

# The Two Faces of Identity

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In this essay I offer an account of what we are looking for, when we ask for the identity conditions of some category of things. The account is a development of those sketched in "The Same *F*" and "Can the Self Divide," but goes importantly beyond them in several ways. Towards the end of this essay I come back to the issue of dividing selves, and conclude that in "Can the Self Divide" I barged right past the correct solution to that problem, into error.

The discussion of conditions of the identity is often provoked by a puzzling case. It will be helpful to have one to refer to. In my *Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* I consider the fictional case of Julia North and Mary-Frances Beaudine. In her novel, *Who is Julia?*, Barbara Harris supposes that Julia is run over by a street car in saving the life of Mary-Frances' child. Mary-Frances has a massive stroke as a result of witnessing this. Thanks to post-modern medical science, we end up with someone I'll call Mary-Julia, with Julia's intact brain and Mary-Frances's intact body.

## 1. HOW CAN IDENTITY CONDITIONS BE A PROBLEM?

That *A* is the same person as *B*, seems just to require that *A* and *B* are persons, and that *A* is identical with *B*. That is, the relation of personal identity seems to be merely the restriction, to the domain of persons, of the relation of identity. And so it seems the problem of personal identity should break neatly into halves: what is required for *A* to be a person? And, what is required for *A* to be identical with *B*? And then it seems that the second half must already be solved. For there are, in logic texts, straightforward and relatively unproblematic accounts of

identity; identity theory is one of the least controversial areas of knowledge a philosopher is likely to need.

Yet it is not the first, but the second half that gives us difficulty. Mary-Julia has Julia's brain and Mary-Frances' body. We are sure of the personhood of all of the characters in our puzzle: Mary-Julia, Mary-Frances, and Julia. No one denies the identity of Mary-Julia with Mary-Frances or with Julia on the grounds that one or both is not a person, but, say, a machine or mannequin. It is the question of identity that perplexes.

It is not only personal identity, but identity of many kinds, that give rise to philosophical problems. Can the river stay the same, when the water is constantly changing? Is the rebuilt church the same as the one that stood in the same place, serving the same congregation, called by the same name? In these cases the problem does not seem to be saying which things are and which things are not rivers or churches, but saying when rivers or churches are identical.

My goal in this essay is to say what it is we are wondering about, when we wonder about the identity conditions of a kind of object. That is, what problem is left over when the clear and uncontroversial account of identity offered by logic texts has been digested? What is the relation between this single clear relation called "identity," and the diversity of problematic relations we use in making judgment about the identity of persons, rivers, churches, baseball games, and everything else?

## 2. THE LOGICAL PROPERTIES OF IDENTITY.

Virtually every logic book contains a section of identity, stating the properties of this relation in a clear, concise, unequivocal manner. Identity is *strongly reflexive*: every object is identical with itself. It is *symmetrical*: if *A* is identical with *B*, *B* is identical with *A*. It is *transitive*: if *A* is identical with *B* and *B* with *C* then *A* is identical with *C*. All of these properties are obvious or even trivial, when the central idea of identity is grasped: if *A* and *B* are identical, then there is just *one* thing that is both *A* and *B*. '*A*' and '*B*' are two terms that stand for *it*. For

example, from transitivity and reflexivity one can prove that if *A* is identical with *B*, and *B* with *C*, then *C* is identical with *A*. But this is obvious: when we go, by identity, from *A* to *B*, and *B* to *C*, and back to *A*, we are in fact going nowhere; since we do not move, we need not return.

A further property of identity is embodied in the principle of the indiscernibility of the identical: If *A* and *B* are identical, then they have all properties in common. This principle, like the other properties of identity, seems obvious and uncontroversial once we grasp the connection between *identity* and *oneness*. If *A* and *B* were identical, but had different properties, one thing would both have and not have those properties. And that cannot be. The indiscernibility of identicals is as clear, and should be as uncontroversial, as the principle that an object cannot both have and not have a certain property.

### 3. IS IDENTITY IDENTITY?

If identity is so clear and trivial, how can personal identity be so murky and important?

One possibility is that this clear notion of identity is not the usual notion of identity at all, or perhaps only one of a number of usual notions of identity, many of which share neither its clarity or its triviality.

We find many philosophers expressing variations on this idea. J.J.C. Smart, for example, once distinguished what he calls "two senses" of "is identical with." In "7 is identical with the smallest prime number greater than 5" we employ the strict sense, presumably what I have called pure identity.

