

# SAMENESS AND SUBSTANCE RENEWED

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*Preamble, chiefly concerned with matters methodological  
and terminological*

Technical terms are worse to be shunned than dog or snake.  
(Leibniz, Gerhardt IV, 140.)

I. AIMS AND PURPOSES

The chief aim of this book is to elaborate a theory of the individuation of continuants, including living substances and other substances. Such a theory ought to comprise at least three things: an elucidation first of the primitive concept of identity or sameness; second, some account of what it is for something to be a substance or continuant that persists through change; third, an account of what it amounts to, practically and cognitively, for a thinker, to single a thing out at a time. Here, with this last task, there is the supplementary question of what it amounts to for the same thinker, having once singled something out, later to single out that same thing *as* the same thing.

From a philosopher's attitude towards the logical and methodological ordering of these tasks one can tell something about his or her attitude towards the idea that the meaning of a word is a function of its use. In this work, it is everywhere accepted that the meanings of such words as 'same', 'substance', 'change', 'persist' and 'recognize' depend upon their use. The life and semantic identity of such terms is only sustained by the activity of singling out or individuating. But the thesis of meaning as use is consistent with two converse or complementary theses (A)(B), which have an equal relevance to what is to be attempted and an equal claim upon rational acceptance.

(A) The relation between the meaning and the use of such words as 'same', 'substance', 'change', 'persist' is in fact reciprocal or two-way. Everything that concerns meaning registers upon use; but, unless we

redefine use, that does not imply that meaning can be reduced to use.<sup>1</sup> Among the concerns I began by enumerating, there is no question of collapsing the first two into the third, for instance.

(B) An interpretation of a set of linguistic uses or conceptual practices must speak of the *subject matter* to which they relate. For that reason, it must refer to the various things themselves towards which the uses or practices themselves are directed, together with the properties and relations of these things. The child who is learning to find for himself the persisting substances in the world, to think the thoughts that involve them and recognize the same ones again, grasps a skill and a subject matter at one and the same time. A philosopher who seeks properly to understand those thoughts must proceed accordingly. Let the philosopher elucidate *same*, *identical*, *substance*, *change*, *persist*, etc., directly and from within the same practices as those that an ordinary untheoretical human being is initiated into. At the same time, let the philosopher show by example what good elucidations can be made of such ideas as these. To this end, let him shadow the practical commerce between things singled out and thinkers who find their way around the world by singling out places and objects – and singling out one another. If the meaning of the terms ‘same’, ‘substance’, ‘change’, ‘persist’, etc., is a function of use and use is a function of the said commerce, then one by-product of this mode of elucidation will be that the task I began by calling the third task is undertaken in concert with the first and the second. The first and second tasks acknowledge the importance of the third; but, by their constant appropriate acknowledgment of this importance, they will in fact absorb the third.

When the reciprocities and mutual interdependencies of concept, practice and thing-singled-out are acknowledged and likened to those of some seamless web, when the primitiveness of all the relevant notions is acknowledged too, how much genuine clarification is it reasonable to expect a philosophical theory of individuation to be able to achieve? Well, we have rudimentary pretheoretical ideas of identity, persistence through change, and the singling out of changeable things. By means of these, we may arrive at a provisional or first explication of what ‘same’ means and of the actual application of this relation-word. So soon as that is achieved, there is a basis from which to scrutinize afresh and then

<sup>1</sup> Or even to correct and truthful use, which would be a less striking achievement. (I hear someone scoffing at the distinction between use and correct use. Let them note that the correct use of a word or device might only be determinable from within a whole practice, yes, but without its following from this that the correct use was determinable from within practice *in respect of this word or device*. Cognate questions are pursued further in my (1997b).

consolidate our logical and participative understanding of the individuating practices that a thinker's grasp of the concepts of substance, sameness and persistence through change makes possible for him. At the end of this second phase, nothing will be recognizable as the philosophical *analysis* of '='. But no special mystery need remain about how a notion of the exigency that we ascribe to the identity relation can find application in the changeable world of our experience. Provided we do not despise the ordinary ideas by which we conduct the untheoretical business of the individuation and reidentification of particulars, we can remind ourselves well enough of what regulates the principled employment of '='. We can remind ourselves of what it is for anyone who is bent on singling out objects to carve off from the world, or isolate from among the objects of his experience, various continuants or things that persist through change.

This emphasis on the practical does not mean something that it might seem to mean if, in the cause of the crudest version of 'meaning as use', a separate priority were accorded to the third of the three tasks enumerated in the second sentence of the first paragraph. It does not mean that, for the benefit of his deluded subjects, the theorist is to find a way to see a world that might as well be one of pure flux in which nothing really persists through change *as if* that world offered us objects that persist through change. For persistence through change is not make-believe. No sensible inquiry could abandon a datum so fundamental or so deeply entrenched.<sup>2</sup> It means that, arriving at the point programmatically described, the theorist is to understand as well as he can – discursively, practically, in the same sort of terms as those who individuate them or in modest extrapolation from these – what it is for an object to be a genuine continuant; it means that, when that is done, the theorist is to describe how the charge that something did not persist is to be considered, namely on its merits, such merits being set out in terms accessible in principle to those who take themselves to believe in genuine continuants. It is in this way that we shall try to identify the point properly at issue in some of the most bitterly contested questions of identity.

There are two complaints about the method of elucidations that will not go happily together: (1) that the method is vacuous, a mere replay of that which needs to be 'explained'; (2) that the demands which the method derives from the congruence and other properties of identity and translates into requirements upon the positive finding of identity are

<sup>2</sup> Nor could flux *as such*, or as coherently conceived, stand in the way of singling out changeable continuants. See my (1982).

draconian, too exigent, too severe. You cannot make both complaints. But it is better (I hope to show) not to make either.

