

The ‘I’ in the Monad: Leibniz and the Essential Indexical

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Abstract Some modern and contemporary philosophers argue that the first-person indexical plays an essential role in the explanation of individual actions. As such it cannot be explained away or replaced by a co-referring term without destroying the cognitive force that its use conveys. There are important aspects of Leibniz’s work that anticipate the view of the essential indexical. The activity in the monad, such as the petites perceptions and appetitions, plays the cognitive role of grounding indexical reference and uses of the first-person pronoun to explain an agent’s perspective and behaviour.

Keywords Monad. Essential Indexical. Perceptions. Memory. Personal identity.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The Essential Indexical. – 3 Leibniz: The Rational Monad and the Mind. – 4 The ‘I’ in the Monad *qua* Essential Indexical. – 5 Petite Perceptions and Personal Identity. – 6 Conclusion.



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1 Introduction

It is well known that Leibniz holds the view that language is a mirror of the mind:

I really believe that languages are the best mirror of the human mind, and that a precise analysis of the signification of words would tell us more than anything else about the operations of the understanding. (Leibniz 1996, 333)

The way one expresses (or is disposed to express) one's thoughts in the first-person mood reflects what goes on in one's mind.¹ It is in this sense that we think Leibniz's 'I' in the monad somewhat anticipated the view of the essential indexical in modern and contemporary semantics. We refer to those proponents of this view as holding the *essential indexicality thesis* (EIT). This is shorthand for the view that holding a belief about oneself is importantly distinct from other forms of propositional attitudes that one can entertain. There seems to be an indexical ingredient that certain beliefs (e.g., *de se*) must have given their explanatory role in behaviour and action. We provide some (of our interpretations of) passages below where Leibniz's thought seems committed to EIT. Specifically, we think there are, indirectly, aspects of his mature metaphysics (*Monadology*), and less-indirectly, from Leibniz's comments on indexicality² and his philosophy of mind (e.g., consciousness, perceptions, memory) that when taken together, articulate a version of EIT which is alive to some degree in the works of Castañeda (1966; 1968), Chisholm (1981), Kaplan (1977), and Perry (1979), for example. On the other hand, current considerations on the essential indexical may help clarify our understanding of Leibniz's view on mind and language (e.g., by tracking and comparing (dis)similarities of the semantic and metaphysical commitments between the former group and Leibniz).

1 It is worth noticing that on this aspect Leibniz anticipated Frege's well-known linguistic turn. As Dummett 1993 points out, Frege stressed that in order to explain what a thought is we have to focus on the sentence used to voice it. For example, both Leibniz and Frege held that a philosophical account of thought can be attained through a philosophical account of language and that a comprehensive account of the former can only be so attained through the latter.

2 See for example, Di Bella 2005, esp. 193-6, who notes that for Leibniz, properties that do not suffice to capture individuality are those expressed by general terms ('a man', 'a garden') nor definite descriptions ('the first man'). Rather, Leibniz maintains that individuality is captured (at the epistemological level) by indexical and demonstrative devices. Leibniz writes: "A certain individual is *this* one, whom I designate either by pointing it or by adding some distinguishing marks. For although we cannot have marks which distinguish it perfectly from every other possible individual, nevertheless we have marks which distinguish it from other individuals we meet" (A VI 4, 744/ Leibniz 1966, 51, modified). Quoted in Di Bella 2005, 193.

In pursuing this line of thought, it is worth mentioning that like Castañeda (1976),³ we take a 'Darwinian approach' in developing our ideas that we trace from the Leibnizian corpus to EIT in contrast to what he refers to as the 'Athenian approach'.

Whereas on the Athenian approach one aims at revealing or constructing a master unity and coherence of philosopher's *corpus*, on the Darwinian approach we try to re-live and enjoy the philosopher's peak insights, even if they are the culminations of periods of uncertainty, incoherence, and self-contradiction. (Castañeda 1976, 93)

Thus, our exegesis of the passages and the ideas therein that we discuss in the paper, the claims we make, and the connections we draw between the intellectual milieus should be read as suggestions - that they may run counter to standard interpretations, or be altogether wrong, is certainly a possibility.