When on the other hand I say that the successful general is the same person as the small boy who stole the apples I mean *only that* the successful general I see before me is a time slice of the same four dimensional object of which the small boy stealing the apples is an earlier time slice (Smart, 1959, p. 37) .

We would ordinarily say, in the circumstance Smart describes, that the general was the very person, the very same person, who stole the apples. So Smart's conception is that personal identity is not the same sort of identity we have with numbers, and further that it is not strictly speaking, identity. We should not simply assume, for example, that the relation the general has to the small boy has the properties identity theory requires of pure identity. And it is clear that Smart thought that generally, when matters of continuity through space and time are relevant, we are not dealing with pure or strict identity.

Why should Smart have thought this? There can be no disagreement about the claim that 'identity' and 'same' can be used to express other relations than pure identity. Identical twins, for example, would not be twins, if purely identical; here 'identical' means roughly 'exactly similar in appearance.'

If the old general and the young thief are discernible, if they do not have all properties in common, they cannot be purely identical. While Smart does not say that they are discernible this may be his reason for denying pure identity. At any rate, this is a common enough reaction to this sort of case to merit discussion.

"The boy is young and the general is not. So they are discernible and not identical." This is a bad reasoning. Although the general is old, he was young; although the boy was young; he is now old. Both the general and the boy were once young, and now are old. There is no clash of properties, no discernibility, no reason to abandon pure identity.

We can treat properties in various ways, and unless we make sure to alter our conception of the principle of the indiscernibility of the identical accordingly, we will run into problems of the sort just encountered. Consider:

Mike ran to work Saturday May 23, 1973.

Is this true because Mike has the property of having run to work Saturday May 23, 1973? Or is it true because Mike had, that Saturday, the property of running to work? Let us say that *running to work Saturday, May 23, 1973* is a permanent

property. If one has it ever, one has it always. *Running to work*, on the other hand, is a temporary property. One has it on the way to work, but loses it once one gets there. If we choose to think in terms of temporary properties, which is natural in our tensed language, we must phrase the principle of the indiscernibility of identicals accordingly:

If *A* and *B* are identical, *A* has (had, or will have) at *t* just those properties *B* has (had, or will have) at *t*.

It will not generally be true, even if *A* is *B*, that *A* had all the properties *B* has, or *A* has all the properties *B* had, or *A* has all the properties *B* will have. But it will also not be true that *A* has all the properties *A* had, or will have. When I finish this essay, I will no longer have a property I once had, of not having finished it yet. Things change, and they can remain identical, in the sense of being one and the same thing, while doing so.

This is a simple point, but there seems to be built into the human psyche a disastrous pair of natural tendencies: to think in terms of temporary properties, and yet to regard the tense in the natural rendering of the indiscernibility of the identical as an irrelevancy. A cruel trilemma is thus posed: give up the principle, give up change, or suppose the identity of persons and chairs and rocks and rivers is not pure identity. But the trilemma is false. There is no reason of discernibility to deny the pure identity of the general and the boy.

#### 4. THE CIRCLE OF PREDICATION AND INDIVIDUATION

So personal identity requires indiscernibility, and there should be no objection to thinking of it as a restriction of identity to the domain of persons.

But why then should there be a problem of personal identity? If we have a complete account of identity, what more need be said about personal identity?

Consider Julia, Mary Frances, and Mary-Julia, the survivor of the transplant operation. The question is, who is this survivor? Mary Frances, Julia, or neither of them? By application of the indiscernibility of the identical, we

know that if the survivor is Mary Frances, the survivor and Mary Frances will have all properties in common. Does this help us to decide? If we are not careful, it may seem to: Mary Frances didn't know French, the survivor does, so the survivor and Mary Frances are discernible and hence not identical. But this argument involves just the mistake exposed above in Section 2. Mary Frances couldn't speak French before the operation. The survivor can speak French after the operation. This information doesn't discern. We would need to establish that the survivor could speak French before the operation, or Mary Frances couldn't after the operation. But then we would have to know just what is in doubt. The question of whether the survivor could speak French before the operation is just the question of who she is. If she is Julia, then she could; if she is Mary Frances, then she couldn't, and her French speaking is a recently acquired trait, gained through acquisition of what used to be someone else's brain. Only misapplied is the indiscernibility of the identical of any help in resolving the case. The principle really just guarantees that an identity puzzle will also be an indiscernibility puzzle.

The reason indiscernibility doesn't help is not that it is unconnected with personal identity, but because the connection is too close. For the survivor to have known French before the operation is just for the survivor to be identical with someone who, before the operation, knew French. To establish the one fact is to establish the other. Our understanding of what it is for a person to have had a property in the past is not separable from our understanding of what it is for a person to be identical with someone in the past.

