* divine ideas; rather, individual natures or individual substantial forms are *represented* in divine ideas. Leibniz often speaks about divine ideas when he means to speak about what is *represented* by these divine ideas.²⁴ He writes, for example: "God, seeing Alexander's

individual notion or haecceity, sees in it at the same time the basis and reasons for all the predicates which can be said truly of him” (DM 8/AG 41). Here Leibniz moves indiscriminately from *individual notions* (i.e., divine ideas) to *haecceities* (i.e., paradigmatic examples of metaphysical ingredients in substances or created beings), and it is really the latter with which he is ultimately concerned, as the second part of the sentence indicates. Sometimes, however, Leibniz is more careful: “Now it is evident that all true predication has some basis *in the nature* of things” (DM 8/AG 41, emphasis added). Here Leibniz is clear that what grounds true predication in substances, what provides the required substantial unity, is the *individual nature* of the substance, not a divine idea about this individual nature. This is Leibniz’s considered view.

My suggestion is that EICs represent substantial forms, and that it is from these substantial forms that all predicates describing everything that will ever happen to a substance *can be derived*, in some sense. As the passages in the previous paragraph suggest, this picture is already present in Leibniz’s middle period, but it is most clearly stated and developed in Leibniz’s mature philosophy, where he moves to a more explicitly dynamic conception of substance. In his important work *A Specimen of Dynamics*, for example, he insists that: “Indeed, primitive force (which is nothing but the first entelechy) corresponds to the *soul* or *substantial form*” (AG 119, emphasis in original).²⁵ In his *New System of Nature*, Leibniz describes a substance’s primitive force as “a nature or an internal force that can produce in it [substance], in an orderly way all the appearances or expressions it will have, without the help of any created being” (G 4.486/AG 144). In his *Monadology*, he writes that a substance’s primitive force is “the internal principle of a substance that brings about change, or the passages from one perception to another” (M 15/AG 215; see also Grua 327). A substance’s primitive force is, for Leibniz, the inner principle of change which explains why the substance undergoes all the change it undergoes and has all the states it has. This is how a primitive force unifies and metaphysically individuates a given substance, for Leibniz.

Before moving on, it is worth pointing out another theoretical benefit of thinking that it is the substantial form, and not the entire CIC, that metaphysically individuates a substance. This is Leibniz’s account of identity of a substance across time. In his correspondence with Arnauld, Leibniz writes:

. . . there must necessarily be a reason allowing us to truly to say that we endure, that is to say that I, who was in Paris, am now in Germany. For if there were no such reason, we would have as much right to say that it is someone else. It is true that my internal experience convinces

me *a posteriori* of this identity; but there must also be an *a priori* reason. Now, it is not possible to find any reason but the fact that both my attributes in the preceding time and state and my attributes in the succeeding time and state are predicates of the same subject—they are in the same subject. Now, what is it to say that the predicate is in the subject, except that the notion of the predicate is in some way included in the notion of the subject? And since, once I began existing, it was possible truly to say of me that this or that would happen to me, it must be admitted that these predicates were laws included in the subject or in my complete notion, which constitutes what is called I, which is the foundation of the connection of all my different states and which God has known perfectly from all eternity. (G 2.42–3/AG 73)

Here Leibniz asks what makes Leibniz-at-time-1, who is in Paris, identical to Leibniz-at-time-2, who is in Germany. Leibniz's question can be appreciated better by considering the following argument:

1. Leibniz-at-time-1 has the property of being in Paris.
2. Leibniz-at-time-2 has the property of being in Germany.
3. Being in Paris and being in Germany are incompatible properties.
4. *The principle of the identity of indiscernibles (PII)*: substance A is identical to substance B if and only if for any property P, A has P if and only if B has P.
5. Therefore, Leibniz-at-time-1 is not identical to Leibniz-at-time-2.

If we think it is the entire CIC that metaphysically individuates a given substance, we have no good reason for understanding why Leibniz-at-time-1 is identical to Leibniz-at-time-2 given that these temporal slices have *incompatible properties*. Grouping together disparate properties into a CIC as merely a *bundle of properties* may give rise to a type of 'total entity' but not one that adequately grounds the numerical identity of substances as they undergo change in time. Why understand such bundle of properties as a single substance enduring through time and not a series of numerically different substances subsequently replacing each other?