2 The Essential Indexical

In "The Problem of the Essential Indexical" John Perry presents us with the following scenario:

I once followed a trail of sugar on a supermarket floor, pushing my car down the aisle on one side of a tall counter and back the aisle on the other, seeking the shopper with the torn sack to tell him he was making a mess. With each trip around the counter, the trail became thicker. But I seemed unable to catch up. Finally, it dawned on me. I was the shopper I was trying to catch. I believed at the outset that the shopper with a torn sack was making a mess. And I was right. But I didn't believe that I was making a mess. This seems to be something I came to believe. And when I came to believe that, I stopped following the trail around the counter, and rearranged the torn sack in my cart. My change in beliefs seems to explain my change in behaviour. (Perry 1979, 167)

According to Perry, the realization that the messy shopper was in fact himself spilling the sugar is essential to explaining why he acted the way he did - that is to say, rearranging his sugar bag. Without the indexical, first-personal reference to himself, an explanation of the shopper's behaviour is incomplete. In other words, it is only when our messy shopper expresses (or is disposed to) his thought us-

³ Castañeda's main works on Leibniz are his 1979 and 1982 articles. See Sicha 1986 for a discussion on Castañeda on Leibniz.

ing the first-person pronoun that he stops searching for the *one* who made the mess and cleans up the mess *he himself* made.

The moral of the story we draw from Perry's view is that 'I' cannot be replaced by a co-referring expression (e.g., 'John') without destroying the force of explanation.⁴ There are numerous Messy Shopper-style examples. Here's another one: An amnesiac can come to know a lot of things about herself that she associates with her proper name, say 'Mary Smith', and comes to know, for instance, that Mary Smith is in danger. Yet if she does not come to entertain the thought she would express by "I am Mary Smith" she would not act appropriately (and, e.g., flee from danger). It is the peculiarity highlighted by such examples that lead certain philosophers to argue that 'I' is an essential indexical.

In a general sense, we can say that first-person attitudes are important in understanding agency and provide a means to explain action for modern theorists of the essentialist persuasion.⁵ According to Castañeda, intentions are essentially first-personal and indexical. In fact, there can be no such thing as purely third-personal, non-indexical intention. Although intentions and beliefs can be reported from a third-person perspective (e.g., John believes that he is the messy shopper), further analysis of such an account reveals a 'quasi-indicator'⁶ (to use Castañeda's terminology) such that what is really going on in John's head is that he *himself* is the messy shopper.

One way to capture EIT is to say that intentional actions are fundamentally indexical. Any account of intentional action needs to be alive to their essential indexicality. In a general sense, we see traces of Leibniz's thought in, and hints to, these more elaborated, mod-

4 More accurately, we should distinguish between the moral we draw from Perry's 1979 article, and Perry's intention in that article. Perry's main aim in "The Problem of the Essential Indexical" is not to argue for EIT. Rather, Perry assumes EIT, and uses it to argue against the view he refers to as the 'traditional doctrine of propositions'. Importantly, in footnote one of the same article Perry gestures to the work of Castañeda indicating that we can find arguments for EIT there.

5 In what follows we employ the term 'essential' when dealing with the essential indexical. Besides, we do not venture into discussing Leibniz's metaphysical essentialism and how it relates to, and differs from, modern and contemporary studies on the topic such as, e.g., the works of Kripke 1980 and Lewis 1986. For a deep analysis of Leibniz's ontology about individual substances and how we identify them, see Di Bella 2005. For a discussion of Leibniz's modal arguments and, in particular, how it relates to the work of Lewis see the seminal work of Mondadori 1973. When we speak of philosophers of the essentialist tradition, we merely mean philosophers inspired by Perry's work on the essential indexical.

6 Roughly, quasi-indicators are anaphoric pronouns that in a that-clause (like in, e.g., "Mary believes that *she herself* is married") capture the indexical reference the addressee made or is disposed to make in her utterance. In our example, the quasi-indicator 'she herself' attributes to Mary an I-thought. For the way quasi-indicators relates to essential indexicals see Corazza 2004.

ern versions of EIT.⁷ Most notably, this includes his view of persons (monads) and the way he conceives of cognitive processes. To the first point, consider one of the many representative passages where Leibniz asserts that we are individual, enduring substances:

I am truly a single indivisible substance, unresolvable into many others, the permanent and constant subject of my actions and passions. (Leibniz 1989, 104 f.)