We have in effect suggested, and rejected, a format for explaining the identity conditions for a certain kind of object, *Ks*. The suggested format was this:

*X* and *y* are the same *K* iff *Xs* and *Ys* are *Ks* and *x* and *y* have all properties in common.

The problem with this format isn't that the statements generated from it by replacing "*K*" with various kind terms aren't true; they are true. The problem is that we couldn't *explain* identity in this way, for the right side could not be

understood unless we understood, for any property of *Ks* whatsoever, what it is for a *K* to have that property. And, unless *K*-identity is already understood, we don't have that understanding.

Now this suggests a more general problem. If we wish to explain or analyze what it is for this *K* and that *K* to stand in a certain relation, the natural way to do it seems to explain it in terms of the relations and properties that are necessary and sufficient for this relation to hold. That is, the natural way to do it is to talk about *Ks*. But understanding such talk requires understanding references to *Ks*, and predication about *Ks*, that is, understanding what it is for *Ks* to have the properties and stand in the relations that are used in the explanation. But, it seems, understanding predication about *Ks* presupposes an understanding of *K*-individuation, the identity conditions of *Ks*. It looks like we are faced with a circle, *the circle of predication and individuation*. To break the circle, it would be necessary to find *some* properties of *Ks*, and relations between *Ks*, which can be understood independently of individuation. The explanation could proceed, without circularity, in terms of this restricted set of relations and properties. If we review what we have said so far, it will seem that this strategy should work.

## 5. IDENTITY'S TWO FACES

Identity seems to have two faces. On the one hand, it is a universal notion; any entity, of any kind, of any category, a snail, or a number, is identical with itself. This can be said *a priori*. Whatever object you care to mention, even if I know nothing special about it, I can be sure that it is self-identical.

On the other hand, there seems to be a family of empirical relations, the determination of which may take careful and painstaking investigation. That the sun is always the same, and is not new every day was, Frege noted, one of the most fertile of astronomical discoveries. It couldn't be determined *a priori*. That the man on the defendant's chair is the bank robber would be impossible for the jury to determine without careful attention to the evidence. And the relation, between the man and the robber, about which the jury must deliberate, seems to

have little to do with the relation that, say, the number of pencils on my desk has with the number of fingers on my hand, or that the war raging in the Pacific in 1945 had to the one raging in Poland in 1939. We seem to have various relations for various kinds of objects, that pass as identity, and cannot be judged a priori.

We seem to have arrived at the following picture. For each kind of object  $K$  there is a relation which is the necessary and sufficient for  $K$ -identity. This relation is not identity, nor even generally equivalent to it, but it is equivalent in the restricted case of  $K$ s. Such a relation we can call the condition of  $K$ -identity.

Spatio-temporal continuity, for example, has often been suggested as the condition of identity for material objects, or at least for most types of material objects. Let's assume this suggestion is correct, for the time being. Still, it is not the condition for baseball team identity, for baseball teams can undergo shifts from city to city at the stroke of a pen, without in any sense passing through intervening places. Admittedly, the A's passed through Kansas City on their way from Philadelphia to Oakland, but the Giants moved from New York to San Francisco without passing through the Midwest at all. So the relation of spatio-temporal continuity, while it may be the condition of identity for rocks and trees, is not the condition of identity for baseball teams. It is even more clearly not the condition of identity for numbers, for numbers can't even stand in this relation.

Now, on this picture, an account of the identity conditions for a kind of objects  $K$  should look like this:

Where  $R$  is the condition of  $K$ -identity,  $x$  is the same  $K$  as  $y$  iff:  $x$  and  $y$  are  $K$ s and  $x$  has  $R$  to  $y$

Of course,  $R$  need not be a simple relation, or one philosophers will have any luck at all analyzing or explaining. Presumably, if humans make identity judgements about  $K$ s, it must be a relation we can determine to hold, or at least think we can.

The various theories of personal identity briefly mentioned in Section 1 can be put into this format:

$x$  is the same person as  $y$  *iff*  $x$  and  $y$  are persons and  $x$  has the same body as  $y$

$x$  is the same person as  $y$  *iff*  $x$  and  $y$  are persons and  $x$  remembers  $y$ 's thought and action.

$x$  is the same person as  $y$  *iff*  $x$  and  $y$  are persons and  $x$  has the same soul as  $y$

Given this picture, we can understand the "two faces" of identity. There is the relation of identity, whose logical features completely circumscribe it. There are various conditions of identity, which differ from kind of object to kind of object. It is these for which we search, when looking for an explanation of  $K$ -identity.

