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HAECCEITAS AND INDIVIDUAL ESSENCE IN LEIBNIZ

In recent years we have witnessed an extraordinary degree of concern with the problem of individuation among philosophers. In this somewhat unexpected development, Jorge Gracia's work has a prominent place. He has provided us not only with an excellent framework to distinguish the various issues that can be raised in relation to individuation but also a birdseye view of most of the various historical accounts¹. Further, against this background, he challenged the historians of philosophy with a question that is directly relevant to the general theme of our conference: «How far has the epistemological tendency characteristic of modern philosophy invaded metaphysics in general and the formulation and solution to the problem of individuation in particular?»².

In this paper, I would like to meet Gracia's challenge partially by studying the relations between Duns Scotus's and Leibniz's theories of individuation. My thesis is that Leibniz's criticism of Duns Scotus's *haecceitas* theory, together with his own theory of individuation by *entitas tota*, is responsible to a great extent for the subsequent, erroneous conception of Scotus's *haecceitas* as an individual essence. The epistemological tendency in the discussion of individuation by modern philosophers is most salient in the conflation of the ontological

1 J.J.E. GRACIA, *Introduction to the Problem of Individuation in the Early Middle Ages*, 2nd rev. ed. Munich and Vienna, Philosophia Verlag, 1988; *Individuality: An Essay on the Foundation of Metaphysics*. Albany, State University of New York Press, 1988; *Suarez on Individuation*. Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 1982; Gracia (ed.), *Individuation in Scholasticism: The Later Middle Ages and the Counter-Reformation*, 1150-1650. Albany, State University of New York Press, 1994; K.F. BARBER and J.J.E. GRACIA (eds.), *Individuation and Identity in Early Modern Philosophy*. Albany, State University of New York Press, 1994.

2 GRACIA, «Christian Wolff on Individuation», in BARBER and GRACIA (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 220.

problem of individuation with the epistemological problem of the discernibility of individuals. If so, the task of tracing the origin of misunderstanding *haecceitas* as an individual essence to Leibniz can shed considerable light on the intriguing relation between medieval and modern treatments of individuation.

There is no doubt that Duns Scotus's *haecceitas* theory is one of the most subtle and profound theories of individuation in the history of medieval philosophy. Both philosophically and historically, his theory deserves extensive and careful discussion. Indeed, we now have not only a new edition of Scotus's treatise on individuation, but also at least one recent book devoted to the notion of haecceity³. Unfortunately, however, *haecceitas* is still too frequently, if not invariably, misunderstood as an individual essence⁴. As I tried to show elsewhere, *haecceitas* cannot be an individual essence for Scotus⁵, for he rejected the nominalistic theory according to which a material substance is by nature singular and individual. Furthermore, if we substitute «individual essence» for «individual difference (*haecceitas*)» in Scotus's triple analogy between a specific difference and an individual difference, absurdities follow. Consequently, it becomes

³ JOHN DUNS SCOTUS, *Lectura in librum secundum Sententiarum*, d. 3, pars I, qq. 1-6, (*Ioannis Duns Scoti O.F.M. opera omnia*, vol. 18). Civitas Vaticana, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1982; *Duns Scotus' Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation*, Latin Text and English Translation by A.B. WOLTER. Santa Barbara, Old Mission, 1992; G.S. ROSEKRANTZ, *Haecceity: An Ontological Essay*. Boston, Kluwer, 1993.

⁴ For example, A. PLANTINGA, «The Boethian Compromise», *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 15 (1978), p. 132; R.M. CHISHOLM, «Possibility without Haecceity», in P.A. FRENCH et al. (eds.), *Studies in Essentialism: Midwest Studies in Philosophy XI*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1986, p. 160; M. LOSOSKY, «Individual Essence», *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 24 (1987), p. 253; N. RASCHER, *Leibniz's Metaphysics of Nature*. Dordrecht, Holland, D. Reidel, 1981, p. 102; F. MONDADORI, «Reference, Essentialism, and Modality in Leibniz's Metaphysics», in R.S. WOOLHOUSE, *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Critical Assessments*, Vol. 1, pp. 232, 238; G. BERGMANN, *Logic and Reality*, pp. 160, 165, 287; BERGMANN, *Meaning and Existence*, pp. 167, 199, 204, 222; ROSENKRANTZ, *op. cit.*

⁵ W. PARK, «Haecceitas and the Bare Particular», *Review of Metaphysics*, 46 (1990), pp. 375-398. A. WOLTER agrees with my interpretation in this regard. Cf. His «Introduction» to *Duns Scotus' Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation*, XVIII-XX.

extremely important to raise the question as to how *haecceitas* has been misunderstood and distorted.