## 2. FORMAL PROPERTIES OF IDENTITY

Where there is reciprocity or mutual presupposition between concepts, analytical philosophy is always tempted into violence or arbitrariness. We find it hard to endure the thought that, in the substantive questions of philosophy, there is no master thread we can pull upon to unravel everything else. Even as I deprecate this *idée fixe*, however, it may appear that the chapters which follow are victim of the same illusion. For in this book the formal properties of identity, namely the reflexivity of identity and Leibniz's Law (registered in the claim that, if  $x$  is the same as  $y$ , then whatever is true of  $x$  is true of  $y$  and whatever is true of  $y$  is true of  $x$ ), will be treated as enjoying a special status. In this way, am I not attempting to insulate from legitimate criticism my opinion that these formal properties determine what can count as someone's singling out or tracing an entity? In the presence of doubt concerning formal properties, is it not simple dogmatism for me to persist in saying (in effect) that the properties of identity regulate, by reference to a claim they make upon reason, the interpretation of thought and action *as* thought and action?

In partial answer to this charge, I can only plead that something is done in the course of Chapter One, §2, to justify the view I take of the formal properties of '='. I do not really think they are given simply *ab extra*. It is true that I liken the status of reflexivity and congruence (along with the symmetry and transitivity that they entail) to that of the Law of Non-Contradiction. But, bracketing Chapter One, §2, my conciliatory view would be that the issue between the opposition and me is holistic and dialectical. If that is right, however, then the question at issue cannot really be resolved until some opposing account of individuation is developed to the same point as the account presented here. These questions will not be resolved until rival descriptions of individuation (and of reference) are compared with one another against the background of all the practices that they purport to describe. (For one small step in that direction, see Harold Noonan's and my exchange in Lovibond and Williams (1996).) The thing I have to hope is that, in the end, the reader will convince himself that the internal difficulties of the ontology and ideology of a position that abandons the Leibnizian conception of identity are overwhelmingly greater than any of the difficulties attaching to

the position I recommend. I trust that at that point, if not before, the reader will come to share my conviction that the Leibnizian principle is immanent in any linguistic or reflective practices we can recognize as reference and individuation.

### 3. NOTIONS

Corresponding to the three tasks mentioned in the first paragraph, we have the notions *identical* (*same*), *continuant* and *individuate*.

(i) The notion of sameness or identity that we are to elucidate is not that of qualitative similarity but that of coincidence (as an object, thing or substance), a notion as primitive as predication and correlative with it in the following way: if and only if Socrates is a man, then Socrates is identical with some man, and thus (we shall argue) shares all his properties with him. (This equivalence is offered as a manifest truth, rather than as an analytical definition of ‘is a man’ or of anything else. It is not offered as a part of a canonical or mandatory definitional sequence. See below, §10.) No reduction of the identity relation has ever succeeded. (See especially Chapter Six, §9.) Nor yet is it called for, once we realize how much can be achieved in philosophy by means of elucidations that put a concept to use without attempting to reduce it but, in using the concept, exhibit its connexions with other concepts that are established, genuinely coeval or collateral, and independently intelligible. (Compare here Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 3.263, 4.026, 4.112.) Not only is identity irreducible. Only in a vacuous sense of ‘supervene’, or a weak and irrelevant one, does it supervene on the totality of properties and relations other than itself. (See Chapter Six, §9.)

(ii) We have to explicate what it is to be a continuant or a substance. This explication will not amount to a definition. Nor will it be achieved without the ineliminably practical demonstration of the ordinary perceptible individuals of common experience. The explication must go some way beyond mere demonstration. But to set out, as so many philosophers have done in emulation of Book VII of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, with the high-minded aspiration to achieve an altogether purer kind of definition of substance, and then to abandon the concept of substance just because the result does not satisfy, is to end up doing philosophy that is at once ill-tempered and needlessly bad. It represents the inability to learn from Aristotle’s experiment.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For my own attempts to learn from it, see my (1995).

Kant writes at §46 of *Prolegomenon to Any Future Metaphysic*: ‘People have long since observed that in all substances the proper subject, that which remains after all the accidents (as predicates) are abstracted, remains unknown.’ I protest that the substances or subjects we begin with are not unknown but known, that the only abstraction in which we need to be interested is utterly distinct from that which is supposed to result from the notional (mythical) removal of properties from a substance. The interesting and benign form of abstraction is that which results from the ascent from particular kinds of substance to the determinable *substance of some further specifiable kind*. (Ascent to what Wittgenstein in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* called a formal concept.) This form of abstraction cannot part us from our conviction that substances are things which are known to us.

(iii) The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘individuate’ in terms of ‘single out’ or ‘pick out’, and this definition is well suited to the purposes of this book. That which individuates – in the one sense in which the word will be used in this book<sup>4</sup> – is in the first instance a thinker. (Derivatively, but only derivatively, one may find oneself saying that a substantive or predicate individuates.) To single  $x$  out is to isolate  $x$  in experience; to determine or fix upon  $x$  in particular by drawing its spatio-temporal boundaries and distinguishing it in its environment from other things of like and unlike kinds (at this, that and the other times during its life history); hence to articulate or segment reality in such a way as to discover  $x$  there. To single  $x$  out though, or even to prolong the singling out of  $x$  into the effort to keep track of  $x$ , is not yet (unless ‘in thought’) to refer to  $x$  or to designate  $x$ . And one may well refer to  $x$ , of course, without in our primary sense singling  $x$  out at all. This is not to say that, if there were no singling out, there could be reference. Singling out is the sheet-anchor for *information about particulars*.