Leibniz's answer is that there is a *law* included in the individual concept "which is the foundation of the connection of all my different states" (G 2.43/AG 73). That is, there is a law that explains and unifies the series of states or properties that a substance has through time. Thus, if we think it is a substantial form that metaphysically individuates a substance, then we can note that Leibniz-at-time-1 has the same substantial form as Leibniz-at-time-2 and that the different properties

of these temporal slices are explained and unified by the law *encoded* in the same substantial form. Identity across time is thus preserved.

The presented argument, then, relies on a misapplication of the PII. Interpretations of Leibniz's version of the PII must respect Leibniz's insistence that identity across time can be secured by the presence of 'marks and traces' (DM 8/AG 41) of past and future *incompatible* properties that the substance has had or will have. This restriction on the PII makes most sense, when it is viewed as the substantial form that metaphysically individuates the substance, and it is what has the 'marks and traces' by encoding a law that in principle can be used to derive past and future predicates truly attributable to the substance.

SECTION TWO: INNOCENT INDIVIDUAL CONCEPTS

Innocent individual concepts are divine ideas that permit God to know everything that will ever happen to all possible substances without requiring that all properties are had essentially or with metaphysical necessity. It is the goal of this section to sketch an account that permits innocent individual concepts.

1.1 Essential and Accidental Properties

In discussions on metaphysics of modality it is standard to make a distinction between essential and accidental properties.²⁶ The former are had necessarily and the latter merely accidentally or contingently. Leibniz uses the word 'essence' in a variety of ways throughout his career.²⁷ At least sometimes, however, he uses this word in the standard way: "whereas absolute and metaphysical necessity depends on the other great principle of our reasoning, namely, that of essences, that is, the principle of identity or contradiction" (LC 5.10; see also Grua 602–6; T 52; 390). The word 'essence' is here used in this standard way. Arguably for Leibniz the essence of the substance is to be identified with the substance's primitive force.²⁸ "The essence of substances consists in the primitive force to act, or in the law of the sequence of changes" (A 6.3.326). This permits Leibniz to say that a substance's substantial form is essential to it, and the properties explained and unified by this form are only accidental to it. The question for us is whether this distinction can be meaningfully maintained, or whether Leibniz's commitment to individual concepts entails superessentialism.

In DM 13, Leibniz seems to endorse one way of preserving the distinction between essential and accidental properties. Using the example of Julius Caesar and the predicate 'being a dictator,' Leibniz writes: "Caesar's future dictatorship is grounded in his notion or nature . . . there is a reason why he crossed the Rubicon . . . why he won . . . at

Pharsalus . . . it is reasonable, and consequently certain, that this should happen. But this would not show that it was necessary in itself nor that the contrary implies a contradiction . . . and nothing is necessary whose contrary is possible” (DM 13/AG 45–46). Leibniz here insists that the proposition “Julius Caesar is a dictator” is metaphysically contingent, despite it being derivable from Julius Caesar’s individual concept, because the proposition “Julius Caesar is not a dictator” does not imply a contradiction by itself. No contradiction is implied, Leibniz further tells us, because the ‘mark’ included in the individual concept by itself is not sufficient to derive ‘being a dictator’ without also making use of divine free decrees, in particular the decree to do what is best (DM 13/AG 45–6). Thus “every truth based on these kinds of [divine] decrees is contingent” (DM 13/AG 46).²⁹