I propose to use Leibniz's discussion of individuation as a vantage point in tracing the origin of the distortion of the notion of *haecceitas*. Even if Leibniz is not primarily to blame for the recurrent distortion and misunderstanding of *haecceitas* as an individual essence, I believe that it might be most fruitful to start with him as a significant cause of it. There are several reasons for this surmise. First, in contemporary analytic discussions of modal metaphysics and individuation, the notion of «individual essence» is usually attributed to Leibniz⁶. Secondly, in Leibniz we find an incisive criticism of Scotus's theory of individuation⁷. Finally, since Scotism was still influential in the seventeenth century («*Scoti schola numerosior est alhis simul sumptis*»), Leibniz's criticism is more important — at least for our purpose — than any earlier attacks on *haecceitas*⁸.

Fortunately, L. McCullough and I. Angelelli have provided us with some recent studies of Leibniz's early discussion of individuation in his *Disputatio metaphysica de principio individui* (1663), which can serve as an excellent point of departure⁹. For, as noted by McCullough, «it is in this text that Leibniz sets out and defends his principle of individuation in a level of detail not to be found elsewhere in his works»¹⁰. As far as Leibniz's criticism of Scotus's *haecceitas* theory is

⁶ Cf. P.A. FRENCH et al. (eds.), *op. cit.*

⁷ G.W. LEIBNIZ, *Disputatio metaphysica de principio*, in C.J. GERRARD (ed.), *Die philosophische Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, Bd. 4, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1880. I shall use P.V. SEVADÉ's translation, which is available from University of Oklahoma Translation Clearing House.

⁸ M. DE WULF, *History of Mediaeval Philosophy*, Vol. 2, trans. by E.C. MESSENGER. London, Longmans, 1926, p. 297.

⁹ L.B. MCCULLOUGH, «Leibniz's Principle of Individuation in His *Disputatio metaphysica de principio individui* of 1663», in BARNER and GRACIA (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 201-218; *The Early Philosophy of Leibniz on Individuation: A Study of the Disputatio metaphysica de principio individui*. Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin 1975; I. ANGELELLI, «The Scholastic Background of Modern Philosophy: Entities and Individuation in Leibniz», in GRACIA (ed.), *Individuation in Scholasticism*, pp. 535-542.

¹⁰ MCCULLOUGH (1994), p. 201.

concerned, we have here (1) the argument against *haecceitas*, (2) the argument against a common nature, (3) the argument against the formal distinction, and (4) the argument related to the nature of individual accidents. As for the young Leibniz's positive theory of individuation by whole entity, we have (1) the argument from entity to unity, (2) the argument from the likeness between the singular and universal, and (3) the argument from the intrinsic determination of nature¹¹.

My strategy for substantiating the thesis that Leibniz is responsible for the frequent distortion of *haecceitas* as an individual essence is as follows. In section 1, I shall try to defend Scotus's *haecceitas* theory by confronting directly some of Leibniz's criticisms of Scotus. In section 2, I shall criticize some of the young Leibniz's arguments in favor of his theory of individuation by whole entity. In section 3, by combining the two previous points, I shall argue that it was inconsistent for Leibniz to hold both his criticism of Scotus's theory and his positive theory of individuation by whole entity. While making these points, I shall add some comments on Leibniz's views on individuation in his mature philosophy.

1. In Defence of Scotus's Theory of Individuation

Apart from the *Disputatio*'s indebtedness to Scotus for the arguments it presents against several theories of individuation, the text reveals interesting parallels with Scotus's work on individuation. First, both authors understood the intention of «individual» to signify indivisibility and distinction, thereby leading them to deal with the same problem in their search for the principle of individuation¹².

¹¹ MCCULLOUGH [1975], Ch. 5 and Ch. 6.