The verbs ‘individuate’ and ‘single out’ are not intensional. If a thinker singles out  $x$  or individuates  $x$ , and  $x = y$ , then, whether or not he knows it, he singles out or individuates  $y$ . Such verbs do, however, permit of a complementation that is intensional. A Greek could have simply singled out Socrates; he could have singled out Socrates as Socrates; he could have singled out Socrates as a certain man or philosopher; or he could have singled out Socrates as the Athenian married to Xanthippe who was represented by Plato to have stressed (*Phaedrus* 265<sup>e</sup>) the equal importance, in classification and in carving, of ‘dividing where the joints are’. What then is the relation of singling out and singling out *as*? In due

<sup>4</sup> Contrast books about logic or metaphysics where the verb is used to stand for the relation between a predicate and some unique thing that satisfies the predicate.

course, we shall discover reason to think that there could be no singling out *tout court* unless there could also be singling out *as*. (This is not a priority claim.) It will be declared that not just any attempt at singling out counts as singling *something* out; that that which is required in a given case derives from what the thing itself is. It will be a consequence of the account of these matters to be given here that, for a thinker to single out or individuate a substance, there needs to be something about what he does, something about his *rappport* with  $x$  or his relational state towards  $x$  and his practical sensibility in relation to  $x$ , which (regardless of whether he articulately knows this or not – for all he needs is clear indistinct knowledge, cf. Chapter Three, note 6 and associated text – and regardless of whether it is a singling out *as*) sufficiently approximates to this: the thinker’s singling  $x$  out as  $x$  and as a thing of a kind  $f$  such that membership in  $f$  entails some correct answer to the question ‘what is  $x$ ?’ For the philosophical cargo carried by this Aristotelian question, see Chapter One and the chapter mottoes prefixed to it from Aristotle’s *Categories*. One further and equally Aristotelian part of that cargo makes reference to the way in which  $x$  behaves, how it acts and reacts. It will be everywhere insisted, moreover, that the singling out at time  $t$  of the substance  $x$  must look backwards and forwards to times before and after  $t$ . And it will be categorically denied in Chapters Five and Six, that, where it is indeterminate what was singled out, we have the singling out of something indeterminate. (Even at this distance the thing denied has the distinctive smell of fallacy.) But at this point in summarizing what is to come, I venture well beyond explanation of terminology and deep into the philosophy of the matter. Chapters Five and Six aim to complete the account of what singling out is. If they succeed, it will become finally clear how and why the singling something out at  $t$  cannot help but look, as I say, both backwards and forwards to times before and after  $t$ .

In sum, let the English language fix what will be meant by ‘single out’ and ‘pick out’. Let these verb phrases sustain the practical and epistemological significance of ‘individuate’, ‘individuation’ and ‘individuating’. Let philosophy then seek to say what individuating acts and thoughts amount to. At this point, a reader who has had enough of preliminaries may want to advance to Chapter One.

#### 4. PHILOSOPHICAL TERMINOLOGY: A MANIFESTO

The explications just given are intended to leave room for me to make the following declaration. Ideally, all technical terms should (i) be defined and

(ii) belong in that part of the metalanguage which does not overlap with the object language. Where there is no alternative but to allow technical terms to penetrate into the object language (e.g. because the object language is poor in schematic devices or devices of generalization), one might hope that technical terms would serve the sole purpose of abbreviation, of summarizing, and of systematizing, in terms not essentially different from the expressions indigenous to the object language, the matters of which the object language already speaks. No doubt the philosophy of any particular science or art will need to use the technical terms of that science or art. But such terms will have needed to pass muster in that art or science itself.<sup>5</sup>

The semi-technical uses in this book of ‘concept’, ‘continuant’, ‘substance’, ‘coincidence’, ‘coincidence under a concept’ will stand condemned unless they can conform to these requirements. Maybe they will not always live up to the ideal stated, and will to that extent stand condemned. But my aspiration for them is that they should be devices for the generalization of that which has a straightforward meaning in the object language of English – more specifically, that they will be *determinables* of which ordinary English provides countless *determinations*.<sup>6</sup> This is everywhere important, but it is a particularly important stipulation in connexion with the term ‘substance’. If we misunderstand determinable notions such as this, then it is almost inevitable that we shall unintentionally restore the unwanted associations of ‘substance’ with doctrines of bare particulars and qualityless substrate.

##### 5. SORTAL PREDICATES AND SORTAL CONCEPTS: AND CONCEPTS VERSUS CONCEPTIONS

A technical term that is associated with ‘substance’ and the *what is it?* question but belongs in the metalanguage is ‘sortal predicate’. I use this

<sup>5</sup> In stating that these are the ideals to which I regard myself as answerable, I am not venturing to condemn all philosophy that disregards them or follows some other manifesto. It is enough for me to say that the badness of much philosophy that is bad by almost any standard can be partly explained as the effect, *inter alia*, of disregard for such maxims – or of utter nescience of them.

<sup>6</sup> The *determinable/determinate* distinction was revived by W. E. Johnson (*Logic 1.XI.3*; Cambridge, 1921) out of dissatisfaction with the traditional genus and differentia account of species when it was applied outside its traditional scope. ‘To be ultramarine is not to be blue and something else besides, but it is a particular way of being blue’, A. N. Prior, *The Doctrine of Propositions and Terms* (London, 1976). *Pace* the traditional doctrine of *genus* and *differentia*, I should say the same of being a cat. It is not a matter of being an animal and something else that is independent of animality. See below on real definitions, §6. Manifestly ‘substance’ stands for a *fundamentum divisionis* in the traditional scheme. Or, in the language of the *Tractatus*, one may prefer to say it stands for a formal concept. For further discussion, see A. N. Prior, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–4 and ‘Determinables, Determinates and Determinants’, *Mind*, 58 (1949), pp. 1–20, 178–94.

