

RETHINKING KANT ON INDIVIDUATION

Eric M. Rubenstein
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

In the section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* entitled, “The Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection”, Kant writes:

Suppose that an object is exhibited to us repeatedly but always with the same intrinsic determinations (*qualitas et quantitas*). In that case, if the object counts as object of pure understanding then it is always the same object, and is not many but only one thing (i.e., we have *numerica identitas*). But if the object is appearance, then comparison of concepts does not matter at all; rather, however much everything regarding these concepts may be the same, yet the difference of locations of these appearances at the same time is a sufficient basis for the *numerical difference* of the object (of the senses) itself. Thus in the case of two drops of water we can abstract completely from all intrinsic difference (of quality and quantity), and their being intuited simultaneously in different locations is enough for considering them to be numerically different.¹

One natural reading of this text is to take it as Kant’s answer to the so-called Problem of Individuation. We are inclined, that is, to interpret Kant as arguing that instead of relying on the intrinsic qualities of a object to individuate that object, spatio-temporal location is sufficient. Spatio-temporal location would be Kant’s preferred principle or explanation of individuation.

The problem with this reading, however, is that it fails to do justice to the complex of issues which have come to be subsumed under the title, the Problem of Individuation. Upon a proper disentangling of these issues we will discover that Kant *does* have something important to say, though not what we might expect. In fact, I shall argue that Kant is properly understood as demonstrating that a particular issue typically taken to constitute the Problem of Individuation is a dead end. Kant, I propose, should be read as critical of the very possibility of answering a traditional metaphysical question about individuals.

I. Individuation v. Diversity

These are strong claims. To establish them I begin by carefully articulating the various issues and debates which have been subsumed under the heading of *the* Problem of Individuation. This is by no means an easy task, for the problem of individuation finds its origins in Aristotle and has undergone numerous transformations since. As an entry-point, we should start with the difference between an individual, on one hand, and a universal on the other. Individuals are taken to be singular; we say of an individual that it is a ‘this’; that it is one; that it is a unity. Universals, at least as traditionally conceived,

¹ Kant, I. *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by W.S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1996), A263/B319.

are thought of as common or general, not as singular. More fully, I suggest we think of universals as repeatables; the universal red, for instance, can exist in various places at once. It can be here and there at the same time. An individual, however, is not repeatable. It is not multi-instantiable nor multi-realizable. So much, then, for the distinction between individuals and universals. How does it give rise to the problem of individuation?

Since the Medievals thought more carefully about this matter perhaps than any other group, it would be fruitful to pose the problem as they did. Notice that when we investigate an individual, we discover that much, if not all, that may be said of it involves the predicating of items which are common, not singular. For instance, the black of my pen, *prima facie*, is common to many other things; the shape of it too. How then, we might ask, do elements which are common become contracted (a technical term from the later Medieval period) into something which is not common? Once more: how can something that is not repeatable come to be from elements which are repeatable? What makes, that is, for the individuality of a given individual? What makes for it being the particular *this*, one, or unity that it is?

This is a fairly traditional way of posing the problem of individuation. But even in the posing of it I have used different locutions, and have posed questions which may not be equivalent. What needs to be done is now is to distinguish the problem I have just presented from closely related ones. Here, Gracia has laid the foundation for many of the topics I wish to examine.² Among the various issues which have not been clearly distinguished, Gracia notes six central ones: 1) the intension of 'individual', 2) the extension of 'individual', 3) the ontological status of individuality, 4) the principle/cause/explanation of individuation, 5) the discernibility of individuals, and, 6) how reference to individuals is secured.

For our purposes, the most important distinction is between Gracia's (4) and (5). Gracia takes this to be the difference between asking, on the one hand, what makes an individual an individual, and on the other, how we go about *knowing* an individual as an individual. As Gracia rightly points out, the move from (4) to (5) is properly a move from metaphysics to epistemology.³ There is another distinction at work here, however, that needs to be brought out. True enough, to *discern* an individual requires knowing it as the individual it is, as one among many. But alongside the *epistemological* question of how one discerns the difference between two individuals, there is the *metaphysical* issue of what makes one individual distinct or different from another individual.

The latter metaphysical issue is one we find Castañeda at pains to distinguish from the question of what explains an individual's being an individual- Gracia's (4).⁴ Castañeda motivates the distinction this

² Gracia, J.J.E. *Individuality: An Essay on the Foundations of Metaphysics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988).

