

Reply to Cover

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The deepest and most formidable presentation to date of the reductionist interpretation of Leibniz's views on relations is surely to be found in Jan Cover's (and John Hawthorne's) outstanding book, *Substance and Individuation in Leibniz*. Not surprisingly, Cover's review of my book sets forth a number of objections to the view I develop. Despite my resistance to his objections in what follows, I found his charges to be both challenging and instructive, and I am grateful for the overall friendly tone with which he expressed them.

Cover decries the absence from my book (and from anti-reductionist literature generally) of any detailed account of the structure of relational accidents in general, and the lack of any detailed account of how individuals form part of the content of such accidents (e.g., how Helen is involved with Paris' accident 'lover of Helen') in particular. His way of driving home the need for such an account in *Substance and Individuation in Leibniz* was to ask: "...are we to believe that [Leibniz] rejects accidents with one leg in one substance, the other in another, but welcomes accidents with one leg in one substance and a full-nelson hug around another."¹ The worry seems to be that the inherence of relational accidents in substances would somehow run afoul of Leibniz's doctrine of individual accidents, and would perhaps do so in an especially egregious way. How so? The answer is not easy to see. The view I ultimately impute to Cover in my book is that if Helen is a constituent of 'lover of Helen' and if 'lover of Helen', as my view maintains, inheres in Paris, then Helen, by transitivity, gains an impermissible foothold in Paris. Apparently laboring under a delusion, I spend much of my chapter three showing that this consequence does not occur. I argue that if we take Helen's constituency in the accident as her being included (in Leibniz's formal sense of that notion) in it, then she is not a constituent of the accident, as Leibniz's conditions for inclusion are not met in her case or in the case of any other individual's being included in any other relational accident. But in his review Cover states that he never intended to argue that Helen steps into Paris in this way; his intent with the full-nelson charge was only to press for the need of an account of how Helen is involved in 'lover of Helen', perhaps so we can be assured that nothing metaphysically suspect (like Helen's having a leg in Paris) is going on.

Now, I grant that I never offer an affirmative account of the structure of relational accidents,² but I believe this counts for little against my view. For anything one could say about Leibniz's views on this would be largely speculative. Leibniz appears to have realized that the concepts of relational accidents could not be formed by the concept-joining operation he understood best—real addition. Instead, he seems to say that such concepts must be formed by an operation he refers to as oblique addition.³ However, Leibniz has little to say about the structure of such oblique sums. Of course, these are concepts of relational accidents and not the accidents themselves, but Leibniz's failure to develop his view of the former is, I believe, a good indication that his view of the latter was undeveloped as well. Nevertheless, my argument in chapter three does show that by Leibniz's own logic of concept-inclusion the concepts of individuals are not included in the concepts of relational accidents. The relation of individual concepts to concepts of relational accidents is something other than containment or inclusion. I strongly suspect that Leibniz would adhere to an analogous result with respect to the relation of individuals to relational accidents. That being so, then although I am unable to offer an affirmative characterization of this relation, I can't find any reason to fear that allowance of relational accidents will transgress the doctrine of individual accidents or lead to anything else that Leibniz would regard as metaphysically unacceptable.

Cover also finds details missing in my response to the world-apart objection, the objection that Leibniz cannot have countenanced relational accidents because it would have violated his view that each monad is like a world-apart. Siding with D'Agostino,⁴ I maintain essentially in the book (p. 9) that the world-apart doctrine only forbids causal influence between monads, it does not bar logical dependence between them. Cover chides, and in this case I think rightfully so, for my failure to explicate the nature of this logical dependence relation, for if it is as strong as Cover suspects it is, it will "make hash" of the world-apart doctrine. Rather than wishing I had offered an account of the notion, however, I wish I had simply not invoked it at all. For I don't think it's needed to respond to the world-apart objection. The world-apart doctrine is primarily a claim that monads do not causally influence one another and that each one's states unfold by means of its own internal law. So, as long as a monad's relational attributes, along with all of its other attributes, unfold via its own internal law and not the causal influence of other monads, then no culinary, or other, violence to the world-apart doctrine occurs. Could a thing have relational attributes arise in this man-

ner if only it and God existed? I think such a scenario fully coheres with these well-known remarks:

There would be no deception of rational creatures, however, even if everything outside of them did not correspond exactly to their experiences, or indeed if nothing did, just as if there were only one mind; because everything would happen just as if all other things existed....(G II 496)

Cover was right, therefore, to red-flag the talk of logical dependence, but I don't believe any harm to my view results once the notion is, as I think it fairly can be, put aside.