Later, a few lines below Leibniz describes this indivisible aspect as the 'mind' or 'I'.⁸ Thus, for Leibniz, it is precisely the 'I' which qualifies the subject as an individual with the capacity to recognize itself as an individual subject of experience differentiating it from all other substances (or monads). For Leibniz, one's experience of oneself *qua* oneself is immediate to consciousness. To this end, Bobro writes:

The mind does not in reflection find the *ideas* of, say, being, or unity, or action within itself, rather it has a direct apprehension of itself as being, as one, as acting, and as a consequence acquires the ideas of being, or unity, or actions. That self-consciousness is a direct apprehension or immediate experience of the ego and its actions is stressed by Leibniz in using such expressions as '*le sens interne*' (*Reflections on Locke's Book*, GP V, 23), '*le sentiment du moi*' (*New Essays* II, 27, § 9/A VI 6, 236), '*les expériences internes immédiates*' (*New Essays* II, 27, § 14/A VI 6, 239), when referring to consciousness or reflection on the self. (Bobro 2005, 30, emphasis in original)

In other words, for Leibniz, a rational subject of experience has immediate, and direct experience of itself, first, with other relations being derivative. And as Leibniz states, even if what the 'I' apperceives is confused or distorted, the 'I' lingers within the subject *qua* subject of experience. In this sense, Leibniz could qualify as a super-essentialist concerning how first-person thoughts are comprehended through the essential indexical. Setting aside discussions as to what counts as a rational subject for Leibniz, we can say that it is individuated, at least in part, by virtue of its awareness as being the subject of its perceptions, because of the sort of creature that it is (see Bobro 2005, 50).

⁷ One of the ramifications of our view is that even if a given essentialist author rejects the ideas of Leibniz wholesale, there are still traces of an undeniably Leibnizian flavour implicit in the theory.

⁸ Bobro 2005 notices another explicit analogy Leibniz draws between persons and simple substances: "What I take to be the indivisible or complete monad is the substance endowed with primitive power, active and passive, like the 'I' or something similar" (GP II, 251/Leibniz 1989, 176; quoted in Bobro 2005, 44).

3 Leibniz: The Rational Monad and the Mind

In his mature metaphysics, Leibniz introduces the term 'monad' to account for his view of simple, immaterial, and indestructible substances. He tells us that all monads are wholly constituted by two features: perception and appetite. Since it is the very nature of a monad to represent, they differ not in their representations, but in how distinctly they perceive their representations. Perceptions are subject to appetites that move the monad from one perception to another. Thus, appetite is the tendency from one perception to another. Leibniz classifies monads into three types. At the bottom of the hierarchy are bare, or simple, monads, such as plants which only contain petites perceptions. These monads are wholly unconscious because petites perceptions do not make the monad aware of what they represent. Next are animal souls, which in addition to petites perceptions, have confused sensations generated by their sense organs which present impressions that are represented by perceptions. The sensations in animal monads are confused in the sense that they are bundles of petites perceptions that run together. Finally, there are human minds, or rational monads. In addition to petite perceptions and sensations, the human mind can reflect on its perceptions. In this way, the human mind has what we can call self-consciousness.

The fact that rational monads possess such a capacity begets several important consequences for Leibniz. The most important of which is the fact that the mind is aware of itself as the subject of its perception, and the changing perceptions, such that a particular self is capable of entertaining "I perceive X" (see Simmons 2011, 200). Another important feature of this view informs Leibniz's theory of mind. On the standard Cartesian view of the mind, perception is viewed "as *for* and *to* a subject, and self-consciously so" (Simmons 2011, 202). Leibniz's theory of mind proposes at least three different possibilities. Of course, monads can be self-consciously aware of themselves such as when one possesses an idea of oneself like the one she would express by voicing "I am the shopper making a mess". However, a monad could equally have perception without this self-conscious feature. Namely, one might be aware of the mess of sugar on the floor in front without really giving it any explicit attention. Finally, a monad can have unconscious perceptions. This last fact is a result of Leibniz's notion of petite perceptions. Such an account would have raised eyebrows among Leibniz's contemporaries:

What seems most strikingly new in all this is Leibniz's introduction of unconscious *petites perceptions*, since they seem to usher in something hitherto unheard of. But the sensations of animals would have been just as anathema to the Cartesians for their lack of reflective self-awareness: in being aware of the roses, they

would insist, one must inevitably be aware of being aware. When Leibniz chides the Cartesians for missing much of what is in the mind, then, it is not just that they have missed the unconscious *petites perceptions*; they have also missed conscious sensations that lack reflective self-awareness. What is more, they have missed these phenomena both as they exist in other living things (animals and simple living things) and in the human mind itself, where all three co-exist. (Simmons 2011, 202)

What is attractive for us is that Leibniz views the mind as possessing various degrees of perception. Some perceptions are unconscious, others are conscious. These two cognitive streams acting in parallel help to deal with problems concerning individuation. The claims made by Leibniz here are surprisingly similar to the modern, cognitive scientific view of the duplex mind, i.e., the distinction between automatic processes and reflective (conscious) ones:

The human mind has two major processing systems at work, and they have different properties [...] The automatic system, also known as the intuitive or reflexive system, generally has many things happening at once [...] simultaneously and somewhat independently of each other. [...] In contrast, the conscious system does one thing at a time, yet it can process in depth and follow multiple steps. [...] only the conscious system seems fully able to make use of the power of meaning and language. (Baumeister 2005, 75)

As Baumeister stresses: “The conscious system did not decide which finger to use to press the elevator button, nor did it supervise each footstep. It only formulated the grand plan” (Baumeister 2005, 278). In other words, most of our thinking activities and actions are guided by automatic cognitive processes operating at the subconscious level. We are guided by self-locating (unconscious) thoughts, by what Leibniz would characterize as *petites perceptions*.

Rational monads possess appetitions. Suffice it to say that appetitions are those inclinations or motivations that drive monads from one perceptual state to another and incline them to act.⁹ Leibniz claims that no monad lacks activity:

[I]n the natural course of things no substance can lack activity, and indeed there is never a body without movement. [...] at every moment there is in us an infinity of perceptions, unaccompa-

⁹ In the *Monadology* (§ 49) Leibniz writes: “*action* is attributed to a monad insofar as it has distinct perceptions, and *passion* insofar as it has confused ones” (Leibniz 1969, 647).

nied by awareness or reflection; that is, of alterations in the soul itself, of which we are unaware because these impressions are either too minute and too numerous, or else too unvarying, so that they are not sufficiently distinctive on their own. (*New Essays*, 53)

Further on, Leibniz discusses how petites perceptions are guided by the appetitions - their internal principle of activity and change:

All our undeliberated actions result from a conjunction of minute perceptions; and even our customs and passions, which have so much influence when we do deliberate, come from the same source; for these tendencies come into being gradually, and so without minute perceptions we would not have acquired these noticeable dispositions. (*New Essays*, 115-16)

These minute impulses consist in our continually overcoming small obstacles - our nature labours at this without our thinking about it. (*New Essays*, 188)

Leibniz's notion of continual minute activities underscores his view of the monad. This idea is significant because of the cognitive form in which he couches it. Sensible representations, Leibniz tells us, constitute the bulk of our cognitive life and underpin the singular viewpoint of every cognitive agent. Such sensible representations are the result of sub-personal informative states and processes that Leibniz refers to as petite perceptions. In Leibnizian terms, the petite perceptions of a monad give rise to representations of sensible qualities and carve out the singular and original point of view that every substance has of the world.

This, we think, can be read alongside some of the main lessons we take from the works of essentialists on the essential indexicals, such as self-locating beliefs, and agent-centered behaviour. This is what underpins what could be characterized as the automaticity of the *de re* and the *de se*. That is, the view that most of our thinking activities are guided by automatic cognitive processes operating at the sub-conscious level and that the latter is guided by self-locating (unconscious) thoughts. Since, for Leibniz, appetite is what guides the constant stream in our mental life, the petite perceptions that are accumulated as the monad unfolds *via* appetite can be viewed as the building blocks upon which our interactions with the external world rest.