The story painted by Leibniz in DM 13 can be developed into one way of preserving innocent individual concepts. CICs are divine ideas that represent everything that will ever happen to possible substances, if created; CICs include these predicates *explicitly*; these predicates are part of their *content*; these CICs are thus individuated by their predicates or contents. By contrast, EICs are divine ideas which represent essences, or primitive forces, which include “marks” or *reasons* that would explain and unify all the properties that can be truly predicated of substances, and from which all these predicates can *in some sense be derived*. Importantly, the explicit predicates, the content, of EICs are just the individual essences and their marks; it is *that content* that individuates EICs. CICs thus include EICs and also the predicates denoting the properties that the marks in EICs explain and unify. In CICs, the principle of sufficient reason (PSR) is preserved, for the possible substances represented therein do have the properties explained by their essences. However, God also has *other* divine ideas which include EICs and predicates describing properties *not explained* by the marks in EICs, but which do not negate or contradict the properties in the essence itself. There is no contradiction here because deriving these predicates from the essence requires making use of divine decrees, in particular God’s decree to do the best. For example, there is a divine idea with Leibniz’s EIC, which includes a mark or reason for *Leibniz’s being in Paris at t*, but also a predicate ‘not being in Paris at t.’ This divine idea is *not logically inconsistent*, for the *mark* included in Leibniz’s EIC is not inconsistent with the negation of the property it explains, namely ‘being in Paris at t.’ The principle of contradiction (PC) is preserved, for no contradiction can be derived from this divine idea without the divine decree to do the best: it represents an alternative metaphysical possibility for Leibniz. These divine ideas representing alternative metaphysical possibilities thus violate the PSR, but not the PC; whereas CICs respect both.

This account leaves several questions unanswered. What about the passage in which Leibniz claims that “otherwise it would not be this man” (DM 30/AG 61)? How does Leibniz’s account of metaphysical individuation relate to his metaphysics of modality? Do all alternative metaphysical possibilities require violations of the PSR? The next section sketches some answers to these questions.

1.2 Subjunctive Conditionals of Human Freedom

Not only does Leibniz often claim that it is metaphysically possible for substances to be otherwise than they are. He also insists that God has knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of human freedom—propositions of the form “if agent S were in circumstances C, S would freely phi.” I argue elsewhere that Leibniz uses these conditionals of freedom to account for the compatibility of human freedom with theological doctrines including divine providential control, divine foreknowledge, and distribution of various kinds of divine graces (Garcia 2018).³⁰ Leibniz writes, for example: “God considers what a man would do in such and such circumstances; and it always remains true that God could have placed him in other circumstances more favorable, and given him inward or outward succor capable of vanquishing the most abysmal wickedness existing in any soul” (T 103). Leibniz insists here that God knows what agents would freely do even in situations in which those agents are never going to be.

Incidentally, Leibniz’s account of subjunctive conditionals of freedom permits for a non-superessentialist interpretations of the “otherwise it would not be this man” (DM 30/AG 61) type passages. Leibniz’s PII and the truth that “If Judas were in C, Judas would freely sin” suffice for it to be the case that if someone were to not sin in C, that someone would not be Judas. It need not also be the case that sinning in C is *essential* to Judas.

Leibniz’s insistence that God has knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of freedom does not establish that he is theoretically entitled to these, nor does it answer how these conditionals fit with Leibniz’s CIC doctrine, however. I argue elsewhere that one way of making sense of God’s knowledge of these subjunctive conditionals of human freedom is by God knowing a multiplicity of possible series of states explained and unified by a single primitive force (Garcia 2019). Such a multiplicity is possible, because what explains a series of states, for Leibniz, is not the primitive force alone but it plus an “initial state” that God bestows on the primitive force to get the series going (G 2.91–92/LA 115). This allows for the possibility of God bestowing different possible initial states on the same primitive force, thus resulting in a multiplicity of possible series of states grounded in and driven by the same primitive force. God

thus knows how a given substance would freely act in different possible circumstances by knowing how these different possible series would unfold. We can think of each of these possible series of states as a single CIC; thus, a single EIC, representing a primitive force as an *essence*, is compatible with a set C of CICs that share EIC and that differ only in *accidental properties*.

This story can supplement the account on the previous subsection. On this picture, counterfactuals true of a particular substance can be understood as the various truths encoded in a set C of CICs unified by a single EIC. Furthermore, *de re* modal attributions can be understood as the various truths encoded in divine ideas including EICs and predicates not explained by the marks included in EICs, along the lines previously sketched. CICs members of C do not violate the PSR, but these other divine ideas do.