³ Gracia, J.J.E. *Individuality*, p.179.

⁴ We should keep in mind throughout that I am not concerned with issues of identity *over* time.

way.

Thus, if we are not to take the individuality of *Nous-A* and *Nous-B* as primitive, then we have the ontological problem of providing an account of their individuality. That is, we must describe that ingredient or structure in *Nous-A* that makes *Nous-A* an individual, i.e. constitutes the individuality of *Nous-A*. Similarly for *Nous-B*. But this genuine *problem of individuation* has nothing to do with the contrast between *Nous-A* and *Nous-B*. The distinctness or diversity that creates a problem about individuality is the contrast between individuals and non-individuals, and it has *nothing* to do with the plurality of individuals.

[E]ven if there were, perhaps only per impossible, just one individual in the world, so that in a sense there would be no problem about individual plurality, there would still be a problem of individuation, namely: the problem of accounting for the individuality of that lone individual.⁵

Accordingly, an account of individuality or individuation focuses on the individual itself, explaining its being an *individual* as opposed to a *non-individual*. The contrast class for the Problem of Individuation, herein *The Problem*, again, is individual versus non-individual. To wonder about diversity, on the other hand, is to inquire what makes an individual different from *other individuals*- contrasting individuals with other individuals, not with *non-individuals*, as does the Problem of Individuation.

What lies behind Castañeda's view, I take it, is the conceptual priority questions of individuation have to questions of diversity. To ask for a principle of diversity is to inquire about what makes for the distinctness of two individuals. That, in turn, presupposes an account of what it is to *be an individual*. There must be *one* before we ask how that one differs from others.⁶

Bringing all this together, there are really two issues which involve diversity, both of which are distinct from the question of what makes an individual an individual. The latter, The Problem, was suggested to be conceptually prior to the other two. Let us then distinguish questions of *diversity* from ones of *individuation*, recognizing the former as including two separate questions. D1 here corresponds to Gracia's (5), while D2 is Castañeda's ontic formulation.

Diversity

Individuation

D1) How does one discern one individual from another?

What makes an individual an individual?

D2) What makes one individual distinct from another?

II. Kant's Approach: First Pass

With the key distinction between individuation and diversity in mind, let us return to Kant's position.

⁵ Castañeda, H. N. "Individuation and Non-Identity" *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 12 (1975), p.133.

⁶ Popper too distinguishes these problems, and uses the distinction to criticize Anscombe and Lukasiewicz. But he then goes on to conflate questions of individuation at a time with identity over time. K. Popper. "The Principle of Individuation", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume*. XXVII, 1953.

While it is tempting to read Kant as offering an answer to The Problem (i.e. The Problem of Individuation) what is in fact provided is a solution to the problem of *diversity*.

Recall the passage which began this paper. There Kant is arguing that difference in spatial location is adequate to explain the distinctness of one object from another. Kant is not saying that spatial location makes an individual the individual it is. He wouldn't say that, for presumably an object could have been differently located and still have been the object it is. Spatial location then is sufficient for distinctness, metaphysically speaking as in D2, not for individuation. Likewise, the epistemological question, D1, of discerning one individual from another would involve grasping the spatio-temporal location of each. Apparently Kant has offered a solution to the problem of diversity, not The Problem.

Interestingly, Kant's approach has a contemporary ally in Strawson. The latter writes,

Hence, as things are, particular-identification in general rests ultimately on the possibility of locating the particular things we speak of in a single unified spatio-temporal system.⁷

This suggests, then, that the theoretical indispensability of a demonstrative element in identifying thought about particulars is not just a peculiarity of this or that conceptual scheme which allows for particulars, but a necessary feature of any conceptual scheme, of any ontology, in which particulars occur.⁸

Among the various points Strawson is chasing here, a central one is how we can succeed in identifying (and re-identifying) individuals. Strawson recognizes that success ultimately requires the ability to pick out some individual with which we are immediately presented, through the use of demonstratives. Again, the use of demonstratives is required in order for us to secure reference to individuals. But talk of *securing reference* is elliptical for talk of differentiating one individual from another. With regard to demonstratives this amounts to the claim that they are required in order to secure reference to the correct individual we want to identify- i.e. to get at *it* and not another. This is a requirement for *differentiating* or *distinguishing* one individual from another- the epistemological version, (D1), of the problem of diversity. As for Kant, spatial location plays an important role in the possibility of diversity.