¹² MCCULLOUGH [1994], p. 205; W. PARK, «The Problem of Individuation for Scotus: A Principle of Indivisibility or a Principle of Distinction?», *Franciscan Studies*, 48 (1988), pp. 105-123. But we have to note that Scotus and Leibniz had entirely different understandings of indivisibility. Since there is no common nature for Leibniz, indivisibility cannot mean incommunicability, as it does for Scotus. Also, we may note that Leibniz tended to emphasize distinction more than indivisibility. For example, in *New Essays*, we read: «The principle of individuation reduces itself, in the case of individuals, to the principle of distinction... If two

Secondly, both were searching for the principle of individuation applicable to all individuals, i.e., both material and spiritual substances¹³. Finally, even a cursory look at the *Disputatio* would be enough to show that it must have been a formidable task for the young Leibniz to overcome the influence of Scotus as he criticized the latter's theory of individuation. Let us examine some of his criticisms.

(a) *On Leibniz's Argument against Haecceitas*

Leibniz's argument against *haecceitas* is basically as follows:

If genus and difference are distinguished only by reason, then there is no individual difference. But the former is true. Therefore, [the latter is true too]¹⁴.

Leibniz counted the major premise as obvious, and tried to prove the minor by two sub-arguments adopted from Soncinhas.

The first sub-argument reads:

Things that are different prior to [any] operation of the mind are separable. But genus and difference cannot be separated¹⁵.

Leibniz did not bother to comment on the major premise. In order to support the minor premise against what he believes to be Scotus's claim that God can bring it about that universals exist besides singulars, Leibniz tried to prove the claim to be absurd.

I prove that this is absurd: For there would be no adequate division [of the genus]. There would be an animal [that is] neither rational nor irrational, and there would be a motion that was neither forward nor sideways¹⁶.

As is clear, the disagreement between Scotus and Leibniz amounts to how they understand the separability of the common nature and the

individuals are perfectly similar and equal and, in short, indistinguishable in themselves, there would be no principle of individuations», *New Essays on Human Understanding*, translated and edited by P. RANVANT and J. BENNETT. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

¹³ ГРЕННАВТ, p. 17.

¹⁴ ГРЕННАВТ, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

individual difference (*haecceitas*). And that depends, at least partially, on how to understand the ontological status of a common nature. I surmise that the only possible way of accusing Scotus of the absurdity to which Leibniz refers is by equivocating on «common nature». The consequence that «there would be an animal [that is] neither rational nor irrational» is absurd only if we consider the common nature «animal» as an individuated common nature, that is, as «an animal». It is by no means absurd to say that the common nature itself (e.g., animality itself) is neither rational nor irrational. In other words, what Scotus claimed to be separable were the common nature itself and *haecceitas*, not an individuated common nature and *haecceitas*¹⁷.

Of course, Leibniz might object by saying that such a position, considered together with the major premise that those things which differ prior to the operation of the mind are separable, would yield the conclusion that the individuated common nature and *haecceitas* do not differ prior to the operation of the mind. But such a consequence does not prove that Scotus's position is wrong. Rather, it indicates the need to qualify his major premise by restricting its application to a real distinction. Again, Leibniz might object by saying that there is no such thing as a formal distinction. But this means that the success of Leibniz's argument against *haecceitas* also depends on the viability of his argument against the formal distinction (see c below).

(b) *On Leibniz's Argument against a Common Nature*

Leibniz's second argument against Scotus's theory is the argument that attacks the Scotistic common nature:

If there are no universals prior to the operation of the mind, [then] there is no composition of the universal with what individuates it prior to the operation of the mind. For there is no real composition the ingredients of

¹⁷ Elsewhere I have shown that, contrary to a common misunderstanding, *haecceitas* is not formally distinct from the common nature itself, but only from the individuated common nature. Cf. W. Park, «Common Nature and *Haecceitas*», *Frantzkranische Studien*, 71 (1989), pp. 188–192.

which are not all real. But the former is true. Therefore, [the latter is true too]¹⁸.

It is interesting to note that, apparently, Leibniz had a hard time justifying this argument. Indeed, the text immediately following the argument is so hopelessly obscure that it is almost impossible to see what Leibniz was trying to do there. For example, even though Gerhardt's edition reads «minor» — which means that we are supposed to find a proof of the minor premise in the passage, we have grounds to believe that the reading should be «major» — Spade believes that «major» is intended here because the minor is proven in the next paragraph.