#### 6. THE CIRCLE OF REFERENCE AND INDIVIDUATION.

But there are difficulties with this way of looking at things.

One question immediately arises, when we look at the conditions of  $K$ -identity in this way. How can the relation in question guarantee indiscernibility? Why should the two faces of identity conform with one another? This they must do, for the identity condition guarantees  $K$ -identity,  $K$ -identity is identity restricted to  $K$ s, and identity guarantees indiscernibility. But why should, say, rocks that are spatio-temporally continuous have all their properties in common? The problem is not so much that this question cannot be answered, but that the answer leads to into another circle, the circle of reference and individuation.

At too casual a glance, we may think that something has gone terribly wrong, for the various conditions of identity might seem not to guarantee indiscernibility at all. The rock that was on my desk a moment ago and the rock beside the paint pail are spatio-temporally continuous; that is, a rock-filled continuous path stretches from one to the other. But they are hardly indiscernible; the one was gray, the other is red, the one was on the desk, the other is on the floor.

But this is just our old fallacy again. The rock on the floor was on the desk, and was gray, and that's just what we said about the rock that was on the desk.

But consider this fact, that the rock now on the floor was gray. That it was gray seems to depend importantly on its identity, on the present assumptions, on the fact that it is spatio-temporally continuous with the rock that was on the desk and was gray. To understand what it is for a rock to have been gray seems to involve understanding what it is for a rock to be identical with a rock that was gray. One who did not understand that spatio-temporal continuity was the condition of rock identity, would not realize that the rock was gray, even if all the facts were readily available.

These reflections seem to provide an answer to our question. The identity condition of *Ks* guarantees indiscernibility because the identity condition is involved in what it is for a *K* to have a property. If rock *A* is gray at *t* and spatio-temporally continuous with the rock on the floor at *t'*, then the rock on the floor at *t'* also has the property of being gray at *t*. Metaphysically, properties flow along the relation of identity. If *A* and *B* are *Ks*, and the condition of identity is met, then they will share all properties, because the properties of the one become, by that fact the properties of the other.

Like much that is strictly speaking incoherent in philosophy, this all makes a point. The point is that the identity condition secures indiscernibility, because the scheme of *K*-individuation, the identity condition for *Ks*, is a part of the scheme of *K*-predication, the condition under which *Ks* have various properties and stand in various relations.

This is really the same point, made earlier, when we wondered why knowing that indiscernibility was a condition of identity did not solve our problems with regard to Julia, Mary Frances, and Mary-Julia. To check on indiscernibility we have to understand under what conditions persons have properties, and this involves understanding personal identity. If we don't know whether Mary-Julia is Mary Frances, we don't know whether Mary Frances had the property, having already known French.

Given this intimate connection, can we really have evaded the circle of predication and individuation? It seems that although the understanding of some

properties (such as having known French) and relations (such as having been taught French by Madame Foucalt) presuppose an understanding of identity conditions, understanding other properties and relations does not. For example, we can determine that Mary-Julia speaks French, without solving the problem of who she is, Julia or Mary Frances. Similarly, we may understand what it is for *person x to have the same body as person y* or for *person x to remember something that person y did* without understanding the conditions of personal identity. Though we cannot explain personal identity in terms of sharing *all* properties and relations, as long as we confine ourselves to the properties and relations that can be understood independently of individuation, we can explain it.

## 7. EXPLAINING IDENTITY CONDITIONS

But another set of problems begins to emerge with the suggested format, if we press our examples a little. Consider the claim that spatio-temporal continuity is the condition of identity for material objects. How would this be stated more precisely? We might say, that where  $K$  is a kind of material object, say rocks,

$A$  is the same rock as  $B$  iff  $A$  is a rock and  $B$  is a rock and there is a spatio-temporally continuous path from  $A$  to  $B$  with a rock at each point along it.

But now this is really a very curious thing to say. If  $A$  and  $B$  are identical, they are in exactly the same place. A path from one to the other would be too short to be worth mentioning.

Perhaps the problem is that we need descriptions that locate the rocks identified in different places and times: "The rock that broke my window Saturday is identical with the rock that broke your window Sunday if and only if there is a spatio-temporally continuous path from the one to the other with a rock at each point."

But this is no better. If the rock mentioned first is identical with the rock mentioned second, they are now in exactly the same place. And wherever the one has been, the other has been too. No path has ever needed to stretch between them. A good thing too-- there has never been any room.