1.3 Identity and Modal Profile

A final question that needs to be addressed before concluding is whether the picture sketched so far requires something analogous to transworld identity. Do the different CICs members of a set C sharing a single EIC represent the numerically identical substance?

The account sketched so far, and Leibniz's texts, do not demand a particular answer to this question. The model can be extended to include either answer. On the one hand, we can develop a proto-Lewisian account in the following way. We can insist that it is CICs, or the 'total entity' represented therein, that metaphysically individuates possible substances. Thus, members CICs, of a set C unified by a single EIC, represent *numerically distinct* possible substances which share a *qualitatively identical* essence. These possible substances are numerically distinct precisely because they have *qualitatively distinct* accidental properties. Contra Mondadori, however, this account need not entail that all properties are had essentially or with metaphysical necessity. Rather, it is still feasible to provide a counterpart-style account of metaphysical modality, roughly like David Lewis himself does (1986): possible substance A is a *counterpart* of possible substance A* if and only if A and A* share an essence; further, to say that it is *metaphysically possible* for substance A to have a property P is to say that there is a *numerically distinct* substance A* that is a counterpart of A and that A* has P, and so on.³¹

On the other hand, it is also possible to develop the account to include something analogous to transworld identity. If it is EICs, or more precisely the primitive forces represented therein, that metaphysically individuate possible substances, then all CICs members of a set C unified

by a EIC will represent the *numerically identical* substance. We can call all divine ideas that include a given EIC the *modal profile* of the single corresponding substance. This picture can be secured by a philosophical move structurally analogous to Leibniz's move in securing identity across time.³²

We noted earlier that Leibniz-at-time-1 who is in Paris is *identical* to Leibniz-at-time-2 who is in Germany, even though *being in Paris* and *being in Germany* are *incompatible*, because both share Leibniz's substantial form, which metaphysically individuates Leibniz, and which explains and unifies the different properties Leibniz has through time. Likewise, we can say that Leibniz-in-possible-series-1 who has property P is *identical* to Leibniz-in-possible-series-2 who has property -P because both share Leibniz's substantial form, which metaphysically individuates Leibniz, and which explains and unifies the different properties Leibniz has in these possible series of states. If this philosophical move works for time, it can work for modal space too.

Perhaps a reason for thinking that this move does not work for modal space is that the kind of restriction to PII required for modality is less plausible than the restriction required for time. Here are two ways of articulating these relevant restrictions into the PII:

Temporal PII: substance A is identical to substance B if and only if for every property P, A has P-at-time-t if and only if B has P-at-time-t.

Modal PII: substance A is identical to substance B if and only if for every property P, A has P-in-possible-series-n if and only if B has P-in-possible-series-n.

Perhaps Temporal PII is more plausible than Modal PII.³³ It is not part of present project to pursue these kinds of questions, however. The point is merely that a philosophical move can be made in the modal case that is structurally analogous to Leibniz's move in the temporal case, and that this would provide a different way of preserving innocent individual concepts, one that allows for something analogous to transworld identity.³⁴ The goal of this paper has not been to argue that innocent individual concepts with transworld identity is the best reading of Leibniz; rather, the main goal has been to argue that the argument from Leibniz's CIC doctrine to superessentialism is not inescapable and that there is enough underdetermination in the key Leibniz's texts to allow for non-superessentialist readings in his metaphysics of modality.

CONCLUSION

Leibniz claims that for every possible substance S there is an individual concept that includes predicates describing everything that will ever

happen to S, if S existed. Many commentators have thought that this leads Leibniz to think that all properties are had essentially, and thus that it is not metaphysically possible for substances to be otherwise than how their individual concept has them as being. This is the superessentialist reading of Leibniz's views on the metaphysics of modality. This paper demonstrated that this reading is not inescapable, and that it is possible to retain a reading of individual concepts that is innocent: individual concepts as divine ideas that enable God to know everything that will ever happen to all possible substances, if created, without requiring that it be metaphysically necessary that substances have the properties they in fact have.

