

DISCUSIONES

COMMENTS ON "INDIVIDUATION AND  
NON-IDENTITY"

*A Reply to Héctor-Neri Castañeda\**

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Let me begin by thanking Castañeda for a very insightful paper, one that raises important metaphysical questions and suggests a fruitful set of tools for handling debates in the history of metaphysics. We can, I think, divide the paper into two sections. In the first, Castañeda argues that there are two quite different problems that metaphysicians who deal with the so-called Problem of Individuation frequently conflate; and in the second, he argues for his own solution to one of these two problems.

The two problems are the Problem of Individuality and the Problem of Numerical Differentiation. The first bears on the question of what it is in an individual that makes it the sort of thing that can exhibit properties but not itself be exhibited by anything; the second bears on the question of what it is that makes an individual numerically different from all other objects, in particular from objects having precisely the same or almost the same properties as it has.

Now, Castañeda argues, correctly (I think), that philosophers have tended to conflate these two issues. In answering one of the two questions (generally, the second), they have naïvely assumed that they were also answering the other. A

\* These comments open a dialogue between Professor Loux and Professor Héctor-Neri Castañeda on "Individuation and Non-identity," a paper presented by Castañeda at the Notre Dame Philosophy Colloquium in the fall of 1973 and subsequently published in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 2, April 1975, pp. 131-140. "Individuation and Non-identity" is an introduction to Castañeda's "Thinking and the Structure of the World," published in *Crítica*, Vol. VI, No. 18, septiembre 1972, pp. 43-81. Professor Loux's comments were originally written for oral presentation. Professor Castañeda's rejoinder appears on pages 109-116 of this issue of *Crítica*.

case in point is the work of Gustav Bergmann and his followers. They begin with the Problem of Differentiation. They assume that, as regards non-relational properties, the Identity of Indiscernibles is false, that particular objects can share all their non-relational properties. Then, they go on to ask, "What in the object guarantees this possibility?" Finding no difference in non-relational properties (and eschewing relational properties as question-begging), they go on to postulate what they call bare particulars. These entities are introduced as the ingredients in objects that guarantee numerical diversity; but, then, proponents of this line go on and identify these diversifiers with Lockian substrata. They tell us that they are the ontological correlates of the 'this' that is an ultimate logical subject —i.e., is a subject but never a predicate. But clearly, the role of diversifier is different from the role of unexemplifiable exemplifier of properties; and in the absence of any argument, we have no right to assume that what plays the one role plays the other as well. As Castañeda so forcefully points out, Bergmann and his followers never provide us with the required argument.

But while I agree with Castañeda's account in the first section of the paper, I have doubts about the second section. Clearly, these two problems must be distinguished; but my doubts focus on whether or not they need ever really arise in the context of ontology. I have already argued before this colloquium that the Problem of Differentiation need not arise. Today I would like to present reasons for my doubts about the Problem of Individuality.

What exactly is the Problem of Individuality? Well, it is the problem of specifying just what it is in an individual that makes it the sort of thing which, while not exemplifiable by anything else, can itself exemplify properties. But why should there be any problem here? Is there a corresponding problem about properties —viz, the problem of what in a property makes it the sort of thing that is at once exemplifiable and a potential exemplifier? My suspicions are that Castañeda

thinks not. But why? Well, he clearly wants to take the exemplifiability of properties as primitive, while holding that the individuality of an individual is a derived notion (as he says, "an ontological emergent"). What I would like to suggest is that the two notions are in the same boat.

What is an individual? I have said that it is what can exhibit properties; but, of course, this is not accurate. To be accurate, we must say that an individual is what can exhibit first-order properties. But what is a first-order property? Well, isn't it just what can be exhibited by individuals as well as exhibit second-order properties? The point here is that the notion of an individual is built into the notion of a first-order property in just the fashion that the notion of a first-order property is built into the notion of an individual. The two notions are so interrelated that it would be a mistake to think of one as more primitive than the other.

Now, Castañeda clearly takes the notion of a property as primitive. His view is that we can construct the concept of an individual out of the notion of a property by employing two kinds of operators —the class-operator and the concretizing-operator. The former operates on properties to yield abstract particulars, classes of properties; the latter operates on these classes to yield concrete particulars or individuals. But the mistake here is to think that the notion of a property is any more fundamental than the notion of an individual.

To get clearer on this, let us ask what restrictions must be imposed on the properties which the class-operator operates on. Clearly, not just any property can be so operated on. No, properties like *being a color*, *being a quality*, and *being a class* must be excluded *on a priori* grounds. Which properties may enter into the relevant classes? Obviously only properties like *being brown*, *being square*, etc. —properties that we call first-order properties, and these are just those properties that can be exhibited only by individuals. But if the analysis that Castañeda provides us is correct, we have, as yet, no way of formulating this restriction, for we haven't as yet reached

the level of individuality and, consequently, lack the conceptual resources for distinguishing the right properties from the wrong ones. Put in a slightly different way, presumably the use of the concretizing-operator presupposes that the properties operated on by the class-operator have already been selected; but it seems to me that on Castañeda's account, no such independent selection is possible.

Let me conclude by raising some questions about Castañeda's use of the concretizing-operator. These questions are not meant as criticisms, but only as appeals for clarification and expansion. Castañeda tells us that the c-operator is to be read as "the object which alone . . .", but does this imply that the properties which fill the blank are such that taken together they guarantee uniqueness of application? If it does (and it surely seems to), then isn't Castañeda committed to some very strong version of the Identity of Indiscernibles? Furthermore, how many properties have to fall into the class formed by the use of class-operator? All the properties of the object? But when? All the properties it exhibits at a particular moment of time? But, then, Castañeda's individuals cannot (given the extensionality of classes) be the sorts of things that can remain identical through change. Perhaps, though, the classes are formed from the properties an object has throughout its existence. But in either case, do all claims about his individuals and their properties turn out to be analytic? If not, why not? These are questions I am certain Castañeda can answer; by answering them, he would do much to clarify for us the position he is defending.