The problem seems to be this. When we say that rocks are identical if spatio-temporally continuous, or if a continuous rock-filled path stretches from one to the other, we must be thinking of two things. But if the path constitutes rock identity, there aren't two things, but only one. But the relation we were trying to use, that of there being a continuous path between, seem to be a relation that can hold only between an object and another object. As soon as we accept this relation as our condition of identity, it becomes incoherent that it should be such. Or, if we say that everything has the "null path" between it and itself, trivial.

Consider the theory that Mary-Julia is Julia only if she can remember Julia's actions. To see if this relation obtains, it seems we have to go to the referent of "Julia" and the referent of "Mary-Julia" and see if the relation obtains between them. If we don't understand the terms "Julia" and "Mary-Julia" we don't understand the left side of the explanation of identity as couched in the current format. But to understand a term like "Julia" is to be able to determine which person is Julia, to know to whom "Julia" refers. But, if we could do that, we would already understand the identity conditions for persons. I called this the circle of individuation and reference. To explain the identity conditions for *Ks*, we need to talk about them. To talk about them, we need singular terms that refer to them. To understand these terms is to be able to pick out which *Ks* they refer to. But to do that we need to understand the identity conditions for *Ks*.

Now this seems like it must be some sort of confusion rather than a deep problem. What is intended by the explanations of identity in terms of spatio-temporal continuity or memory seems clear enough. We do seem to be able to explain identity conditions in the way suggested.

Clearly, to understand the left side, e.g., "the rock that struck your window at 5:00 p.m. Saturday," what we need to do is to be able to determine which rock this refers to from among the rocks inspectable at that time. We could do this without being able to *trace* the rock, without knowing its identity condition. And similarly for Julia.

However, an important point is brought out. The circle of individuation showed that, until we understood the identity conditions for persons, we don't fully understand the ascription of properties and relations to persons. We partly understand it: we know under what conditions *this* person speaks French. But we don't fully understand it; we don't understand what it is for this person *to have been able to speak French yesterday*. The understanding of ascriptions of the first sort, plus an understanding of individuation, yields an understanding of ascriptions of the second sort.

This second problem, the circle of reference and individuation, was that we don't fully understand reference to *Ks* until we understand the conditions of *K* identity. Again, we have a partial understanding. I can pick out, from among the objects before us now, after the operation, the one we refer to with "Mary-Julia." The problem isn't epistemological; it's not what I think that identical twins might be involved. Even given full information, I can't trace Mary-Julia back.

It's clear that identity conditions can be explained by the format

*A is the same K as B iff A has R to B.*

But these considerations suggest that the format misleads us as to exactly what we do understand. My understanding of the singular term on the right side, prior to being told that *R* is the condition of identity, differs from my understanding of them after I have learned this. Just as my understanding of *knows French at t* was limited to being able to apply it at *t*, so my understanding of "Mary-Julia" is limited. Again, it seems a partial understanding of reference, plus an understanding of the conditions of identity, yields a full understanding of reference. The fact that the right side is only partially understood, it seems, should be represented in the format.

## 8. PARTIAL UNDERSTANDING OF IDENTITY

We need a format that makes clear that to understand an explanation of *K*-identity, only a partial understanding of *K*-predication and a partial

understanding of  $K$  reference can be presupposed, and only a partial understanding need be presupposed.

One way to represent this is to suppose that on the right hand side of our present format the singular terms have, as their reference, not  $Ks$  but  $K$ -stages, and that the relation used on the right is not a relation between  $Ks$ , but between  $K$ -stages. For example, in the case of the rocks, what the 'path' stretches between is not rocks (or a rock and itself) but rock stages (which might just be taken to be those place times occupied by rocks). To understand the right side I need only to be able to tell rock-occupied place times from place times that are not rock-occupied, to know the boundaries of rock-stages, and to be able to understand when two rock-stages are joined by a continuous path of rock filled stages.

On this approach, what is misleading about the format is that the singular terms are used ambiguously on the left and right sides. On the right side, they refer to rock-stages, on the left to rocks.

Our account of rock identity looked like this:

The rock at  $p^t$  is the same rock as the rock at  $p^{t'}$

iff

$p^t$  is rock-occupied, and  $p^{t'}$  is rock-occupied and there is a continuous sequence of place-times between  $p^t$  and  $p^{t'}$  each member of which is rock-occupied.

Here we have given necessary and sufficient conditions for a statement about rock identity in terms of statements not about rocks, but about place-times. We introduce  $K$ -identity without presupposing  $K$ -individuation.

Before criticizing this idea, let's develop it somewhat.