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NOTES

1. Translations are the author's own unless a translation is cited.
2. The secondary literature on Leibniz's account of modality is quite extensive. Many scholars think that Leibniz is a kind of necessitarian or superessentialist: Mates (1972; 1986), Mondadori (1973; 1975), Frankel (1984), Griffin (1999; 2013), and Jorati (2017a, Ch. 5). A few disagree: Hunter (1981), Adams (1994), Lodzinski (1994), Baxter (2000), and Murray (2004), for example.
3. Sleigh (1990) and Cover and Hawthorne (1990; 1992; 1999) provide influential dissenting interpretations.
4. Herein superessentialism is understood as the thesis that for any object O and for any property P if O has P, then it is metaphysically necessary that O has P. Mondadori, who reads Leibniz as a superessentialist, defines it thus: for any object O and Property P, if O has P, then it is not possible for O not to have P while still existing/being O (1973, 83). Look, (2013, § 3), also attributes this view to Leibniz, and defines it as: for any individual substance, x, and for any property P of x, necessarily, if x exists, then x has P. A closely related view is that of necessitarianism, which is here understood as the view that everything that is actual is metaphysically necessary. Griffin (2013, 3) defines necessitarianism this way and attributes it to Leibniz. In this paper, little attention will be paid to the distinction between these views. What matters, for present purposes, is that they all undermine metaphysical contingency.
5. Mondadori (1973; 1975); Mates (1972; 1986); Look (2013, § 3).

6. Arnauld himself detects that this is what Leibniz is saying and finds such a view perfectly acceptable: “For I agree that God’s knowledge of Adam when he resolved to create him contained that of everything that has happened to him, and of everything that has happened and is to happen to his posterity; and if the individual concept of Adam is taken in this sense, what you say about it is very certain” (A 2.2.34/LA 45).

7. Robert Sleigh, who himself distances his own superintrinsicness interpretation of Leibniz from superessentialist readings, nonetheless thinks that it is a bit unfair of Leibniz to rely on this innocent reading, in his correspondence with Arnauld, because Leibniz’s CIC doctrine is far from innocent (Sleigh 1990, 48–49).

8. Mondadori (1973; 1975) and Griffin (1999; 2013), for example.

9. He writes, for example: “An *attribute* is a necessary predicate that is conceived through itself, or that cannot be analyzed into several others” (A 6.3.574; 1676).

10. Leibniz wrote an entire dissertation on this topic early in his career: *Dissertatio de arte combinatoria*, A 6.1.163–230; see Nachtomý (2007, Ch. 1), and Rescher (2013, Ch. 1, Sec. 5).

11. There is a tradition of making the relevant point about individuation by stating a conditional with an impossible consequent along the lines of the one in the main text (see Mondadori 1975, Fine 1994). This tradition is followed here. However, if one is puzzled by such conditionals, the same same point can be safely reformulated this way: for any predicate p and for any concept C , if C includes p , then for any concept C^* if C^* does not include p , then C and C^* are numerically distinct.

12. T 8; G 3.573; G 7.302. Several commentators have also noted this: Mates (1972; 1986), Sleigh (1990, 50) and Look (2013). Arguably, this is not a sufficient condition as well. As Leibniz sees it, part of what it is for something to be a world is that this thing be, in some relevant sense, an object worthy of divine choice: G 2.51, T 8–9, Grua 390.

13. This part of Leibniz’s views is most clear in his mature period (T 414, for example).

14. See Cover and Hawthorne (1990; 1992; 1999) for an intriguing way of dissenting from this reading of Leibniz.

15. Rescher (2013, Ch. 1) makes these same points; Look (2005) provides an illuminating discussion on this topic.

16. Several commentators have noted this: Mondadori (1973), Adams (1979, 7), and Sleigh (1990, 75), for example. We can see this Leibnizian view, for example, in Leibniz’s discussion of Adam conceived *sub ratione generalitates*. Leibniz explains: “that is to say, without naming Eve, Paradise, and other circumstances that fix individuality” (G 2.42/AG 72).

17. The CIC doctrine is central in his important work *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686) and his correspondence with Arnauld (1686–1687), for example.

18. It is worth pointing out that the sense of ‘possibility’ articulated in this claim connecting concepts and substances is itself a sense that cannot be fully captured by possible world semantics, for possible worlds are composed of individual concepts and not substances so the relations holding between these are prior structural features of the modal space represented by possible worlds instead of something that is there represented.