In other words, the principle of action, that is, the primitive force which is our essence, expresses itself in momentary derivative forces involving two aspects: on the one hand, there is a representative aspect (perception), by which the many petites perceptions are expressed within the one, simple substance; on the other hand, there is

a dynamical aspect, a tendency or striving towards new perceptions, which inclines us to change our representative state, and move towards new perceptions. As the monad shifts from one perception to another, there is the sense of an irreducible quality:

The thought of myself, who perceives sensible objects, and the thought of the action of mine that results from it, adds something to the objects of the senses [...]. And since I conceive that other beings can also have the right to say 'I', or that it can be said for them, it is through this that I conceive what is called substance in general. (Leibniz 1996, 188)

For Leibniz, rational monads have an accompanying representation alongside these petite perceptions, namely, the *I* in us. For such creatures, sensible experience carries with it some instance of what distinguishes them from other minds. Experience is not only of things. It is also from a certain point of view in which things are experienced (or represented). In the messy shopper example, the patrons in the store and John both have access to the facts surrounding the mess and the shopper making it. This can be represented by some description such as 'the person who is such and such' (where 'the person who is such and such' is a description that applies only to the messy shopper, John). However, this description does not provide an explanation of John's behaviour only until he realizes that he himself made the mess. After all, the messy shopper could have formulated a belief about someone who satisfies the description (given above) but does not realize that he is in fact the person making the mess.

4 The 'I' in the Monad *qua* Essential Indexical

In this section we will mainly focus on the way our thinking (and communicative) episodes inherently relate to the reality we apprehend and, in particular, on how this activity is, most of the time, perspective driven. We are, we could say, intrinsically embedded in the surroundings we are interacting with and this situatedness is from a particular viewpoint. So, how do so-called perspectival (or viewpoint-guided) thoughts constitute the (cognitive) grounding of what came to be characterized (after David Lewis' 1979 seminal paper) as the *de se*? The main picture to be defended goes as follows: we are cognitively built to grasp pieces (objects) of our surroundings in an 'indexical' way. This, though, needs to be qualified. For the time being, we will use 'indexical' within quotes for, as we will see, our 'indexical' access to the external world, the (basic) grounding of our thoughts, need not be represented in our minds by our entertaining a token representation of an indexical, i.e. by the tokening of a men-

tal symbol we would exteriorize in uttering an indexical expression. As Castañeda stresses:

[I]ndexical reference is personal, ephemeral, confrontational, and executive. Hence it cannot be reduced to nonindexical reference to what is not confronted. (Castañeda 1989, 70)

It is worth considering again John the messy shopper from the perspective of a monad – a centre of activity. For Leibniz, each monad contains in it the proposition that would be expressed if the agent were to utter “He is making a mess”. Since all monads mirror the entire universe, all monads would entertain this proposition. However, the degree of distinctness of the proposition and the accompanying apperception is available in certain degrees, perhaps confusedly, by the monad. The only monad that can represent this proposition from a first-person perspective correctly is the messy shopper, John, who has the ability to become aware of his own distinct point of view. The viewpoint he expresses by voicing “I am making a mess” refers uniquely to John, the messy shopper. The distinct apperception of the content of the proposition is available to John’s consciousness. This apperception expressed in the first-person mood reflects the viewpoint of the agent, in our example John. If this apperception were expressed using a co-referential term, say ‘he’ (when, e.g., looking at his image in the mirror) or ‘John’, we would lose the agent’s peculiar self-attribution. It is in this sense that Leibniz’s ‘I’ in the monad may be best understood along the way we understand ‘I’ *qua* essential indexical:

Anyone can believe of John Perry that he is making a mess. And anyone can be in the belief state classified by the sentence “I am making a mess”. But only I can have that belief by being in that state. (Perry 1979, 183)

Furthermore, when one expresses one’s thoughts in uttering ‘I’ one need not identify oneself as when one ought to do when one refers to someone else using, e.g., ‘she’, ‘he’ or a proper name:

I can be mistaken in thinking that what I see is a canary or (in case of hallucination) that there is anything at all that I see, but it cannot happen that I am mistaken in saying this because I have misidentified as myself the person I know to see a canary. (Shoemaker 1968, 82)

The ‘I’ in the monad can also be understood along this view. For, when one comes to be aware of a given perception one cannot misidentify oneself *qua* subject of the relevant perception.