We have a class of entities, place-times, that stand in a certain relation, *being occupied by* to rocks. Every rock determines a class of place-times, those place times  $p^t$  such that the rock was in  $p$  at  $t$ . And each place-time is either occupied by exactly one rock or none. Let us call place-times the class of *rock-*

*occurrences* and *occupying* the occurrence relation. And generally I will speak of the class of *K* occurrences. Note that, somewhat unnaturally, *K*- occurrences are not *Ks*. Place times are not rocks.

Next we have a relation among rock occurrences. This relation is not identity. This is a complex relation, for which it will be handy to have a simple name; let's call it "being rock-connected." This relation, like identity, is transitive and, symmetrical. It is *weakly* reflexive; any place-time that is rock-connected with any place-time is rock-connected to itself. Thus rock-connectedness is an equivalence relation. It partitions the set of rock occupied place-times into mutually exclusive sets. Each member of one of these equivalence sets is rock-connected to all the other members. Let's call such connected place-times "rock-cousins."

To understand the left side of our explanation, one needs to understand what it is for a place-time to be rock occupied, and what it is for place-times to be rock connected. Now, in fact, a place-time is rock-occupied only if there is a rock which is in the place at the time. It seems, one could understand the notion of a place-time being rock-occupied, without having a fully developed concept of rocks as temporally enduring objects. And further, place-times are rock-connected only if the rock that occupies one is identical with the rock that occupies the other. But again, it seems one could identify the place-times that are rock-connected, without yet having the full concept of a rock.

We have, then, two skills or competencies which are presupposed by the explanation of rock identity. I shall say that one who has these skills has a *pre-individuative* understanding of rocks. The concept of a rock plays, in his conceptual scheme, only a predicative and not a referential role. The explanation of rock identity introduces, on the basis of the pre-individuative concept of a rock, an individuative concept.

To generalize. An explanation of *K*- identity requires the following:

A class of *K*-occurrences;

An occurrence function

A unity relation--now conceived as an equivalence relation among *K*-occurrences.

The explanation introduces the notion of "The *K* that has the occurrence relation to the occurrence"--that is, an apparatus for reference to *K*s-- and gives the condition of *K*-identity for *K*s thus identified.

Note that this way of looking at the matter corresponds to the format of the analyses of personal identity provided by Grice and Quinton, discussed in Essay 5 [of *Identity, Personal Identity and the Self*]. Grice's provides us with a relation between "total temporary states" ---- slices of consciousness, so to speak. They are states of a person (occurrence relation), and are states of the same person if the later contains or could contain memories of experiences in the former (unity relation). This isn't quite an equivalence relation, but one can be build from it: the one state contains or could contain memories of an experience in the other, or contains an experience of which the other does or could contain a memory. We seem to have found a format for identity explanations that fits the work of a revered philosopher.

## 9. A REGRESS OF INDIVIDUATION?

This way of looking at the matter is not completely satisfactory either, however. For to introduce a concept of *K*-identity, for any kind of object *K*s, we seem to presuppose a mastery of reference, predication and individuation of another kind of entity, *K*-occurrences. But where did this understanding come from? It seems that the identity conditions of *K*-occurrences would also have to have been learned. But this would presuppose an understanding of reference, predication, and individuation of some further sort of entity, the occurrences of the occurrences. We have escaped the circles of individuation, it seems, at the cost of a regress of individuation. And the regress is vicious, it seems, since

understanding reference predication, and individuation at each level presupposes an understanding of these items at the next level down.

Though vicious, the regress is perhaps not infinite. Perhaps there are minimal entities, with no spatial or temporal spread whatsoever, that could terminate the regress. Hume, perhaps partly because of some perception of these problems, seems to suppose that in the end what we perceive and think about are such minimal sensibilia. And Wittgenstein's simples, and Russell's transitory sense data, seem also suited to terminate such a regress.

But the emerging picture of individuation seems if not logically incoherent, simply false. The idea that we begin with a secure understanding of reference, predication, and individuation of some minimal sensibilia, whether conceived of as transitory mental phenomena, total temporary states, or the smallest portions of space-time capable of arresting our attention, is just bizarre.

The problem, I believe; is this. We were right in saying that only a pre-individuative understanding of *K*-reference and predication can be, and need be, presupposed to understand *K*-identity. But the current scheme represents a partial understanding of *K*-reference and predication as a *full* understanding of some *other* scheme of reference and predication, of an alternate scheme of individuation. What we need to do is represent it as just what it is: partial understanding. I try to do this in the next part of this essay.