We confront an important choice at this point. We may conclude that Kant (and Strawson after him) simply failed to note the important distinction between The Problem (of individuation) and the problem of diversity. They would be guilty then of changing the game, as it were. Alternatively, we may understand Kant as presenting a moral about the possibility of answering The Problem. This is the path I shall pursue, for I believe Kant's account is not an unreflective change of game. Rather, his position suggests that the only problem that *can* be solved is the problem of diversity. That the Problem of

⁷ Strawson, P. F. *Individuals* (London: Methuen and Co., 1959), p.38.

⁸ Strawson, *Individuals*, p.119.

Individuation is unsolvable, I will argue, is one of his deeper lessons about the pursuits of the metaphysician.

I do not, of course, claim to be the only one who has noticed that Kant is addressing the problem of diversity, as I have called it, and not the Problem of Individuation. In fact, philosophers Barber and Gracia see Kant's approach as part of a trend in the Modern period to move from The Problem to issues of diversity, a trend driven by increasing concerns with epistemology. Gracia writes,

The blurring of the distinction between the problem of individuation and the problem of discernibility returns to philosophy in the modern period with the renewed emphasis on epistemology...questions about individuation became transformed into questions about the discernibility of individuals.⁹

Barber, in turn, puts it this way.

While the ontologist asks what it is in objects that individuates those objects, the epistemologist searches for features in experience that allow us to discern the difference among objects.¹⁰

Now I have no quarrel with the characterization of epistemic concerns as linked with questions of diversity, even granting, as I do, that there is a metaphysical issue still present- my D2. Indeed, I will make much of the introduction of epistemology into the traditional debate, arguing, as do Gracia and Barber, that this is accompanied by a move from questions of individuation to ones of diversity. The problem, however, is that Gracia and Barber do not offer a reason why there is this transition. To put it directly, is there a reason why interest in epistemological issues should trigger interest in the problem of diversity? Further, why should this interest in epistemology leave behind traditional questions about individuation? Is this a mere historical accident? Have those who have taken what Gracia calls the turn to *epistemologism* merely become uninterested in questions of individuation?

Here we might be inclined to say, following Kuhn's lead in the philosophy of science, that with different paradigms come different problem sets, and what counts as a pressing problem is relative to one's paradigm.¹¹ In the present context, we might interpret this as suggesting that once we have taken the turn to epistemology with the Moderns, traditional questions about individuation disappear, as they were important only if you take seriously the Scholastic world-view.

That would still leave unaddressed two fundamental questions, namely: 1) Why does epistemology bring with it a concern with *diversity*, at the expense of The Problem?, and 2) Where does a concern with epistemology leave The Problem? If we cannot give an answer to these questions, we are

⁹ J. Gracia, "Christian Wolff on Individuation", in *Individuation and Identity in Early Modern Philosophy*. ed. by K.F. Barber and J.J.E. Gracia (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), p.220.

¹⁰ K. Barber, "Introduction" in *Individuation and Identity in Early Modern Philosophy*. ed. by K.F. Barber and J.J.E. Gracia (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), p.4.

¹¹ T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996).

stuck with the position, it seems, of simply having to note the changes in philosophical interest, giving up the possibility of making sense of such changes.

I wish to resist this nihilistic reading. I propose then a rational reconstruction of the movement from the traditional questions about individuation to ones about diversity. For I believe there is a reason why epistemic considerations *require* a movement from individuation to diversity. That would answer (1). What's more, as mentioned, I think we ought to read Kant's concern with the problem of diversity as no slip, nor conflation of questions of individuation with ones of diversity. Rather, he recognizes that taking the turn to epistemology requires we give up trying to solve The Problem. That would answer (2).

Yet to make these points, and to show why Kant's concern is with diversity not individuation, requires some groundwork. To that end, I first examine Leibniz's view of these matters. Leibniz's views are a natural place to start, since Kant's views, particularly in the Amphiboly, are aimed at Leibniz. As we will see, this also makes sense on philosophical grounds, for Leibniz's approach signals an important change in perspective to The Problem, one which culminates in Kant's critique.

III. Leibniz on Individuation and Diversity

Leibniz's views on individuals are articulated in this famous passage.

