

## Response to Brown

by Laurence B. McCullough

Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy, Baylor College of Medicine

I want to thank Professor Stuart Brown for his review of my book and for the provocative set of criticisms that he advances. I address what I take to be Brown's main criticisms: (1) that Leibniz did not retain his youthful account of the principle of individuation in his mature philosophy; (2) that I do not take sufficient account of how Leibniz is indeed a modern philosopher; (3) that Leibniz does not hold in his mature philosophy that all individual substances are non-material; and (4) that students of cultural studies will find little of use to their work in mine. Brown, rightly I think, directs most of his attention to the first criticism and so my response is devoted primarily to it.

1. Brown takes exception to my claim that Leibniz had settled his account of the principle of individuation in his *Disputatio Metaphysica de Principio Individui* of 1663 and retained this account in his mature work. Instead, Brown holds that Leibniz later dissolved the problem of individuation that "at least some scholastics had and that he had come to regard the search for the principle of individuation as itself problematic." Brown does acknowledge that Leibniz sometimes takes views consistent with the account he gives in the youthful *Disputatio* and has some kind words for such Scholastics as Suarez. Brown advances this interpretation by reference to several key texts. I want now to consider these texts and suggest that they support my reading, not Brown's.

At *New Essays* 230 (A VI vi 230), Brown says, Leibniz introduces the principle of individuation through the voice of Philalethes (Locke) and not Theophilus (Leibniz). This is not quite right. Philalethes introduces the topic of "identity or of diversity," which he frames in terms of the impossibility of two things existing in the same place at the same time (A VI vi 229-230). Theophilus rejects this approach, because time and space do not make things distinct and because there is no such thing as perfect similarity. There must be an "internal principle of distinction" to explain diversity of things and diversity of times and spaces. As I show in Chapters 1 and 4, the principle of individuation in the *Disputatio*, whole entity, is an internal principle that explains distinction, one intension of individuality. An entity that is divisible is not distinct, even from itself, and so indivisibility is presupposed in this text. Whole entity also explains indivisibility, the second inten-

sion of individuality.

Philalethes then replies that the principle of individuation is “existence,” a position that Leibniz had already considered and rejected in the *Disputatio*. No surprise, Leibniz has Theophilus reject it here, in favor of the principle of distinction. Theophilus argues that if two things could be perfectly similar, “there would be no principle of individuation. I would even venture to say that in such a case there would be no individual distinctness, no separate individuals,” including distinctness of spaces and times with which had Philalethes started this section—a nice *reductio*. The implication is this: there is a principle of individuation internal to individuals that causes things not to be perfectly similar. This is precisely the principle of individuation, whole entity, and the nominalism of the *Disputatio*. Brown makes much of the Remnant-Bennett translation of ‘revient’ as ‘reduces’ (A VI vi 230, l. 22). ‘Revient’ can also, more reliably, be translated as ‘returns to’ and so Theophilus is *returning to* the principle of individuation of the *Disputatio*, whole entity, which accounts for distinction. Existence as the principle of individuation, defended by Philalethes, cannot do so, as Leibniz had already shown to his satisfaction in the *Disputatio*. The principle of individuation does not reduce to the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, but grounds the nominalism on which the latter principle depends for its meaning, as I argue in Chapter 6.

I agree that G vii 481 can be read as holding that the principle of individuation is a corollary of the principle of individuation, whole entity, which makes things determined and distinct from all other things. Whole entity thus explains how Leibniz can tell Arnauld in the May, 1686, letter that the “nature” of an individual is “complete and determined” (G ii 42), because whole entity results in self-individuated and therefore determined nature, as I show in Chapter 4. ‘Nature’ and ‘determined’ are terms of art of the Scholastics and Leibniz disagreed in the *Disputatio* with Scotists and others who held that there could be a *common* nature in individuals, a nature that—as determinable, i.e., requiring the addition to it of a principle of individuation—could not be “determined.” This passage makes sense only on the reading that Leibniz retains whole entity as the principle of individuation. The other principles that he considers in the *Disputatio*—negation, existence, and haecceity—all add individuality to a determinable, not determinate, nature. The bulk of my book is devoted to a close examination of Leibniz’s treatment of these four principles of individuation and the sources in later Scholasticism upon which he drew. Suarez is the main source for whole entity and so it is no surprise at all, as Brown notes, that Leibniz thinks well of this particular later Scholastic.

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In “A Meditation on the Principle of the Individual” (A VI iii 490491, Parkinson, pp. 50-53), Leibniz says that “unless we admit that it is impossible that there should be two things perfectly similar, it will follow that the principle of individuation is outside the thing.” Brown is correct to acknowledge that an internal principle of individuation evokes the account of the *Disputatio*. But Brown omits that Leibniz in this *Meditatio* goes on to say that, if there is no internal principle of individuation, then one thing cannot differ in itself (*in se*) from another—it could not be distinct and therefore individual—another nice *reductio*. Whole entity, as an internal principle, provides for distinction and also for the nominalism that leads to the denial of perfect similarity. The principle of the identity of indiscernibles, a thoroughgoing nominalistic metaphysical principle I argue in Chapter 6, requires an internal principle that can generate distinction and only whole entity, Leibniz shows in the *Disputatio*, is up to this task. I was certainly aware of the *Meditatio* but made reference to less obscure texts in Chapters 5 and 6, where I show how whole entity is Leibniz’s mature principle of individuation.