#### 10. ENTITY WITHOUT IDENTITY?

Quine famously said, "no entity without identity (1981, p. 102)." We can certainly have a partial understanding of a system of reference, predication and identity for a kind of object *K*, however. A helpful idea here is Strawson's concept of *feature placing* (Strawson, 1959). Suppose I am an American Midwesterner in the 1950's traveling in Europe. I am confronted with a large playground full of soccer fields. I know that there is a game, soccer, called "football." I know it involves kicking and scoring goals, and is played on a larger field than American football. But suppose, for the sake of an illustration, that I have no idea whether the entire

playground constitutes one soccer field, or two, or several. I have the ability to point out various features. I can point and say, "this field has a muddy spot here" and "this field has a big metal structure with a net there." I manage thereby to say something truth-evaluable, even if I do not know whether "this field (pointing one place) is that field (pointing another)." Hence I do not know whether "the field with a muddy spot here has a metal structure there." The limits of my ability are not due to the fact being hidden from me; the relevant facts are open to view, but I don't know the rules. I have a partial understanding of the conditions of reference, predication and identity for soccer fields, the system of individuation and predication.

This partial understanding suffices for me to ask the questions and learn the answers that will take me to a full understanding. I can ask, "is this field the same as that one," or "does this goal go with the field it opens to or the field behind it?" The process of learning the scheme of individuation and predication will be just a part (usually a very early part) of understanding how the game works. When I learn that the metal structure is a goal, and that the requirement is to get the ball into the inner part of the net from the direction it faces (like hockey), and not from behind (analogous to basket ball, where to get the ball through the opening it has to change direction), I'll naturally grasp that each field will incorporate a pair of facing goals, and probably get the hang of it pretty quickly after that.

Consider a checkerboard, with sixty-four squares, thirty-two black and thirty-two red; eight rows of eight alternating red and black squares; eight columns of alternating red and black squares, eight left-leaning diagonals, four all red and four all black, varying in length from one square to eight, and eight otherwise similar right-leaning diagonals. I put my finger on a square and say, "That is red there." This could mean "This square is red" or it could mean "This column (or row, ) is red at this square or that this right-leaning (or left-leaning) column is red. But it really doesn't mean any of these things; it means something that is neutral between them. We can imagine the feature placing sentences, the

skill for which I have mastered, to be a neutral bottom level that can be used with superstructures that determine which of the entities we are talking about.

Clouds are an interesting example. Take a typical Nebraska summer afternoon, building up to a glorious thunderstorm, with a sky full of different kinds of clouds, stretching this way and that.<sup>1</sup> We seem to have sky full of entity, but there is not very much identity. Is this huge expanse of darkness over in the west a part of the same cloud as this other part over here, a bit to the east? The two parts do not constitute one clear homogeneously colored bulgy mass---a sort of paradigm case of cloud identity. But there is a continuous stretch of cloud stuff between them, with the color gradually changing. "Cloud" seems to be clearly a count noun, not a mass term. There are many clouds; not a lot of cloud, in the sky. But the identity conditions for clouds seem to be greatly underdetermined.

This is true not only for cloud identity at a time, but cloud identity over time. Anyone who spends a good part of an afternoon watching clouds can testify that although there can be clear cases of a single cloud moving across the sky, there are many cases where the way clouds combine and split and change shape leaves our concept of cloud-identity without much of a hold. The problem is not that you or I only have a partial understanding of an existing system of cloud individuation and predication, but that there is no such system. We get by with a partial system. There is no abiding need for a set of rules that would cover a wide variety of cases. If there is, say for the purposes of an art class (you must paint at least two clouds), additional conventions can be manufactured on the spot.

How do we model the partial understanding in these cases? In each case, there is a confident identity in a small region---in the cloud case, also over a small period of time. This is tied to the system of features that we are placing. We could say that each placement of a feature is an existential quantified statement, to the effect that there is a thing of the kind in question, that exhibits such and such a property; e.g., "There is a soccer field here where I'm pointing, and it is muddy." Another way is to simply suppose that the speaker is talking about

small spatial or spatio-temporal parts, of roughly the size of the region of confidence: small soccer field parts, squares, and cloud-stages.

The way of the circle of predication and individuation is then to realize that talk of occurrences is a way of modeling partial understanding, or partial implementation, of a system of predication and individuation.

We said above that an explanation of *K*-identity requires the following:

A class of *K*-occurrences;

An occurrence function

A unity relation--now conceived as an equivalence relation among *K*-occurrences.