Now it is evident that every true predication has some basis in the nature of things, and even when a proposition is not identical, that is, when the predicate is not expressly contained in the subject, it is still necessary that it be virtually contained in it, and this is what the philosophers call *in-esse*, saying thereby that the predicate is in the subject. Thus the content of the subject must always include that of the predicate in such a way that if one understands perfectly the concept of the subject, he will know that the predicate appertains to it also. This being so, we are able to say that this is the nature of an individual substance or of a complete being, namely, to afford a conception so complete that the concept shall be sufficient for the understanding of it and for the deduction of all the predicates of which the substance is or may become the subject. The quality of king, which belonged to Alexander the Great, an abstraction from the subject, is not sufficiently determined to constitute an individual, and does not contain the other qualities of the same subject, nor everything which the idea of this prince includes.¹²

We should focus here on the idea that individuals are determinate with respect to every predicate. Thus we can say that it is determinate whether Alexander has the property of being king, whether he is taller than six feet, etc. Non-individuals, on the other hand, as the text suggests, are not determinate with respect to every property. Being king, for instance, is indeterminate with respect to who in fact is king.

Familiarly enough, Leibniz makes the above points by reference to his semantic doctrine of containment, whereby every more specific property contains the more general ones which may be predicated. We can say, that is, that humans are mortal, because the property of being human contains the more general property of being mortal. Human is thus more determinate than mortal; and subsequently

¹² Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), §8.

we cannot predicate human of mortal. Continuing this line, we can say that Alexander is an individual as the concept of Alexander is determined with respect to every predicate; the concept of Alexander contains every predicate that may be truly predicated of him. In fact, pursued to completion this becomes the thesis that each individual is determined with respect to every possible predicate, thus insuring the difference between all (possible) individuals. When this fully determinate criterion is spelled out, then, we get an account of diversity.

It is even necessary that every monad be different from every other. For there are never in nature two beings that are perfectly alike and in which it would not be possible to find a difference that is internal or founded on an intrinsic denomination.¹³

In addition to the difference of time or of place there must always be an internal principle of distinction: although there can be many things of the same kind, it is still the case that none of them are ever exactly alike. Thus, although time and place (i.e. the relations to what lies outside) do distinguish for us things which we could not easily tell apart by reference to themselves alone, things are nevertheless distinguishable in themselves. Thus, although diversity in things is accompanied by diversity of time or place, time and place do not constitute the core of identity and diversity by impressing different states upon the thing.¹⁴

On Leibniz's view, talk of fully determinate individuals goes hand in hand with his view that all entities must be qualitatively different if they truly are numerically distinct. Having said that, however, the complication should be apparent. For the role being fully determinate serves is not that of individuation, but rather that of *diversity*. The fully determinate nature of an individual serves as the ground for its numerical distinctness from other individuals.

We now find ourselves faced with the same problem we encountered above with Kant. Should we conclude that Leibniz too has succumbed to the error of conflating questions of individuation with questions of diversity? Should we conclude that Leibniz has unwittingly moved from traditional debates over principles of individuation to a new problem, the metaphysical ground or nature of diversity? Again, I think not. Upon closer inspection there is another element in Leibniz's account, one that can allow us to see, rather than confusion on his part, the beginning of a new perspective on an old question.

To appreciate this new element, which in turn explains Leibniz's move from individuation to diversity, we should revisit a portion of text. Again,

This being so, we are able to say that this is the nature of an individual substance or of a complete being, namely, to afford a conception so complete that the concept shall be sufficient for the understanding of it and for the deduction of all the predicates of which the substance is or may become the subject.¹⁵

Leibniz explains this further as follows.

¹³ Leibniz, *Monadology*, in *Leibniz: Philosophical Papers and Letters*. translated by L. Loemker (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing, 1970), §9.

¹⁴ Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. and ed. by P. Remnant and J. Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.230.

¹⁵ Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, §8.

The concept of an individual substance includes once for all everything which can ever happen to it...and in considering this concept one will be able to see everything which can be truly said concerning the individual, just as we are able to see in the nature of a circle all the properties which can be derived from it.¹⁶

Crucially, however, this kind of knowledge is possible only for God. Only God is capable of grasping the nature of an individual substance, knowing its individual or complete concept.

When we carefully consider the connection of things we see also the possibility of saying that there was always in the soul of Alexander marks of all that had happened to him and traces even of everything which occurs in the universe, although God alone could recognize them all.¹⁷

We have here the introduction of an epistemology into the metaphysical debate over the nature of individuals, apparently resulting in a concern with diversity, not individuation. But the crucial question, again, is why the introduction of epistemic considerations causes a change from questions of individuality to ones of diversity.