If Spade's interpretation is right, Leibniz tried to prove the major as follows:

Everything that is really different from something else prior to [any] operation of the mind, in such a way that neither one, either in whole or in part, is a part of the other, can be separated from the other. For among things that are adequately different, neither needs the other in order to exist. Hence, it can be separated [from the other] by the absolute power of God. And a part is simply inseparable from its whole only in the sense that [the whole] should [be required to] remain [after such a separation]¹⁹.

However, Spade counts the content of this paragraph to be totally irrelevant to both the major and the minor premise.

Instead of struggling with this obscure argument, I would rather find fault with the minor premise. Leibniz tried to prove the minor as follows:

The minor is proved prosyllogistically. For there would exist a line that was really neither straight nor curved, which is most absurd²⁰.

Neither Spade nor I know what a «prosyllogism» might be. But the idea presented is exactly like one we saw earlier in Leibniz's argument against *haecceitas*. As he tried to prove that genus and difference are distinguished only by reason, here he is trying to prove that there are no universals prior to the operation of the mind. If so, we may use the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

same tactic in countering Leibniz by pointing out that there is nothing absurd in characterizing linearity itself as neither straight nor curved. And the fact that Leibniz used the same pattern of argument in both his argument against *haecceitas* and in his argument against the common nature, indicates that Leibniz committed a fallacy of circular reasoning.

(c) *On Leibniz's Argument against the Formal Distinction*

Leibniz's argument against the formal distinction, which seems to be the crux of the matter, is as follows:

If there is no formal distinction, haecceity is destroyed. But the former is true. Therefore, [the latter is true too]²¹.

After having reviewed some Scotists' conception of the formal distinction, Leibniz accused them of being «strangely confused and inconsistent when they apply these matters in actual facts»²². He aptly pointed out that, in order for *haecceitas* to be prior to the intellect, *haecceitas* must be different from the species in some other respect than that it is apt to move the intellect in a distinct way. But he claimed that

whatever it is, it is absurd. For as soon as [haecceity and the species] differ apart from the intellect, they are not identified with one another [in the subject]²³.

In order to see whether Leibniz was doing justice to Scotus's formal distinction, let us use Mark Jordan's definition of the formal distinction:

Two things are formally distinct if and only if: (1) They are found in a single (non-composite) thing, or in a simple component of a composite thing. (2) They are really identical. (3) They differ formally *ante operationem intellectus*. (3) is expressed in the following alternate ways:
(a) The formal nature (*ratio*) of one is not the formal nature (*ratio*) of the

other. (b) If they were definable, [at least] one would not occur in the definition of the other²⁴.

Leibniz's criticism is nothing other than the accusation that condition (3) and condition (2) are incompatible.

But it is not that difficult to show that there might be a case in which both conditions are satisfied. For example, van Fraassen once wrote about the possibility that the distinction between being a trilateral and being a triangle is a formal distinction²⁵. They are both extensionally and intensionally identical. Still, they are different in comprehension. They are formally distinct.

Let us now turn to the case of *haecceitas* and the individuated common nature. Since one of the terms of the distinction, i.e., *haecceitas*, is not definable, condition (3b) is pertinent: If both the common nature and *haecceitas* were definable, [at least] one would not occur in the definition of the other. Now the question is whether the common nature and *haecceitas* could be really identical even if they are of such a nature that if both were definable, [at least] one would not occur in the definition of the other. Now I think that it is at least certain that if *haecceitas* were definable, the individuated common nature would not occur in the definition of *haecceitas*. And it is quite certain that *haecceitas* and the individuated common nature are really identical. In other words, it is by no means absurd that they are formally distinct.

²⁴ M. Jordan, *Duns Scotus on the Formal Distinction*. Ph. D. dissertation, The State University of New Jersey [Rutgers], 1978, pp. 55-56. Cf. also, M. Adams, «Ockham on Identity and Distinctions», *Franciscan Studies*, 36 (1976), p. 35. The textual basis may be found in his Oxford Lectures, Bk II, dist. 3, pars 1, q. 6, n. 171:

«As there are diverse formal perfections or formal entities, then, in one and the same thing (such as whiteness) from which a generic intention can be derived (such as the intention of color), and another formal entity from which the intention of the difference (white) is derived – as we said in Bk I [Lectura d. 3] – so too in the same thing there is a positive entity formally other from which the specific nature is derived, one which is completely a «this», to which any sort of division is abhorrent». I added «[at least]» since without this qualification Jordan's formulation would be too strong.

