

PHIL 4603: Metaphysics  
Prof. Funkhouser  
Adams, “Primitive Thisness and Primitive Identity”

- The question of haecceities:

Is the world — and are all possible worlds — constituted by purely qualitative facts, or does thisness hold a place beside suchness as a fundamental feature of reality? (172)

- One could accept primitive thisness for semantic reasons — e.g., Kripkean direct reference.

1.

- Some definitions:

*thisness*: The property of being identical to a particular individual. *Haecceity*.

An interesting aside: “... I am not committed to regarding properties as components of individuals.” (173)

Also, these thisnesses are not necessarily bare particulars (substrata).

*suchness*: This is defined in terms of *basic suchness*, which is itself characterized in the right hand column, p. 173.

2.

- Leibniz: Thisness is reducible to suchness. Further, Leibniz held that every property of an individual is essential to it.

- Adams argues that the *semantic* primitiveness of thisnesses (think: Kripke) does not entail the *metaphysical* primitiveness of thisnesses. Leibniz, for example, could accept the former.

- These issues have obvious connections with the Identity of Indiscernibles:

Let us therefore here reserve the title “Identity of Indiscernibles” for the doctrine that any two distinct individuals must differ in some suchness, *either* relational *or* nonrelational. (175)

- What would be a counter-example to the Identity of Indiscernibles?

In order to establish the distinctness of thisnesses from all suchnesses, therefore, one might try to exhibit possible cases in which two things would possess all the same suchnesses, but with different thisnesses. That is, one might seek counter-examples to refute the Identity of Indiscernibles. (175)

So, a full defense of primitive thisness must contain a refutation of the Identity of Indiscernibles.

3.

- Familiar objections to the Identity of Indiscernibles involve spatial dispersal (e.g., Kant and Black). Counter-examples can also be given that involve temporal dispersal (e.g., infinite repetition of events).

4.

- Argument: Surely there can be two *almost* indiscernible spheres. What would prevent one from changing ever so slightly, or possibly being slightly different, so that they become indiscernible?

- Interesting thesis:

The mutual distinctness of two individual persons already existing cannot depend on something that has not yet happened. (178)

5.

- How would Lewis react to the following claim?

Issues of modality *de re* turn on identity questions. To say that a certain individual is only contingently a parent, but necessarily an animal, for example, is to say that there could have been a nonparent, but not a non-animal, that would have been the same individual as that one. (179)

- Q: Does primitive thisness entail primitive transworld identity? Adams answers “no”, but claims that the latter is more plausible given the former.

Relatedly:

The claim that there are nonqualitative thisnesses does not clearly entail that *transtemporal* identity, for example, is primitive. (179)

Any case of this sort [given in the right hand column, p. 180], in which two possible worlds differ in the transworld identities of

their individuals but not in their suchnesses, provides us at once with a clearer proof of a primitive transworld identity than has yet been found for a primitive transworld identity... If the Identity of Indiscernibles is rejected, there seems to be no plausible way of analyzing transworld identity and non-identity in general in terms of other, more basic relations. (180–181)

6.

- But, there must be some necessary connections between thisnesses and some suchnesses. These are not analytic necessities, however (e.g., Jimmy Carter, necessarily, is a person). Adding such necessary connections makes Adams a *Moderate Haecceitist*.