The answer, I believe, is that coming to know an individual requires being able to know it is *this* and not *that*. Be it for God or humans, to intuit or grasp a thing requires getting in immediate cognitive relation to that thing. That is to say, it is for a mind to be in direct relation to that thing and not another. To accomplish this, however, one must be able to pick out that thing as distinct from another. As a result, the ground of the diversity between two individuals becomes crucial. It is this ground a knower must fasten upon in order to grasp *this* and not *that*. I conclude then that the introduction of epistemic concerns necessarily prompts a shift from questions of individuation to ones of diversity.

Making use of our earlier distinctions, we may say that once one introduces epistemic considerations into one's account of individuals, no longer will one address questions of individuation. Rather, one will be led to ask first about how one discerns a given individual as distinct from other individuals. This was our D1. Should one press the matter, one will be led to inquire into the ground of the diversity of two individuals- that which makes possible the distinctness among the individuals one is seeking to know. This was D2. D1 and D2 make up the problem of diversity, and I maintain one is led to that problem from the introduction of epistemological concerns into one's metaphysics.

This general argument aside, one may worry over my attribution of epistemic concerns to Leibniz's account, which I have argued explains his move from questions of individuation to ones of diversity. After all, Leibniz does seem to be giving a straightforward metaphysical account of diversity. He does write, as we have seen,

It is even necessary that every monad be different from every other. For there are never in nature two beings that are perfectly alike and in which it would not be possible to find a difference that is internal or founded on an intrinsic

¹⁶ Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, §13.

¹⁷ Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, §9.

denomination.¹⁸

This certainly suggests that Leibniz is not driven to an account of diversity by epistemic considerations, as I have maintained. But by bringing other elements of Leibniz's view to bear, we can see that his metaphysics is thoroughly infused with an epistemology, one that does require a move from individuation to diversity.¹⁹

In short, on Leibniz's view, the actual world was chosen from a multitude of various possible worlds for it is the best possible world.²⁰ Possible worlds, in turn, are bundles or composites of substances (i.e. monads). Importantly, however, not all combinations of substances are possible. The nature of each substance, that is, sets parameters on its combinatorial possibilities. Adam, for instance, can't not be partnered with Eve; Caesar could not have crossed the Rubicon at a different time. What constrains Caesar's movements is Caesar's nature itself.²¹ So too for Adam. It is part of the nature of Adam that he be with Eve. He would not be Adam otherwise. While there are many, many possibilities, then, of how things can combine, it is not a free-for-all.

That would be true, if the universe were the connection of all possibles, but that is not the case, since all possibles are not compossible. So the universe is only the collection of a certain (façon) of compossibles, and the actual universe is the collection of all existent possibles, i.e. those which form the most rich composite. And as there are different combinations of possibles, some better than others, there are several possible universes, each collection of compossibles constituting one.²²

The connection with our earlier concerns is this. God needs to have a complete conception of every individual so as to know which substances are compossible, and so be able to know which combinations make the best possible world. God must know his individuals to accomplish this. What exists then has to accord with what can be known by God. The realm of existents, in other words, is constrained in that what exists must be a possible object of knowledge for God. Yet to be known by God, as we have seen, requires that each entity be discernible from every other entity. But that is just to say that the differences between each individual, their diversity, is intimately connected with God's epistemological concerns. Thus though Leibniz does speak of the metaphysical ground of diversity, this is, as I have maintained, a result of his 'epistemic turn'. It is no accident, I conclude, that we find Leibniz's metaphysical account of individuals laced with epistemic language.

IV. Kant's Twist: Second Pass

¹⁸ Leibniz, *Monadology*, §9.

¹⁹ Carl Posy has helped me appreciate how deep the epistemic concerns run in Leibniz.

²⁰ Leibniz, *Monadology*, §53.

²¹ Because it is not relevant to my concerns, I will safely ignore Leibniz's views about the possibility of freedom, given the appearance of determinism.

²² Leibniz, "Letter to Louis Bourguet", Loemker, p.662.

We have established that a concern with knowing individuals leads to a concern with the ground of an individual's diversity from other individuals. Importantly, one's view of the cognitive process of getting in direct relation to an individual will determine the manner in which this diversity is to be established and grounded. (Again, as I argued above, the introduction of an epistemology will lead one first away from The Problem, and then to D1 and D2.) If one were able to intuit an object only by the use of concepts, as does Leibniz's God, that object must be internally different from other objects. Only then could one succeed in getting at the one and not the other; there is no other way to distinguish one from another, by the use of concepts, than by looking for a thing's internal differences. Absent those differences we have the same entity. That is what Kant is pointing to in his discussion of Leibniz in the Amphiboly.