19. At least in general terms, this is the way in which Mates (1972; 1986) and Mondadori (1973; 1975) argue for superessentialism from Leibniz’s CIC doctrine.

20. Lovejoy (1964, 172–175) makes explicit use of something like this line of reasoning. Baxter (2000, 194–195) gestures at it in passing.

21. Arnauld’s more developed argument is roughly along these lines (*Arnauld to Leibniz, 13 May 1686*, A 2.2.35–36), and Mondadori flirts with the central ideas (1973, 83).

22. After Robert Adams insightful work on Leibniz (1994), it is now standard to think that it is a mistake to read Leibniz as relying in anything like modern versions of possible world semantics. Scholars like Griffin (1999; 2013, Ch. 7), however, have managed to use modern accounts of possible world semantics to make sense of Leibniz’s modal metaphysics without explicitly attributing those semantics to Leibniz himself.

23. McCullough (1996) and Mugnai (2001) provide powerful arguments that Leibniz’s views on the *Disputatio* and beyond is strongly influenced by Suarez’s views on metaphysical individuation.

24. Bartha (1993, 46) makes the same point.

25. Leibniz further divides primitive force into active and passive primitive force, and he goes on to identify substantial forms only with the former and primary matter with the latter. Jorati (2018) argues that Leibniz reduces these hylomorphic elements to these primitive forces. These complications will be ignored for the purposes of this paper.

26. See Code 1986, Fine 2005.

27. In the early 1680s, Leibniz writes: “Perfection, or essence, is an urge for existence” (Grua 288/AG 20); in the *Discourse* itself Leibniz writes: “We could call that which includes everything we express our essence or idea” (DM 16/AG 49).

28. See Cover and Hawthorne 1992, Melamed and Lin 2016, and Garcia 2019.

29. Baxter (2000) provides an insightful interpretation of Leibniz’s account here.

30. Anfray (2002) argues for a similar thesis.

31. Texts that fit, but do not demand, this view are Leibniz’s discussion of various qualitatively distinct “Sextuses” (T 414), “an infinity of Adams” (G 2.42/AG 72), and perhaps also T 52, 225.

32. Texts that fit, but do not demand, this view include those previously cited in defense of reading a substance's substantial form, and not its entire CIC, as that which metaphysically individuates a substance, for Leibniz. There are also some passages that seem to be best read as endorsing something analogous to transworld identity (A 6.4.1374, 6.4.2318; Grua 358; T 103, 174).

33. What is undeniable is that different readings of the PII have central consequences for metaphysics of modality. For example, Jorati (2017b) argues that, for Leibniz, the PII is metaphysically contingent partly because it depends upon the PSR which is also metaphysically contingent. Cover and Hawthorne (1999, Ch. 5) also spend time looking at the extent to which a metaphysically contingent PII follows from a metaphysically contingent PSR and how the various arguments in which Leibniz's employs these principles, and the resulting picture of metaphysics of modality, are affected by the modal status of these principles.

34. Plantinga (1974; 1977) and Flint (1998) have presented models that also include the PII and transworld identity. Cover and Hawthorne (1999) also argue that Leibniz can accommodate something analogous to transworld identity, though their final picture is in several respects quite different than mine. Mates (1972) argues that including world-indexed properties in complete individual concepts enables Leibniz to avoid superessentialism while retaining the principle of the identity of indiscernibles. He argues, however, that Leibniz fails to provide a good "criterion for cross-world identification" (116) which would mark the distinction between essential and accidental properties, so he ends up ascribing superessentialism to Leibniz. The present proposal to identify the essence of a substance with its primitive force adequately addresses Mates' worries.

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- LGR *Leibniz on God and Religion*, Edited and translated by Lloyd Strickland. Bloomsbury Academy, 2016.
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- M *Monadology* (1714). Cited by section as in G 6.607–623; English translation from AG 213–225.
- T *Theodicy*. (1710). G 6:102–365; English translation E. M. Huggard. Theodicy. La Salle: Open Court, 1985. Cited by section number.

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