Furthermore, the following two passages where Leibniz talks about the *I* in us, may be understood as anticipating contemporary essentialist perspectives as well:

Furthermore, by means of the soul or form, there is a true unity which corresponds to what is called the *I* in us; such a thing could not occur in artificial machines, nor in the simple mass of matter, however organized it may be. (*New System of Nature*, GP IV, 482)

This experience is the consciousness which is in us of this *I* which apperceives things which occur in the body. This perception cannot be explained by figures and movements. (*Reply to Bayle*, GP IV, 559 f.)

As Kulstad and Carlin (2020) point out: “Leibniz’s point is that whatever is the subject of perception and consciousness must be truly one, a single ‘I’ properly regarded as *one* conscious being”.¹⁰ The ‘I’ in the monad understood as an essential indexical, we think, also helps us to appreciate Leibniz’s view on personal identity and its relevance to contemporary discussions.

5 Petite Perceptions and Personal Identity

Leibniz, like Descartes, undoubtedly believed that personal identity relied on the continuity of the person’s substance. Descartes, focused on substantiality, disregarded the role that psychological continuity played. Leibniz regarded this as an egregious error, for how can a person be sensitive to punishment and reward without memory and consciousness (see Gut 2017, 100-1). Thus, like Locke but unlike Descartes, Leibniz also held that psychological continuity is a necessary condition for the preservation of personal identity. Like Locke, Leibniz believed that if a person lacked consciousness of their past experiences, they would not qualify as the same person in the moral and religious sphere (see Gut 2017, 101). However, Leibniz goes further than Locke. For Leibniz, Locke’s account of personal identity was subject to admit of absurd consequences. Leibniz’s view of personal identity is able to manoeuvre the problems with Locke’s account because Leibniz maintained that all experiences of a person are included in their individual substance, which is the unchang-

¹⁰ According to Leibniz apperception is consciousness or, to put differently, the reflexive knowledge one entertains of one’s internal state. This consciousness is not given to all souls. Only rational beings (or rational monads) can have access to it.

ing *I* in us.¹¹ These experiences include both perceptible experiences for consciousness (sensible perceptions), and non-perceptible experiences (insensible perceptions).¹² For this reason, Leibniz is able to maintain that even when a person loses consciousness, that is to say, the apperception of some of one's experiences, one is not entirely stripped of one's perceptions. It is the continuity of perceptions and the interconnections between them that constitute the sameness of a person through time.

Firstly, if personal identity was based only on consciousness, its complete loss by a given person (as, for instance, a result of an unfortunate accident) would mean the loss of personal identity. A person before and after an accident would be a completely different person. Secondly, if consciousness and memory were the only way personal identity can constitute itself, they would actually be all that constitutes a given person. It would lead to absurdity in the case when memory gaps were filled with false content (see Gut 2017, 106-7). Leibniz writes:

Now, suppose that such a man were made young again, and learned everything anew - would that make him a different man? So it is not memory that make the very same man [...] within each substance there is a perfect bond between the future and the past, which is what creates the identity of the individual. Memory is not necessary for this, however, and it is sometimes not even possible, because of the multitude of past and present impressions which jointly contribute to our present thoughts; for I believe that each of a man thought has some effects, if only a confused one, or

11 As Leibniz puts it: "Organization or configuration alone, without an enduring principle of life which I call 'monad', would not suffice to make something remain numerically the same, i.e. the same individual. [...] one can rightly say that they remain perfectly 'the same individual' in virtue of this soul or spirit which makes the *I* in substances which think" (Leibniz 1996, 231-2). And he further adds: "I would not wish to deny, either, that 'personal identity' and even the 'self' persist in us, and that I and that I who was in the cradle, merely on the grounds that I can no longer remember anything that I did at the time. [...] there be a mediating bond of consciousness, even if this has a jump or forgotten interval mixed into it. Thus, if an illness had interrupted the continuity of my bond of consciousness, so that I did not know how I arrived at my present state even though I could remember things further back, the testimony of other would fill in the gap in my recollection. [...] And if I forgot my whole past, and needed to have myself taught all over again, even my name and how to read and write, I could still learn from others about my life during my preceding state" (Leibniz 1996, 236-7).