[Leibniz] believed that he cognized the intrinsic character of things inasmuch as he compared all objects only with the understanding and the abstract formal concepts of his thought...He compared all things with one another merely by concepts and naturally found among them no differences other than those by which the understanding distinguishes its pure concepts from one another. (A270/B326)

Accordingly, *Leibniz* compared with one another objects of the senses, taken as things as such, merely in the understanding. *First*, he compared these objects insofar as they are to be judged by understanding as being the same or different. Hence he envisaged solely their concepts and not their position in intuition wherein alone objects can be given, and ignored completely the transcendental location of these concepts (i.e. whether the object is to be numbered among the appearances or among things in themselves). Thus the outcome could not be other than it was: viz, Leibniz extended his principle of the indistinguishable, which holds only for concepts of things as such, to [cover] also the objects of the senses...(A271/B327)

Kant, of course, offers a different account of how immediate relations to objects are established. This involves the distinct faculty of intuition, along with its forms of space and time. As such we get a different account of the ground of the diversity of objects, one grounded simply in their different location.

The difference of locations even by itself, apart from further conditions [i.e. intrinsic determinations], makes the plurality and distinction of objects as appearances not only possible but also necessary. (A272/B328)

As with Leibniz, we see that once epistemic considerations are given pride of place in one's thinking about individuals, one is forced to determine the ground of individuals' diversity. Kant's story, which is an account of diversity, not individuation, is a direct consequence, we might say, of a metaphysics driven by epistemology.

What Leibniz got right, then, according to Kant, was recognizing that the ground for sameness and difference, an ontological issue, is intimately tied to the faculties involved in *judging* sameness or difference, an epistemic issue. Where Leibniz went wrong, however, was not recognizing the distinct faculty of sensibility that is essential to human judgments of sameness and difference (and knowledge in general). This led Leibniz to approach questions of sameness and difference by reference to the internal qualities of a thing, instead of recognizing that as object of the senses, spatial location is sufficient for

resolving this question...

Leibniz took appearances to be things in themselves, and hence to be *intelligibilia*, i.e., objects of pure understanding...and thus his principle of the *indistinguishable*...could not be disputed. But since appearances are objects of sensibility and since understanding's use regarding them is not pure but merely empirical, space itself- as the condition of outer appearances- already indicates plurality and numerical difference. (A264/B320)

What remains, however, is our original problem, the Problem of Individuation. I have suggested that Kant, following Leibniz, offers an account of diversity; this as a result of taking seriously epistemological considerations. But what should we do with the perennial debate over the nature or principle of *individuation*? To help us reach the further conclusion I wish to attribute to Kant, namely that there cannot be an answer to that puzzle, we should consider the following bits of text. Kant writes,

It is, therefore, solely from the human standpoint that we can speak of space, of *extended things*, etc. (A27/B43; my emphasis)

And if we annul ourselves as subject, or even annul only the subjective character of the senses generally, then this entire character of objects and all their relations in space and time- indeed, even space and time themselves- would vanish; being appearances, they cannot exist in themselves, but can exist only in us. (A42/B59)

Kant looks to be suggesting that to even make sense of objects at all we must appeal to the faculties of sensibility and understanding that make knowledge possible in the first place. Objects, like space, we might say, are transcendently ideal. Of course, making sense of Transcendental Idealism is a notoriously complicated issue, particularly when one tries to formulate it in a way that does not collapse into Berkeleyian idealism. I have no aspirations to add to the various versions that are already in the literature. I do suggest, however, that we can connect these matters with our earlier points in the following way.

We should read Kant, I propose, as saying that only by including talk of the knowers for whom individuals are individuals, can we even make sense of there being individuals. That is, as individuals are transcendently ideal, to even speak of entities which are individuals requires reference to the ways in which individuals are known by beings like us. And the way they are known, as we have seen, involves the process of spatially locating them.

The moral of Leibniz's error, discussed above, is that we cannot make any substantive claim about objects when we abstract out reference to the manner in which objects may be known by us. While such knower-independent objects might be thinkable by us, they are not knowable.