In the *Discourse on Metaphysics* Leibniz does not claim that an individual substance is individuated by its complete individual concept. Leibniz would not, and does not, confuse an entity with its concept. Instead, Leibniz holds that the nature (again, using a term of art from the intellectual framework of the *Disputatio*, which I explain in Chapters 2 through 4) of an individual substance or “estre complet” — whole entity—is such that *from it* we can have a complete individual concept of it. This concept therefore allows us to deduce all of the predicates that can be truly ascribed to the individual. Predicate terms in propositions of the ‘S is P’ form refer to concepts, not things. In Chapter 6, I explain in some detail the distinction that Leibniz makes between concepts and things and how the complete individual concept of a monad can be abstracted from its appetite and perceptions, the monad’s whole entity, making deduction of the predicates of a monad possible.

Finally, in his fifth letter to Clarke (Section 26, G vii 395), Leibniz does make reference to the perplexities about individuation to be found in the “vulgar philosophers.” But Leibniz objects to what these philosophers “would call” or identify as the principle of individuation, namely a principle that would allow individual things to differ only by number. He had already rejected all such principles of individuation in the *Disputatio*. These principles do indeed generate perplexities, because these principles lead to a metaphysical impossibility, namely, perfect similarity — a nice application of *ex impossibile quodlibet*. Such perplexities follow from the *wrong* principles of individuation, but not from the *right* one, as he shows in the *Disputatio* and as he writes in the 5<sup>th</sup> letter to Clarke.

In summary, none of the passages that Brown cites makes sense on their own philosophical terms unless Leibniz continues to hold Suarez's nominalistic principle of individuation, whole entity, as the principle of individuation in his mature philosophy—precisely the principle that he defends in the *Disputatio*. Far from “moving a long way from his 1663 dissertation,” Leibniz remains firmly committed to its conclusions throughout his philosophical career. Leibniz may later give priority to the intension of distinction and therefore to the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, but he does so on the basis of whole entity—remaining firmly committed all the while to his youthful solution to and not at all “dissolving” the problem of individuation or engaging in a “reductionist manoeuvre.” Thus, my claim for continuity in this one respect of Leibniz's philosophy is far from “dogmatic;” it is required by the very texts that Brown cites and by the many others that I consider in my book.

2. At the core of Leibniz's metaphysics of individuals lies a premodern account their individuation, Suarez's, as I show in Chapter 4. An essential part of this account is Leibniz's extended “critique of scholasticism,” which—contra Brown—I do indeed acknowledge in Chapter 3. I also acknowledge that Leibniz took seriously the “mechanical philosophy,” i.e., the challenge of providing a metaphysics of activity rather than static forms. Leibniz is surely modern in taking up this subject matter but he does so, as I explain in Chapter 7, not by abandoning but by adapting his premodern commitments to this new challenge. Thus, I characterize Leibniz's modernism as “modest and incremental” (190).

3. Part of Leibniz's modernism is therefore that individual substances become centers of activity, as I explain in Chapter 5. As early as 1668 Leibniz rejects body, or matter, when “cut off from a concurrent mind,” to be a substance. I show in subsequent chapters how monads, the “simple” individual substances of the mature philosophy, are centers of activity and non-material. Monads individuate matter or body and so there are material things, but matter or body, as inert, cannot be a substance. Matter is destructible and so it would make no sense to hold both that monads are indestructible (God's gift to them), which Leibniz does indeed hold, and that matter apart from mind or monad is a substance. Brown quotes my initial, anticipatory claim on this score from Chapter 1 but omits mention of the textual arguments I advance in later chapters. An argued interpretation is not reliably labeled “dogmatic.”

4. Students of cultural studies may, I believe, find something useful in Chapter 7, where I argue that, in the philosophy of a so-called “modern” philosopher such as Leibniz, many premodern concepts and methods persist. I also suggest that this

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is true of many other figures of 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century philosophy. If we should, as I argue there, abandon labels such as “modern,” because they can and do seriously mislead us in reading old books and distort them beyond the recognition of their authors, then we should abandon some of the labels of cultural studies, such as “post-modern,” as similarly distorting old and even new books and other cultural monuments. There is, I argue, no distinctly modern for the post-modern to follow. Surely it will be of interest to students of cultural studies to learn that an important term of their art is devoid of intellectually substantive content.

Laurence B. McCullough  
Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy  
Baylor College of Medicine  
Houston, Texas 77030-3498 USA  
mccullou@bcm.tmc.edu