This is an explanation of *K*-identity not in the sense that talk about *Ks* is thus revealed as or shown to be talk about *K* occurrences. It is rather an explanation in the sense of giving us another way of looking at the phenomena that the institution of *Ks* and *K* identity is a way of dealing with. This alternative system need not itself be complete, or particularly efficient or good for anything at all except the needs of the theorist. It will allow us to see the actual system of *K*-individuation and predication against a background of alternatives possible systems for dealing with the same phenomena.

However, much the same effect can be achieved by continuing to talk about *Ks*, but simply limiting the predications that we make, that are based on feature flow along the lines of identity. We can talk about the people, Mary, Julia, and Mary-Julia. We can say that all of them speak English, but we can't say that two of them speak French. The first doesn't require anything but checking on features. The second would require a negative decision as to identity; viz., that Julia and Mary-Julia are different. Likewise we can't say that only one of them speaks French. We can say that Julia speaks French, Mary-Julia speaks French, and Mary does not speak French. Most philosophers who talk about identity conditions will talk this way, with a sense of which explanations are fair and

which are not that reveals a sense of what attributions count as placing feature and which require identity judgements. We have then done what philosophy should do: justified the natural way we talk about and explain identity, from a host of problems that bother the philosopher who obsesses about the topic, but do not often get in the way of profitable discussion.

## 11. RETURN TO DIVIDING SELVES

In Essay 3 I discussed the case of dividing selves. *B* and *C* emerge from surgical shenanigans with equal claims on being *A*, the pre-surgical source of their memories. But there is no inclination to suppose that *B* and *C* are identical, for there is no unity of consciousness nor of body. They are separate people, with mental lives flowing in different directions, sitting in different rooms; eventually, no doubt, they will sue one another, a strange thing for someone to do to himself.

I posed the issue as one between which of three languages we speak. The stage language said that *B* and *C* are not identical, and neither are *A* and *B* or *A* and *C*. This is the way David Lewis looks at the case. The branch language says that *A* is *B* or *A* is *C* but not both. This might be because of a metaphysical link that may be impossible to establish (Chisholm, 1969), or it may be on account of one being the overall "closest competitor" (Nozick, 1981). Finally, there is the lifetime language---the alternative I defended. According to the lifetime language, before the operation all of the things that happen to *B* and *C* after the operation were in *A*'s future, and after the operation all the things that happened to *A* before the operation were in *B*'s past and in *C*'s past. But nothing that happened to *B* after the operation was ever to be in *C*'s past, and vice versa. Each view has its pluses and minuses. I argued in the article that my view ---- that we implicitly speak the lifetime language ---- did the best job providing a home for are various "intuitions" about the case. However that may be, it seems to a very difficult position for people to swallow. There is a certain tendency to suppose that there are three people involved the Y-shaped one we called "*A*" before the operation, and the two branches that we call *B* and *C*, and that only tricks I built

into the mechanism of reference makes it the case that before the operation "There is just one person here" is true in the lifetime language.

Perhaps I marched by the most plausible solution, without noticing it, under the banner "no entity without identity." I want to say that *A* should anticipate everything that happens to *B* and to *C* after the operation; he *will* do those things. And both *B* and *C* should take credit for everything that *A* did before the operations; they *did* those things. And I should say that this way of spreading properties around is consistent, because it could be done consistently, as both the lifetime and the person-stage languages show. And perhaps there I should have stopped. The article provided the machinery for seeing that our language may simply be undetermined on the crucial question; our language may be only partially defined on all of the possibilities we can think of, even though it takes care of all of virtually all of the cases that have ever arisen. Whether we should spread properties around without identity, or insist on identity and go against some intuitions about how many people there are, may be quite undetermined, even if the question of who would have done what is not, as I tend to think.

Perhaps, but I am not yet convinced. The intuitions we have about identity are not all equal. The strangeness of being able to say, from a sort of atemporal perspective, that there are three people before the operation is real enough. But that is because we expect more out of identity than logic puts into it. The surplus comes from the well-behaved nature of most unity relations under most circumstances that we need to worry about. If the unity relation is not well-behaved, we will get surprising results. I still think my solution keeps the surprises to a minimum and the logic to a maximum.

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<sup>1</sup> It is an odd convention that counts permanent dramatic features, like mountains, to count in favor a state's natural beauty, but not reliable but transient features, like clouds. Thus the Colorado Rockies which cover only a small portion of the sky, cause Colorado to be considered a beautiful state, while the regular shows that Nebraska's clouds provide, stretching from horizon to horizon, with fireworks several times a week all summer long, are discounted.