Lockean term in roughly the manner of the second part of P. F. Strawson's *Individuals* (London: Methuen, 1959). See especially his pp. 168–9. (For a discrepancy not of philosophical purpose but of detail, see Chapter One, section 8 below.) Locke's usage, Strawson's usage and my own are all focused or organized by Aristotle's distinction of predications in the category of substance from predications in the category of quality and the other categories. See the first five chapters of Aristotle's treatise *Categories*, especially the two passages I have prefixed to Chapter One. For Locke's usage, see *Essay* III, iii, 15:

it being evident that things are ranked under names into sorts or species only as they agree to certain abstract ideas, to which we have annexed those names, the essence of each *genus* or sort comes to be nothing but that abstract idea which the general, or *sortal* (if I may have leave so to call it so from *sort*, as I do *general* from *genus*), name stands for.<sup>7</sup>

Here, as in other cases, the intuitive semantics we reach for in replacement of the Lockean system of ideas are Frege's or some adaptation of these. (For, however unfinished Frege's original scheme may be and whatever reservations one may have about the further elaborations that he offers of it in *Grundgesetze*, the underlying ideas are as general as they are durable.) Like other predicables, a sortal predicate expresses a sense and, by virtue of expressing this sense, it stands for a concept. Under this concept individual things may fall. See the diagram in Frege's letter to Husserl.<sup>8</sup> To understand a predicate and know what concept it stands for is to grasp a rule that associates things that answer to it with the True and things that don't answer to it with the False. (The extension of the concept is therefore the inverse image of the True under the function

<sup>7</sup> At §19 ('Divided reference'), Quine (1960) notes the following variants for 'sortal predicate': (1) individuating predicate; (2) articulative predicate; (3) substance-name; (4) shared, or multiply denotative, name; (5) predicate which divides its reference (extension). Another variant that has had some currency, on which see Woods (1959), is (6) boundary drawing predicate. (Cf. Frege (1950), §54.) All six terms serve to illuminate the difference, partially but only imperfectly reflected in the grammatical division of noun and adjective or verb, between Aristotle's ontologically basic question *What is x?* and less basic questions such as *What is x like?* *Where is x?* *What is x doing?* Note that looking at these terms in this Aristotelian way will enforce a *diachronic* interpretation of 'individuate', 'articulate', etc. We shall not be in the business of describing first what it takes for synchronic momentary presentations (things presented) *a* and *b* to be the same dog and then describing what it takes for a presentation now and a presentation tomorrow to be 'concanine'. Identity over time is just identity. The same holds of identity at a time. Such truisms should condition any account of the terms of a given identity judgment. Any secure practical grasp of what counts now as a dog regulates present judgments in the light of future and past findings about the same thing. And *vice versa*. See my 'Reply to Noonan' in Lovibond and Williams (1996).

<sup>8</sup> The letter is dated 1894. See Dummett (1973), Chapter Five. The diagram is reproduced in my (1984) and my (1993).

determined by this rule.) To grasp the rule is to grasp how or what a thing must be (or what a thing must do) in order to satisfy the predicate. To grasp this last is *itself* to grasp the Fregean concept. Thus ‘horse’ stands for that which Victor is and Arkle is, for instance – just as, outside the sortal category, the verb-phrase ‘runs swiftly’ stands for that which Arkle does. When I declare that to grasp this rule is to come to understand what *horse* is or *run swiftly* is, someone may insist that, in that case, the concept so spoken of, *horse* or *run swiftly* or whatever it may be, is a property. I shall not demur, but simply insist in my turn that the notion of a rule of correlation to which I appeal is pretheoretical. It is not indissolubly wedded to an extensional criterion of concept identity. The extensional criterion is the by-product, not here needed, of the mathematicians’ regimentation of an entirely intuitive notion.<sup>9</sup>

The concept *horse* is not then an abstraction such as horse-hood or horse-ness (whatever these are). It is something general or, better, universal; and to that extent it will be philosophically contentious. But *horse* or *mammal* or *carnivore* surely *are* things that we need to speak of or quantify over, in metaphysics and in science.<sup>10</sup> Objects fall under them and so on – and, under this aspect, objects can be seen as belonging to divers assemblages, variously denominated species, sorts, kinds.<sup>11</sup>

Seen in this way, as something with instances, the concept belongs on the level of reference (reference in general being something of which naming is one special case). But there is another use of the word ‘concept’ which is equally common, if not more common, and this belongs on the level of sense. It is this rival use of the word ‘concept’ that we find in discussions that are influenced directly or indirectly by Kant. In those discussions, talk of things falling under a concept, or of concepts having extensions, may be less felicitous. Or rather, it will not come to the same thing. Perhaps everything will fall into place, however, and the connexion will be visible between the two uses of the word, if we try to reserve the word ‘concept’ for the Fregean use and we prefer the word ‘conception’ to cover the Kantian use (seeing a Fregean sense as a very special case of a conception). The connexion that there is between the two may then be understood as follows:

<sup>9</sup> See B. A. W. Russell, *Introduction to the Mathematical Philosophy* (London, 1917), p. 187, and the further references to Ramsey, Quine and Church given in Aaron Sloman’s neglected but valuable article ‘Functions and Rogators’ (1965). See especially pp. 158, 159, 161.

<sup>10</sup> For more on these, see my (1984), especially the references to Elliot Sober, ‘Evolutionary Theory and the Ontological Status of Properties’, *Philosophical Studies*, 40 (1981), and my (1993). The quantification in question is over both sortal and non-sortal properties.

<sup>11</sup> In ordinary English and even in ordinary philosophical English, some of these terms lead a double life perhaps, as denoting assemblages *or* as denoting properties.

Thinker T has an adequate conception of the concept *horse* (an adequate conception, as one says in English, of a horse) if and only if T can subsume things under *horse*, knows what it would take for a thing to count as a horse, and has some sufficiency of information about what horses are like, etc.

In a word, the conception of horse is a conception of that which ‘horse’ stands for, namely the concept of horse, or the concept *horse*. (Similarly, one may speak of an idea of horse and mean by this a conception of the concept *horse*.) On these terms, the right way to understand what a philosopher means when he speaks of grasp of the concept *horse* may be to understand him as speaking in a telescoped way of having an adequate conception of that which the predicate ‘horse’ stands for, namely horses. Such phraseology as ‘grasp of the concept *horse*’ was common in *Sameness and Substance*. Given the option of reading it as just indicated, there are places where I have seen no danger in the telescoped terminology’s remaining in place.