12 As Curley writes: "Leibniz, like Locke, does not want to base the diachronic identity of person on the continuity of transcendental subjects. Instead, like Locke, he makes it depend on a relationship of continuity among the states of the subject. But since he disagrees with Locke that the thinker is necessary aware of his thoughts, persons do not, for Leibniz, exhaust the class of thinking things. He will extend his account of identity to all thinking things. And since, for Leibniz, all genuine individuals are thinking things, this account will hold for all individuals" (Curley 1982, 323).

leave some trace which mingles with the thoughts which follow it.
(Leibniz 1996, 114)

All our undeliberated actions result from a conjunction of minute perceptions; and even our customs and passions, which we have so much influence when we do deliberate, come from the same source; for these tendencies come into being gradually, and so without the minute perceptions we would not have acquired these noticeable dispositions. (Leibniz 1996, 115-16)

Once again, the idea of *petites perceptions* plays a foundational explanatory role: The *petites perceptions* (or unconscious thoughts) guiding our automatic actions (see the duplex mind, section 3) ground the subject's experiences to itself. For as Leibniz claims, there is nothing in a simple substance but its *petites perceptions* and their changes.

If we interpret *petites perceptions* in the way discussed by Baumeister (section 3), perhaps we can find a way to reconcile it with what Perry (1990) refers to in his later works as 'self-notions'.¹³ For Perry, self-notions underscore what we do when we decide what to do. Self-notions are repositories that store our personal information. Self-notions are thoughts about ourselves, and are, therefore, first-personal. The work self-notions play can be instructive in viewing the connection between Leibniz's *petites perceptions* and apperception. *Petites perceptions* *belong* to a particular individual such that when that person apperceives them,¹⁴ they apperceive *their* perceptions. In other words, we can think about *petites perceptions* as an inventory of individual identical information as playing the role of providing reasons for individual action. The reason an individual, X, acts on information involving X and not someone else is because X-information is indexed to the individual, X. The important point here is that the perceiver need not have an accurate perception of an object (e.g., you may think that you see a canary, when really it is a dove) to be able to experience that object from their first-person point of view. Individual perceivers cannot mistake themselves as the perceivers since their perceptions are already indexed to them.

There are two important consequences we can draw from the above considerations we have been discussing at length. The first, it is the idea that indexicality is essential to intentional thought, and intentions are essential to agency. The second is that first-personal access is important to explain Leibnizian and EIT intuitions concerning puzzling cases of identity and memory.

¹³ We note that we are probably stretching Perry's idea of self-notion a lot further from how he intended it to be used.

¹⁴ See Kulstad 1977 for discussion on the apperception of *petites perceptions*.

Consider again our messy shopper, John. Suppose that while John is shopping, he suffers a lapse of thought whereby he totally forgets what he has come to buy, and more alarmingly, basic facts about his life (e.g., he cannot remember his name, or that he is from Nebraska, and what he had for breakfast that day, etc.). Now, suppose that he notices that the mess of sugar is caused by the bag that he has in his cart. It is plausible that John is able to move from the thought that he would express in uttering "Someone is making a mess" to the thought he would express by "I am the one who is making a mess" despite the fact that he cannot say for certain what his name is, where he was born, or what he ate for breakfast moments before heading to the supermarket. According to Leibniz, all John requires is his repository of petites perceptions, which act as buffers for his first-personal perspective.¹⁵

An immaterial being or spirit cannot 'be stripped of all' perception of its past experiences. It retains impressions of everything which has previously happened to it, and it even has presentiments of everything which will happen to it; but these states of mind are mostly too minute to be distinguishable and for one to be aware of them, although they may perhaps grow some day. It is this continuity and interconnection of perceptions which makes someone really the same individual. [...] So it is unreasonable to suppose that memory should be lost beyond any possibility of recovery, since insensitive perceptions, whose usefulness I have shown in so many other important connections, serve a purpose here too – preserving the seed of memory. (Leibniz 1996, 239-40).