²⁵ B. C. VAN FRAASSEN, «Extension, Intension, and Comprehension», in M. K. MUNITZ (ed.), *Logic and Ontology*. New York, New York University Press, 1973, pp. 103, 113.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

2. Criticism of the Young Leibniz's Arguments for His Theory of Individuation

The young Leibniz claimed that every individual is individuated by its whole entity. And he claimed that such a theory is held by most distinguished men and takes away all difficulties. He gathered five arguments usually given in favor of the theory. And, following McCullough, they can be categorized into three groups: (1) the argument from entity to unity; (2) the argument from the likeness of a singular and a universal; and (3) the argument from the intrinsic determination of the nature. Let me comment on the second and the third groups of arguments, which are more relevant to our present concern, i.e., *haecceitas* and an individual essence.

(a) *Against the Argument from the Likeness of the Singular and the Universal*

Leibniz's second and third arguments for the theory of individuation by whole entity are characterized together by McCullough as the argument from the likeness of singular and universal. Here is the second argument.

Those [principles] that are universal principles of being in a universal are its singular principles in a singular. But the whole entity is the universal principle of being in a universal. Therefore, [the whole entity is also the singular principle of being in a singular]²⁶.

Apparently, this is an argument by analogy. And we can criticize its weakness by pointing out that there is a serious disanalogy between the terms being compared. For, whereas the universal principle of being in the universal must have communicability, the singular principle of being in the singular must have incommunicability. So, even if the whole entity is the universal principle of being in the universal, it is not likely that the whole entity is the principle of being in the singular.

The third argument is this.

... the universal and the singular are not really different. Therefore, they have the same principles. Therefore, the whole entity, which is the principle of universality, will be [the principle] of singularity too²⁷.

Insofar as the universal and the singular do not differ really, «the universal» must denote the individuated common nature. So, it may be the case that the individuated common nature and the singular have the same principle, i.e., the same principle of being in the singular. But, then, the final conclusion does not follow. For there could be something other than the whole entity that is both the principle of the individuated common nature and the principle of the singular. It seems all too natural to exclude the whole entity, since that was assumed by Leibniz to be the principle of universality.

(b) *Against the Argument from the Intrinsic Determination of Nature*

McCullough counts Leibniz's fourth and fifth arguments as variations of a single theme: the consequences of denying that whole entity is the principle of individuation. The fourth argument goes as follows:

There exists in Socrates, for example, a nature intrinsically determined to him outside the understanding. Soncinus concedes this. If he denied it, there would be a complete universal among real things, contrary to the Thomists...Is there a further nature too in Socrates? If not, it is clear that the nature of Socrates individuates itself. -If there is one, [then] there will be a «different» and an indiffernet human nature in Socrates at the same time²⁸.

At first blush, this argument seems to pose a formidable dilemma. But we can grasp the first horn without any regret. For, even if there is no nature in Socrates that is indifferent, it does not necessarily follow that Socrates individuates itself. In Socrates, there is only the individuated nature, say this human being, that is an individual. Scotus can consistently claim that *haecceitas* is that which individuates the common nature itself (humanity) into this (this human being). In other

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

words, Leibniz cannot launch this argument against Scotus without begging the question as to the status of the common nature itself.

What is important is that here we seem to have a clue to understanding how Leibniz viewed *haecceitas*. He asked «Is there a further nature too in Socrates?» Apparently, he considered *haecceitas* as a sort of nature. But, as I pointed out elsewhere, *haecceitas* cannot be a nature at least for Scotus²⁹. In other words, Leibniz was begging the question when he assumed that if there is something other than the individuated nature (this humanity) in Socrates, that must be a kind of nature.

Another important thing to note is that the young Leibniz did not quite distinguish between an individual essence and the whole entity of an individual. Only then does it make sense to say that if there is no further nature in Socrates, then it is clear that the nature of Socrates individuates itself. At this stage, Leibniz had not introduced the monad as a principle of individuation. The monad was distinguished from the whole entity of an individual. In other words, his position was still a kind of nominalism, according to which there is no need for a principle of individuation because the nature of an individual individuates itself.