At this point, with terminological explanations more or less complete (and ready to be repeated later, as and when necessary), the reader who has not yet postponed reading the rest of this Preamble ought probably to advance to Chapter One.

## 6. REAL AND NOMINAL

Next, in anticipation of something laid out in Chapter Three, a word on the terminology of ‘real’ and ‘nominal’. The use of these terms turns on the distinction between a predicate whose elucidation makes ineliminable allusion (or must *begin* by making ineliminable allusion) to members of its actual extension (real)<sup>12</sup> and a predicate whose elucidation can dispense with such allusion (nominal). In the case of the nominal, the elucidation can often be made fully explicit or articulate. In the pure case of the nominal, it never needs to involve the deictic or demonstrative element that is so typical of the real definition. A typical nominal definition would be Aristotle’s formula ‘*x* is a house if and only if *x* is a shelter against destruction by wind, rain and heat’. By contrast, a typical real definition – I call it a definition only to follow custom, this is not really definition – might run in the following way: ‘*x* is a water-vole just if *x* is relevantly similar to *that* [demonstrated] *animal* (letting the criterion of ‘relevantly’ depend at least in part on the nature, whatever it may

<sup>12</sup> Pending the completion at some imaginary moment of a science, cf. Chapter Three, section 5, point (v). Compare the way in which the elucidation of the sense of a proper name is *designatum*-involving. Cf. here ‘On the Sense and Reference of a Proper Name’ (1977), by John McDowell, to whom this Preamble is indebted also in other ways, and cf. my (1993).

prove to be, of the animal actually demonstrated)'.<sup>13</sup> Not only does the real definition depend on real specimens. The question of its application and correctness or incorrectness also depends crucially on the facts about these specimens. All the same, real definitions lie within the province of semantics, as well as of empirical fact. No lifelike elucidation of ordinary discourse could be contrived without them.<sup>14</sup> Let us forget once and for all the very idea of some knowledge of language or meaning that is not knowledge of the world itself. In this way, let us follow through the capital thing which Quine contended for in 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism'.<sup>15</sup>

#### 7. NECESSARY/CONTINGENT AND *A PRIORI* / *A POSTERIORI*

It is to be expected that there should be concepts any passable conception of which requires experience. Such concepts are *a posteriori* or empirical. The semantics of a predicate that stands for such a concept ('elm', 'oak', 'rabbit', 'brazen', 'green', for instance) will be rooted in the actual

<sup>13</sup> A definition can be real with respect to *genus* and nominal with respect to *differentia*. The philosophers' favourites like 'sibling', 'oculist' and 'bachelor' have definitions like this.

<sup>14</sup> There may be a measure of injustice to Locke (as well as to certain other philosophers) implicit in this usage. By using terms that are commonly conceived of as Locke's property and stressing constantly the importance of the real, I may seem to be claiming that, in his adherence to what he called the nominal, Locke failed to see things which some say he did see. Locke's doctrine of ektypes and archetypes, and the way he contrasts ideas of mixed modes with ideas of substance, both suggest not only that he had a grasp of the question whether a given predicate has an extension-involving or not extension-involving sense, but also that he may have anticipated the ideas of onus of match and direction of fit which, following Michael Woods (*op. cit.*, in footnote 7) and David Shwayder (1963), p. 9, I have found so suggestive in J. L. Austin ('How to Talk: Some Simple Ways', *P.A.S.* 1952-3) and have allowed to influence the exposition given here of certain thoughts that now have currency in philosophy about substantives and kinds. Such ideas certainly go back to Leibniz. See Leibniz's *Meditations on Truth, Knowledge and Ideas*, Gerhardt IV, especially p. 422. See also *Discourse on Metaphysics* (sections 24-5) and *New Essays* (Akademie, pp. 254-6). Some see the germ of all this in Aristotle's account at *Posterior Analytics* 93<sup>a21</sup> of how we may effect a preliminary determination of a phenomenon (e.g. a certain noise in the clouds) and then, having picked it out, gradually refine our description of its nature and work back to the rudiments of a real (or as Leibniz would say causal) definition. It may well be that some comparable credit is due to Locke, if he is correctly interpreted. Chapter Three credits Putnam and Kripke with refurbishing such ideas for present purposes.

<sup>15</sup> See *From a Logical Point of View*, pp. 20-46. This view of that which is enduringly important in Quine's argument accrues to me from remarks and commentaries that Hilary Putnam has offered since the nineteen sixties. For the consistency of this thing with the modest essentialism that will be advocated in this book (from Chapter Four onwards), see Quine's later judgment in *Ways of Paradox* (1977 edition): 'There is also in science a different and wholly respectable vestige of essentialism or of real definition. . . . It consists in picking out those minimum distinctive traits of a chemical, or of a species, or whatever, that link it most directly to the central laws of science. Such definition. . . . is of a piece with the chemical or biological theory itself [and] conforms strikingly to the Aristotelian quest. . . . This vestige of essentialism is of course a vestige to prize.'

world. (See the previous paragraph.) Nothing, however, prevents the occurrence of such concepts in judgments that are themselves *a priori*. For instance, ‘all rabbits are rabbits’ requires (of anyone who understands it at all) a certain quantum of experience; but, once a thinker has got *a posteriori* that which is required to understand it, he needs nothing more to see that it is true. In this sense, the judgment, whose comprehension is in part *a posteriori*, is itself *a priori*. Moreover, it is true no matter what. So it holds necessarily. Notoriously, though, not everything that involves such concepts yet holds necessarily can be *a priori*. Pursuing the deictic demonstration of gold and investigating the relevant similarities of good specimens of the stuff that is denominated ‘gold’, physical chemists have found ways to light upon the element with atomic number seventy-nine. Since that is the very stuff they were directed to by the deictic demonstration, it seems gold is necessarily the stuff with atomic number seventy-nine. (Use Russell’s theory of descriptions and Smullyan (1948) to understand the grammar of this claim.) But the experience that it takes to understand the semantics of ‘gold’ was insufficient to establish this identity. It holds necessarily but *a posteriori*. The same surely holds good for ‘Lucifer is Noctifer’. The *a posteriori* basis on which each of these names is understood does not suffice to establish that Lucifer is Noctifer. Only when that identity is established empirically can modal reasoning convert this discovery into the discovery that there is no circumstance in which Lucifer is not Noctifer. The identity holds necessarily – necessarily but *a posteriori*.