The categories are not, as regards their origin, based on sensibility, as are the *forms of intuition*, space and time; they therefore seem to admit of an application expanded beyond all objects of the senses. Yet they themselves are in turn nothing but *forms of thought* that contain merely the logical ability to unite a priori in one consciousness the manifold given in intuition. And thus, if one takes away from the categories the only intuition possible for us, then the signification they can have is even less than that of the pure sensible forms. (B306)

Accordingly the understanding limits sensibility, but without therefore expanding its own realm. And inasmuch as the understanding warns sensibility not to claim to deal with things in themselves but solely with appearances, it does think an object in itself. But the understanding thinks it only as transcendental object. This object is the cause of appearance (hence is not an appearance) and can be thought neither as magnitude nor as reality nor as substance, etc. (because these concepts always require sensible forms wherein they determine an object)...If we want to call this object noumenon, because the presentation of it is not sensible, then we are free to do so. *But since we cannot apply to it any of our concepts of understanding, the presentation yet remains empty for us...*(A288/B344-5; my emphasis)

It is perhaps even misleading to speak of a noumenon as itself an *object*, as least as the concept of an *object knowable by us*, carries with it the concept of a perduring, spatially located item existing in causal relations with other objects. If we are not speaking of this kind of object, however, we are speaking of object only in the thinnest of senses; we have the concept of an object that we are not in a position to make substantive claims about.²³

In other words, and this is the moral of Kant's account, I suggest, there are no epistemic free considerations of individuals available to us. Yet this is just what is attempted by those who pursue the Problem of Individuation. They are, in essence, looking for a principle or explanation for the individuality of an individual, one which is knower or perceiver independent, as it were. But that cannot be provided, for *no* synthetic claims about things in themselves are possible.

Again, the traditional Problem of Individuation seeks an account of the nature of individuality without epistemic concerns. For once one introduces epistemological considerations, as we have seen, one must pursue the problem of *diversity*. But trying to provide an account of individuality can't be done, I suggest. To try to do so requires speaking of individuals, yet without making reference to the knowers for whom there *are* individuals. Without reference to such knowers, as Kant suggests, one can't even make sense of there *being* individuals.

The critique of this pure understanding, therefore, does not permit one to create a new realm of objects apart from those that it may encounter as appearances, and to stray into intelligible worlds- not even into the concept of them...And thus we are left with a way of determining the object merely through thought; and although this way of determining the object is a mere logical form without content, it nevertheless *seems* to us to be a way in which the object exists in itself. (A289/B345-6; emphasis added)

[I]f we remove from the categories all conditions of sensibility, which mark them as concepts for a possible empirical use, and take them as concepts of things as such...then there is nothing more to be done with them but to regard the logical function that they have in judgments..Yet we then do this without in the least being able to indicate just where the categories can have their application and their object, and hence how...they can have any signification and objective reality. (A242)

And with no individuals there can be no question as to how such individuals are made, or of wherein lies

²³ Invoking a familiar point, this is to distinguish "object" in the weighty sense from "object" as mere logical subject- the distinction between *Gegenstand* and *Objekt*. Kant's point would then be that while we can judge sameness and difference for sensible objects, we can make no such judgments about non-sensible ones. Nor can we make any claims about the individuation of such non-sensible objects.

their individuality. Yet as soon as we introduce such knowers we *can* speak of individuals, but then we are left with problems of *diversity*, not individuality.

This point, with its radical suggestion, may be put slightly differently. I suggested in my opening sections, that the Problem of Individuation is prior to the problem of diversity; that we must understand how there could even be a single individual (as opposed to non-individuals) before inquiring how that one individual differs from other individuals. We have now, as it were, turned this point on its head. For we have seen that one can make such a claim only when one approaches such matters of metaphysics without epistemological constraints. When we think of The Problem, abstracting out the means and manner by which individuals may be known, we are inclined to think of that problem as conceptually prior to one about individuals' diversity. I have suggested, however, that once we introduce epistemic concerns, we must reject this ordering. In fact, and this is the radical suggestion, we must view the questions of diversity not only as prior to ones about individuation, but the latter questions as non-starters. Again, without knowers there would be no individuals to ask about. Yet with knowers we are left to wonder about only diversity.²⁴

²⁴ Thanks to Mary MacLeod, Carl Posy, and Jorge Gracia for help at various stages of this project. Additional thanks to two anonymous referees for helpful suggestions and comments.