Let us now consider a second, Leibnizian take on the Messy Shopper example.¹⁶ We call it the Many Johns case.¹⁷ Suppose there are two monads, John₁ and John₂ in two symmetrical worlds. We know, according to Leibniz that both monads contain the same information about the universe as each other (and every other monad for that matter). Thus, both are indistinguishable in terms of their general de-

¹⁵ See Kulstad 1977 for discussion.

¹⁶ In fact, this example can be seen as echoing a challenge posed by Strawson's [1959] 1964 introduction of the monad/chess example against Leibniz's doctrine of individuation. Like Nichols 1999, though, we think that the example does not really apply to Leibniz, but rather someone Strawson calls 'Leibniz'. This is because Leibniz had already formulated a similar thought experiment (i.e., what is often referred to as the 'Many Adams') and responded to the challenges it posed.

¹⁷ The relevance of Leibniz's substance-accident realism to issues on transworld identity is discussed at length in an excellent article by O'Leary-Hawthorne and Cover 1996. In particular, they point to how the haecceitism/anti-haecceitism debate reintroduced into contemporary discussions by Kaplan 1975 can be squared with Leibniz's doctrine.

scriptions (e.g., memory, appearance, psychological capacities, and dispositions). But let's suppose that John₁ and John₂ have qualitatively indistinguishable points of view in these symmetrical worlds. That is to say, John₁ and John₂ are spilling bags of sugar unbeknownst to themselves in Safeway's in symmetrical universes. The putative challenge is that points of view of the world do not carry the explanatory role of distinguishing monads.

We think both Leibniz and EIT theorists share intuitions about this case: Both John₁ and John₂ have a fundamentally different self-reflexive feeling. For Leibniz, self-reflexivity is nothing other than apperception. In Leibniz's theory of mind,¹⁸ apperception is that distinguishing feature that automatically differentiates among two putatively indistinguishable, monads, or our 'internal principle of distinction'. Similarly, EIT theorists would argue that it is completely natural to believe that both John₁ and John₂ have their own unique points of view. Thus, John₁ and John₂ come to utter and say different things when they entertain the thought "I am making a mess". John₁ would call of the search of the messy shopper, and hopefully, clean up the mess *he himself* made. The same holds for twin-earth John. For the 'I' they would (or be disposed to) utter stands for John and twin-John respectively. In uttering 'I' John cannot refer to twin-John and *vice versa* where the intentions of John₁ to clean up the mess miraculously become those of John₂.

6 Conclusion

We are quite sure that our excursion into Leibniz's philosophy through the lens of some contemporary philosophical appeals to essential indexicality did not do full justice to Leibniz's original thoughts and ideas (and perhaps that we've mistreated some of the contemporary views concerning indexicality and *de se* beliefs). Our aim was modest. If anything, we hope to have shown how Leibniz's 'I' in the monad somewhat anticipated current theories regarding the essential indexical. At the same time, we hope that our contemporary philosophical lens may be of some help in understanding Leibniz's philosophy of mind. No doubt, we ignored some important aspects of Leibniz's metaphysics, and possibly numerous other studies linking indexicality to Leibniz's essentialism. To this end, we re-quote Castañeda "Whereas on the Athenian approach one aims at revealing or constructing

18 For a paper on the differences between the Cartesian view of mind and Leibniz's own, and the importance of the latter's thoughts on raising "a set of foundational philosophical questions about the mind that could not be asked from within the Cartesian framework" we recommend Simmons 2001, 73.

a master unity and coherence of philosopher's *corpus*, on the Darwinian approach we try to re-live and enjoy the philosopher's peak insights, even if they are the culminations of periods of uncertainty, incoherence, and self-contradiction" (Castañeda 1976, 93). We, no doubt, enjoyed our Leibnizian excursion even if in our reading and understanding we ended up with uncertainties, confusions and, possibly, contradictions.

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Abbreviations

- A = Leibniz, G.W. (1923-2021). *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
GP = Leibniz, G.W. (1875-90). *Die philosophischen Schriften*. Hrsg. von C.I. Gerhardt. 7 Bde. 2. Aufl. Reprint Hildesheim: Olms, 1965.

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