These matters are familiar, even if they still lie on the margin of controversy. But, beyond those treated by Saul Kripke, certain adjacent questions are less familiar. Leibniz writes in *On Nature Itself* (G IV, 512, following §11)

Matter resists being moved by a certain natural inertia (as Kepler well calls it) so that . . . it requires for its motion an active force proportional to its size . . . Just as matter has a natural inertia which is opposed to motion, so in a body itself, and indeed in every substance, there is a natural constancy which is opposed to change.

The point Leibniz draws to one’s attention here is a perfectly general condition on the determinable concept *material body or substance*. Relatively few ordinary thinkers are in a position to state this condition articulately or with precision. But a person who had absolutely no conception of this mark of the concept *material body or substance*, or who expected no resistance at all from things that answered to determinations

of it (such as *apple*, *wagon* or *tree*), would be hard to credit with any adequate conception of these concepts (either of the determinable *material substance* or of such determinations of it).<sup>16</sup>

What then is the status of the truth ‘a material substance has inertia and requires for its motion an active force proportional to its size’? It is a candidate to hold necessarily. Nevertheless, the truth is scarcely analytic. It does not follow from logic and definitions. (What definitions are available here?) The truth is grounded in the empirical concepts *material substance* and *inertia*. It is grounded there in such a way as to leave no room (apparently) even for the possibility of a material substance without inertia. Moreover, for anyone who thinks through what is involved in a substance’s lacking inertia, the very idea of a material substance’s lacking inertia may seem to be excluded. Some philosophers may even react to this by calling the truth that material substances have inertia an *a priori* truth. If I do not call it that myself, it is because I strongly suspect that, in thinking through what would be involved in a substance’s lacking inertia and finding the way blocked to that state of affairs, one calls upon experience for a further contribution, over and above that which was required to grasp the empirical concepts that are involved.

## 8. FORMAL NOTATIONS

In the ensuing chapters, there are notations and locutions that may give the impression that, despite protestations to the contrary, I am engaged in the business of constructing a formal system. But the only aim of these notations is to effect abbreviation where abbreviation is needed, or to make fixed and transparent whatever is taken in the context to be the logical and inferential character of certain antecedently familiar forms and locutions. In the case of notations such as ‘ $a = b$ ’, this disclaimer is to be borne particularly in mind. This simply abbreviates ‘*a* is the same donkey as *b*’, where that is to be understood as having whatever meaning the language imparts to these English words. Again, at the outset of the inquiry in Chapter One, the question is put whether *x* can be the same *f* as *y* without being the same *g* as *y*. But there is no policy here to diminish dependence on informal English. To make a question in English out of this schema, for instance, replace the letters ‘*x*’ and ‘*y*’ by names of things and the thing-kind letters ‘*f*’ and ‘*g*’ by predicates denominating

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Christopher Peacocke, ‘Intuitive Mechanics, Psychological Reality and the Idea of a Material Object’, in *Spatial Representations*, ed. Eilan, McCarty and Brewer (Oxford, 1993).

kinds of thing, e.g. ‘donkey’, ‘horse’, ‘tree’, ‘mammal’, ‘animal’, ‘beast of burden’. In sum, the codifications proposed should be seen as an invitation to agree in finding a certain meaning in natural language expressions of which the notations are the counterpart, and then to treat these notations as specifying that meaning canonically.

Notation such as this, latching as it does onto one particular understanding of the reusable words that make up some phrase or latching onto one particular reading of the construction in which the words are placed, represents, if you will, a first step in the direction of a systematic account of the logical grammar of English. But it is no more than a first step. Much has been learned from experiments with an approach that is opposite to mine, i.e. with a would-be exact or calculus-building approach. This has advanced some matters by raising questions not previously encountered and identifying all sorts of possible answers to these questions. Yet all too often this top down approach has had the effect of precipitating its proponents rather suddenly into issues for which there had been no discursive or presystematic preparation. In this book, by contrast, the approach is that of the underlabourer – albeit an underlabourer not denied the *distant prospect* of discerning a simple Leibnizian order implicit in the syntax and semantics of English.

#### 9. THE MODE OF COMBINATION INVOLVED IN ‘IS THE SAME DONKEY AS’

In the explanation described as a first step, I said how ‘*a* is the same *f* as *b*’ may be read as a sort of English. This explanation was general. But this particular form is, for purposes of this book, special and specially important. What is the relation between the mode of combination by which ‘donkey’ occurs in ‘*a* is the same donkey as *b*’ and that by which ‘donkey’ occurs in ‘*a* is a donkey’? For the sake of completeness, we need to address this question. Logically speaking, the matter belongs here; even though, as so often with the questions treated in this Preamble, one who does not care yet about the answer may wish to skip or go on now to Chapter One.