The fifth argument is as follows:

Either some essence — for example, the humanity of Socrates — differs from the humanity of Plato if we prescind from what is added to the nature from outside it, or else not. If [there is one that] differs in number intrinsically, [then] it individuates itself. If not, it follows that in itself the humanity of Plato and [the humanity of] of Socrates are numerically the same³⁰.

²⁹ W. Park, «*Haecceitas* and the Bare Particular». It is very important to note that there has been an attempt to defend a formal conception of *haecceitas*. See R. WOOD, «Individual Forms: Richard Rufus to John Duns Scotus», in L. HONNEFELDER, R. WOOD, M. DREYER (eds.), *John Duns Scotus. Metaphysics and Ethics*. Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1996, pp. 251-273. But, in the same volume, Gracia convincingly argued that, at least in the *Opus oxoniense*, *haecceitas* cannot be a form. Gracia, «Individuality and the Individuating Entity in Scotus' *Ordinatio*: An Ontological Characterization with a Speculative Possibility on Antecedents», pp. 229-250.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Again, in order to confront the dilemma launched by Leibniz, we grasp the first horn. The humanity of Socrates and the humanity of Plato are intrinsically different in number. But what individuates Socrates is not the individuated nature (of Socrates); rather, the *haecceitas* of Socrates contracts the common nature itself (humanity) into Socrates (this human being). Leibniz must have thought that if one grasps the first horn, then because individual essences (i.e., the humanity of Socrates and the humanity of Plato) are already different, and thereby individuate themselves, there is no room for *haecceitas*. But he was wrong insofar as individual essences, or individuated natures, are different only because *haecceitas* contracts the common nature to this or that.

3. *Haecceitas*, *Entitas tota*, and Individual Essence

(a) *Entitas tota*

We examined above the young Leibniz's arguments in favor of his theory of individuation by the whole entity. These arguments are striking in that they largely depend on Leibniz's criticism of Scotus's theory of *haecceitas*. We do not witness any serious and sustained effort by Leibniz to explain the notion of *entitas tota*. What is the so-called *entitas tota*, after all? And why should that be the principle of individuation of individuals? As Angelelli points out, the central problem of the *Disputatio* must be the understanding of the term «*entitas*»³¹.

In order to solve this problem, Angelelli starts by making some preliminary points that «*entitas*» occurs in the grammatical construction «*entitas* of», and that somehow it has parts³². And the lesson from some of the passages we discussed above is, according to him, that «we learn that anything falling short of the whole entity of x, any proper part of the entity of x, will not do as a principle of

³¹ ANGELELLI, *op. cit.*, p. 535.

³² *Ibid.*

individuation of x »³³. Ultimately, he makes an interesting analogy between the question «what is the *entitas* of a thing?» and the typical mathematical question about the definition of a function: «Given x as input, what is $f(x)$?» And his conjecture is that «the *entitas* of x » is, to continue with the mathematical terminology, just the identity function, namely, the *entitas* of $x=x$.³⁴

I think that Angelelli's discussion of the term «*entitas*» is of utmost importance. However, the outcome is rather disappointing. If the *entitas* of x is identical with x , what is the point of introducing the function «is the *entitas* of?»? Did Leibniz distinguish between the *entitas tota* of x and the individual x ? If so, what kind of distinction would it be? A formal distinction? If they were identical in every sense, then Leibniz would turn out to be a nominalist³⁵. If not, Leibniz was introducing the formal distinction through the back door.

Of course, we may gather some interesting pieces of information about how the young Leibniz viewed the whole entity from his *Disputatio*. For example, he explicitly claimed that

it is wrong to separate those who say that an individual individuates itself and those who say that matter and form are responsible for this. For what is matter and form when united, if not the whole entity of the composite?³⁶

But such information is not useful for understanding the relation between an individual, its whole entity, its individual essence, and its *haecceitas*.

(b) *How Leibniz distorted Haecceitas*

Here is an argument to show that Leibniz distorted Scotus's notion of *haecceitas*. Leibniz considered *haecceitas* either (1) as an individual essence or (2) as an individual difference (i.e., as *haecceitas* proper). If he considered it as an individual essence, then he misinterpreted it, and it should be possible for him not to identify the whole entity with an

individual essence. But this way out was not open to the young Leibniz because he identified the whole entity with the individual essence. If he considered it as an individual difference (*haecceitas*), then there are two different possibilities. Either (2a) he distinguished between the whole entity (or the individual essence) and the individual, or (2b) he identified all of them, i.e., the whole entity, the individual essence, and the individual, as one and the same thing.