Cover also asserts that a trivialization of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles results if, as my view maintains, relational attributes are genuine features of things. 'Distinct from B' is a relational attribute which, if it were regarded as actually being in A, would distinguish A from B, but would do so in a glaringly hollow way. I believe that such a situation would trivialize the identity of indiscernibles principle only if 'distinct from B' were the *only* difference that obtained between A and B. If, on the other hand, this difference was always accompanied by other differences, then such a trivialization need not occur. Such is the case. If two things are distinct, their spatial positions will differ and their differing positions will give rise to numerous other differences in the relational attributes that each one possesses. In section 47 of his fifth letter to Clarke, Leibniz famously explains that a thing's place, though not an accident itself, is founded upon the relations of coexistence that the thing has to other fixed existents. If two things differ in place, then each will have a distinct set of relations of coexistence. Further, Leibniz appears to assert to Clarke that these relations of coexistence are accidents in substances. I realize that Cover remains unimpressed by such passages as proof texts for anti-reductionist views. Be that as it may, the passage does show Leibniz's view that differences in position will always be accompanied by differences in relations of coexistence. Thus whether one regards the relations of coexistence *themselves* as accidents or whether one believes that they ultimately reduce to non-relational accidents, one can equally well say that, on Leibniz's view, no two things will differ in just their places (which, since place is not a genuine accident, would not constitute a real difference) or solely in one's having a relational attribute of being distinct from the other.

From his remarks in the review, I suspect that Cover will not accept differences in relations of coexistence as sufficient for avoiding the trivialization of the identity of indiscernibles principle either. That is, he may have us imagine two dis-

tinct substances A and B which are alike in every respect save their relations of coexistence, and then assert that the imagined scenario secures the principle in a trivial way as well. Presumably, this is the point of his mention of Leibniz's argument from the fourth letter to Clarke (G VII 364), which Cover paraphrases as: "If ours were a world W in which there are distinct indiscernibles *a* and *b*, there would be a numerically distinct world W* in which *a* and *b* are spatially 'switched' such that God could have no sufficient reason for preferring W over W*." But this passage would only count against my view if Leibniz would extend the notion of distinct indiscernibles (i.e., of two things that are equal and perfectly alike) to things which are alike in every respect except in their relations of coexistence, and I am far from convinced that he would. I don't see why differences in relations of coexistence fail to count as non-trivial differences between two substances. It is surely far from clear that two things which are alike in every respect save their relations of coexistence (assuming such relations were genuine accidents) can reasonably be said to be, from the standpoint of God's wisdom and choice, equal and perfectly alike. It is my contention, then, that Leibniz's argument against Clarke does not concern a situation like the foregoing; rather, it concerns a scenario under which two things are alike in *every* respect. And if that were the case, then (as place itself is not an accident of things) a bare difference in the places of the things, under the assumption that the things are alike in every internal respect (not even differing in relations of coexistence), would not be accompanied by any actual difference in the things, and God would have no reason for placing them in one arrangement rather than another. This is the thrust of Leibniz's argument, and I believe that, contrary to what Cover alleges, it makes sense under my view.

Lastly, I must take exception to Cover's overall assessment that my Leibniz floats too near the linguistic surface of the topic, while his Leibniz resides at the deeper (and presumably truer) metaphysical foundations of it. The central project of my book is to develop a more plausible reading of Leibniz's claim that there are no purely extrinsic denominations (NPE) by examining both Leibniz's arguments for NPE from other of his doctrines and his argument from NPE to the doctrine of expression. Leibniz employs his predicate-in-subject principle, the principle of the interconnection of all things and the identity of indiscernibles principle to establish NPE. I argue in a fair amount of detail (see chs. 2, 4 and 5) that on no plausible reconstruction of these arguments can the reductionist view of NPE be seen as Leibniz's intended result, whereas the version of NPE I pro-

REPLY TO COVER

pose is clearly implicated in each one. The reductionist rendering of NPE, at best, can be made to *cohere* with these doctrines, but it doesn't *follow* from them, as Leibniz so often asserts that NPE does. Nor can reductionist NPE serve as a plausible premise for the doctrine of expression (see ch. 6). Again, expression can cohere with a reductionist construal of NPE, but it is not at all clear how it can be inferred from it. These are some of Leibniz's central metaphysical doctrines, and if the reductionist reading of NPE does not follow from them (or function well as a premise for them, in the case of the expression doctrine), then that is evidence against its being the view of the true metaphysical Leibniz. And if my view succeeds far better in these contexts, then that is evidence in its metaphysical favor. I do not primarily rest my case on the fact that Leibniz often refers to extrinsic denominations as 'predicates' or 'accidents', or the "adverb-dropping inference" Cover refers to at the beginning of section II of his review. These linguistic-surface-type considerations are a part of the case for an anti-reductionist reading of Leibniz and I treat them as such in the book, but they are certainly not the heart of my case. Thus, for all Cover says, I see no reason to concede the metaphysical high ground to him.

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Notes

¹ Cover and Hawthorne, *Substance and Individuation in Leibniz*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 73.

² I say that such is not my aim on p. 38. I refer the reader to my remarks on that page for more response to Cover on this issue.

³ See *General Inquiries about the Analysis of Concepts and of Truths*, C 356-359. See also my discussion of this on pp. 42-45.

⁴ D'Agostino, F. (1976). "Leibniz on Compossibility and Relational Predicates." *Philosophical Quarterly* 26: 125-138.