According to Quine, ‘*a* is the same donkey as *b*’ is simply a contraction or condensation of the logical form ‘*a* is a donkey and *a* is *b*’.<sup>17</sup> Thus ‘– (is) (*a*) donkey’ should be read as a predicate distinguishable within the

<sup>17</sup> See Quine review of P. T. Geach, *Reference and Generality* (1964); also Perry (1970).

general class of predications only by the non-syntactic marks insisted upon at §5 above. (These marks are further discussed in Chapters One, Two and Three.) A variant that I think Quine might tolerate, and (having scrutinized all extant alternatives) I should myself prefer it, is to see ‘*a* is the same donkey as *b*’ as saying that *a* stands to *b* in the relation of identity *as restricted to* (things that are) donkeys. Hence our notation in this book:  $\frac{a = b}{\text{donkey}}$ . In Russell and Whitehead’s official *Principia Mathematica* notation (see Volume I, \*35), the approved rendering would have been  $(a) = \llbracket \text{donkey } (b)$ .

The advantage of proposals such as these is that they simultaneously show forth the distinctive contribution of ‘donkey’ to the linguistic forms that the word ‘donkey’ helps to make up and show it as made by means of a single mode of combination. Suppose that for one moment we represent this mode of contribution by the invented verb ‘to donkey’. Then ‘*a* is a donkey’ becomes ‘*a* donkeys’ and ‘*a* is the same donkey as *b*’ becomes ‘*a* donkeys and *a = b*’ or else (essentially similarly, but in a way that brings ‘=’ and ‘donkey’ better into construction together): *a* has to *b* the relation of identity *as restricted to* things that donkey, or *a* has to *b* the relation same  $\llbracket$  donkey.

So far so good. Now, helping ourselves to similar verbs for other substantives, we can quickly make sense of ‘there is something that *a* is’, ‘*a* is the same what as *b*?’, ‘*a* is the same something as *b*’, and so on. For purposes of such contexts, the letters ‘f’ and ‘g’, which have served so far as schematic, will need to take on the role of true variables,<sup>18</sup> ranging over the general things which we claimed to discover that thing-kind words stand for. Examples would be person, plant, tree, house, horse, donkey, etc.<sup>19</sup> On these terms, if we continue with our temporary representation of nouns by verbs, we can say that ‘*a* is something’ is true if and only if *a* something-s; that *a* something-s if and only if for some f (one of these general items) *a* f-s, or  $(\exists f)(fa)$ . Similarly, ‘*a* is the same something as *b*’ is

<sup>18</sup> If we were constructing a formal system, it would be a heinous offence to let the same letters f and g do duty sometimes as schematic letters, understood by reference to the role of holding a place for their designated linguistic replacements, and at other times as genuine variables, understood by reference to whatever items ‘all’ and ‘some’ range over. But, as I have said, our notation is not introduced for the purpose of constructing a formal system. It is only abbreviatory and disambiguative.

<sup>19</sup> This is second level quantification but of a very limited kind. There is no question yet, of quantifying over everything true of *x*. We quantify over the sorts of thing which this or that given object is, in the Aristotelian sense of this phrase. For this, see again the epigraphs for Chapter One.

true if and only if, for some  $f$ ,  $a$   $f$ -s and  $a = b$  or, better,  $a$  has to  $b$  the relation of identity as restricted to things that  $f$ ; or, more formally,  $(\exists f) \left( \begin{smallmatrix} a = b \\ f \end{smallmatrix} \right)$ . Note that in the quasi-formalized version, concatenation is taken to do the work of the verb ending. When we revert to the ordinary English form  $a$  is an  $f$  and look back at the quasi-formalized version, this concatenation is seen as having taken over the work of the indefinite article too, bracketing for us the nice question of how much or little significance to attach to the English form ' $a$  is a(n) . . . '.

In sum, following the variant that I propose on Quine's proposal, we then have the equivalence:

$$a = b \leftrightarrow (\exists f) \left( \begin{smallmatrix} a = b \\ f \end{smallmatrix} \right)$$

Let it be as clear as anything can that, in embracing and exploiting this equivalence, one is not agreeing with Geach's claim that always ' $x$  is identical with  $y$ ' is an abbreviation for ' $x$  is the same  $f$  as  $y$ ' where  $f$  'represents some count noun supplied from the context of utterance' ('or else it is just a half-formed thought').<sup>20</sup> One is disagreeing deliberately and actively with that. If vindication were really needed of the bare ' $a = b$ ', then the right-hand side of our equivalence would vindicate it. It would vindicate it as definite, determinate and well formed. It is determinate in the same way as 'I talked with someone yesterday at noon' is determinate for a truth-value.<sup>21</sup>

In *Sameness and Substance* the question of how  $\begin{smallmatrix} a = b \\ f \end{smallmatrix}$  and ' $a$  is an  $f$ ' are related was left undecided. In so far as it can now be treated as decided, there should be no strict need to argue separately or twice over, as in Chapter One, about the formal properties of '=' and ' $\begin{smallmatrix} = \\ f \end{smallmatrix}$ '. There is something to be said, though, for trying to satisfy the reader separately under each head. Again, in Chapter Two, where the doctrine of Sortal

<sup>20</sup> See Geach (1972), p. 238. See also Geach (1980), p. 214.

<sup>21</sup> It follows that there are two reasons why there has never been any temptation, either in *Sameness and Substance* (1980) or in Wiggins (1967), in each of which ' $a = b$ ' was treated as guaranteed the same truth-value as ' $(\exists f) \left( \begin{smallmatrix} a = b \\ f \end{smallmatrix} \right)$ ', to follow Geach in claiming that ' $a = b$ ' is in any way defective or incomplete. First, no variable is free on the right side. Secondly, being Leibnizian ' $(\exists f) \left( \begin{smallmatrix} a = b \\ f \end{smallmatrix} \right)$ ' and ' $a = b$ ' are both determinate in the further sense of excluding the possibility (see Chapter One) that  $(\exists g) \left( \begin{smallmatrix} ga \text{ \& not } \\ g \end{smallmatrix} \begin{smallmatrix} a = b \\ \end{smallmatrix} \right)$ .