If (2a) is the case, then Leibniz must have assumed the formal distinction all over again. But it is obvious that he could not concede that. Nullifying all his criticisms against Scotus's formal distinction seems to be too high a price to pay.

If (2b) is the case, then Leibniz turns out to be a nominalist.

And, it seems likely that the young Leibniz would have been most willing to take this last horn, thereby inadvertently adopting a nominalist position. One may even say that there is nothing wrong in this, because in fact Leibniz was a sworn nominalist. For example, McCullogh writes:

It is in response to the Scotists that Leibniz's nominalistic commitments are fully displayed in the *Disputatio* and, I believe, cemented unalterably in place for the rest of his life³⁷.

There are, however, at least two problems with this interpretation. First, that Leibniz rejected what he considered to be an extreme realism does not make him a nominalist. Secondly, and more importantly, it does not necessarily make sense for a sworn nominalist to be searching for a principle of individuation. Rather, we seem to have enough ground to believe that he wanted to distance himself from the nominalist camp.

It seems to me that no matter which horn of the trilemma Leibniz would have taken, he was bound to face an uncomfortable consequence. If so, we may conclude that it was inconsistent for the young Leibniz both to criticize Scotus's *haecceitas* and to hold on to a theory of individuation by *entitas tota* simultaneously.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 538.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 538-539.

³⁵ According to ANGELLI, many historians of philosophy have already expressed a complaint similar to mine. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 539-540.

³⁶ ГЕННАРТ, p. 18.

³⁷ MCCULLOUGH (1994), p. 209.

Finally, here is a wild speculation of how the mature Leibniz tried to find a way out of the trilemma. I believe that, throughout his life, Leibniz was serious in searching for the principle of individuation. In other words, he was never a true nominalist. Nor was he ever willing to accept the formal distinction. So, the mature Leibniz must have taken the first horn. It was probably not very difficult for him to misinterpret *haecceitas* since it had been regularly misinterpreted by the disciples of Scotus themselves, as well as by his medieval opponents. Moreover, Leibnizian texts confirm that sometimes he equated *haecceitas* and an individual essence. For example, he wrote:

God, on the contrary, in seeing the individual notion or «haecceity» of Alexander, sees in it at the same time the basis and the reason for all the predicates which can be truly affirmed of him.³⁸

Probably, the initial step for such a distortion was already taken by the young Leibniz in his characterization of *haecceitas* as a formal principle. He wrote:

I pass over the fact that haecceity would instead be a form. For it contracts and distinguishes.³⁹

Since there is neither such an entity as *haecceitas* nor a common nature to be contracted, the individual essence instead deserves to be called *haecceitas*. Anyhow, it is the individual essence that distinguishes.

The only burden Leibniz had to bear was to figure out a way to distinguish between the whole entity (or the individual) and the individual essence. And this was not a difficult task for him. By reintroducing haecceitic traits in individual essences, he successfully distinguished between an individual that is nothing but a bundle of characteristics and an individual essence that is self-individuated. That is what we find in Leibniz's mature theory of individuation, according to which the whole entity of a monad, which is self-individuated appetition and self-individuated inseparable perceptions, is the principle of individuation⁴⁰.

It is simply impossible for me to grant a fair hearing to the mature Leibniz's theory of individuation here. But if my assessment of the young Leibniz's criticism of *haecceitas* and his own theory of individuation by *entitas tota* is sound, and if Leibniz indeed distorted the notion of *haecceitas*, then at least we have found a clue to the tangle of mysteries involved in his modalology. Further, insofar as Leibniz's notorious principle of the identity of indiscernibles, his claims pertinent to the problems of transworld identity, and his marvelous ideas about compossibility are amenable to epistemological interpretations, Leibniz's distortion of *haecceitas* as an individual essence must have far-reaching implications for the intriguing relations between the medieval and modern treatments of the problem of individuation.

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³⁸ LOEWNER, p. 308.

³⁹ GERHARDT, p. 23.

⁴⁰ MCCULLOUGH (1994), p. 212.