Dependency is formulated, it may be wondered what strict need there now is for the third clause of Principle **D** to invoke f-coincidence as such. In that third clause, is more required than that there should be no difference at all between the particular *f* that *a* is and the particular *f* that *b* is? In the absence, however, of complete reconstructions of the lifespans of *a* and of *b* (and that is the normal case), some idea of f-coincidence does seem integral to the ordinary working or application of the third clause of **D**. In *Sameness and Substance Renewed*, the third clause remains as it was. See Chapter Two, §1.

#### 10. QUESTIONS OF PRIORITY

Do the determinations of the foregoing section mean that there is a danger that we may be forced to concur in a claim that adherents of Quine are apt to repeat sometimes, as if in evidence against positions like **D**? Does it mean that ' $x=y$ ' is prior somehow to the practices, directly and indirectly invoked by **D**, of the individuation of things and the assignment of things to thing-kinds?

When we do propound identity conditions for bodies, or persons, or classes, we are using the *prior* concept of identity in the special task of clarifying the term 'body' or 'person' or 'class'; for an essential part of the clarification of a term is clarification of the standard by which we individuate its denotata.<sup>22</sup>

Well, no. There is no need at all to concur in the asymmetry Quine has seemed to suggest. For the truth is that there can be no question in this province, where so much is primitive, of *anything's* being absolutely prior – either logically or philosophically or psychogenetically. To be sure, 'Juno donkeys' or 'Juno is a donkey' will seem (so soon as we look at this predication as it appears in English) to mean or imply that Juno is the same as one of the donkeys or is identical with one of the donkeys. But, as we shall see in Chapter Two, there is also an opposite dependence. The practical grasp of identity itself presupposes the capacity to subsume things under kinds, to refer to them and to trace them (or keep track of them). But in order to trace things, one has to trace them in the way that is appropriate to this or that *kind*, and then, by dint of one's understanding of congruence as flowing from identity or coincidence, to assign to an object picked out at one time and again at another time everything that is true of either. But if that is right, then not only does sortal predication presuppose identity. Identity presupposes sortal pred-

<sup>22</sup> W. V. Quine (1972). My italics.

ication.<sup>23</sup> These things belong together – or the grasp of each requires the grasp of the other. Identity is a notion coeval with the determinable *entity of some determinate kind*, which brings with it the possibility of the particular determinations that figure in particular sortal predications.

Without thinking very hard about what one is hoping for, one forms too easily the aspiration to discover a starting point from which one could introduce, stage by stage, as if definitionally, the apparatus of naming, substantial predication, identification and differentiation, then other kinds of predication, then quantification over individuals, then quantification over sorts, then abstraction (the prototype of lambda abstraction), then quantification over properties . . . If the process to be reconstructed were intended to be definitional or quasi-definitional, however, then all the hazards of piecemeal definition would have to be guarded against (the hazard of the left hand's undoing or altering what, unknown to the left hand, the right has already done). The difficulties would quickly appear of keeping careful account of what already presupposes what. Given the absolutely foundational nature of that with which we are concerned, however, and the primitiveness of the predicative and other devices that are under consideration, I should claim that it is a false picture that bewitches one who demands such a quasi-definitional sequence. What we have here to confront is a whole skein of connected practices. These practices are intertwined with one another. Their relations can indeed be set out in all sorts of true equivalences. But it does not follow they can be set out in a *developing sequence* of the kind we were meant to be looking for. It is much more likely that the basic

<sup>23</sup> Geach seeks to penetrate to a deeper level of analysis of sortal predication, by isolating an underlying mode of combination effected by the attribution of equivalence relations (which are not necessarily, according to Geach, congruence relations) such as *x is the same donkey as y*, *x is the same apple as y*, etc. This relation can then be *derelativized* as in '*x is the same donkey as x*', '*x is the same apple as x*', etc. Finally, he offers these latter forms as definitions of '*x is a donkey*', '*x is an apple*'.

Geach's proposal can be separated from Geach's case against absolute identity and his denial of congruence.

If the proposal were offered on the level of psychogenetic theory, then it would be implausible. For it is hard to avoid thinking that calling *x* the same horse as *y* presupposes picking *x* out and picking it out as something (as a horse?) simpliciter. If there were nothing more to horse-identity than there was to being a horse, whence could come the relationality that Geach derelativizes?

If Geach's proposal is simply grammatical or definitional in its intent, well, that is more plausible. But it may be less clear than it looks. For as soon as we try to bring Geach's 'same donkey as' forms into the requisite relation with 'the same what?' and 'the same something as', which are indispensable to the whole rhetoric of sortalism, we need to discern structure *within* 'is the same donkey as'. This structure cannot, however, be, for Geach, that which is suggested by the English predicable 'is the same donkey as'. For that apparently reintroduces both absolute identity and simple 'donkey' predication.

forms and devices have to be learned together. Just as the keystone of an arch and the adjoining bricks can be placed together, but only if somehow they are placed there simultaneously or they are put into position with the help of a temporary external support, so each primitive device is learned *simultaneously and in reciprocity* with each of the others.

In the language learning case, there is the possibility of partial and interim grasp of a device. But the full grasp of any one device will require the full grasp of many or most of the others. If semantic devices are well made, then, once they are fully mastered, they will operate smoothly and in concert together. Their mutual relations will indeed allow of their being rehearsed by logical equivalences. If a sceptical question arises, however, about whether in their supposed reciprocity the concepts corresponding to the expressions we are concerned with are well made, the only answer that ought to be promised is that, several chapters into the book, there will be *indirect* assurance that the locutions 'same', 'horse', 'same horse' collaborate securely in the modes of combination of which we avail ourselves in identifying things, placing them in kinds, distinguishing them from other things and attributing other properties to them. For the interim, the most that should be offered in answer to the question broached in paragraph one, §9 above, is a non-definitional and non-psychogenetic account of a single mode of combination linking 'is an f' and 'is the same f'.