

## **Modal Status of the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles in the Correspondence with Clarke**

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Does Leibniz hold the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles (the PII hereafter) to be necessarily or contingently true? The textual evidence is generally held to be equivocal. While many of Leibniz's discussions of the PII are either unclear on its modal status or clearly suggest its necessity, there are texts, mainly found in the correspondence with Clarke, which allegedly entail or suggest that it is contingent. Most recent scholars judge that the texts from the correspondence with Clarke are anomalous and that Leibniz's considered opinion is that the PII is necessary. In his recent book, *Leibniz's Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles*, Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra argues that even the texts from the correspondence with Clarke which are typically thought to support the claim that the PII is contingent, do not genuinely do so. First, he claims that Leibniz's arguments in the correspondence with Clarke only entail the truth of the PII and not that it is necessary or contingent. From this he claims that Leibniz has no reason to think that the PII is contingent. Second, he argues that despite scholarly consensus to the contrary, nowhere in the correspondence with Clarke does Leibniz assert the contingency of the PII. In this paper I argue that Rodriguez-Pereyra is wrong on both counts.

Does Leibniz's argument for the PII in the correspondence with Clarke establish its modal status? I argue that although the best reconstruction of the argument does not have a modalized version of the PII as its conclusion (just as Rodriguez-Pereyra states), this doesn't mean that Leibniz has no reason for thinking that the PII is contingent. I argue that Leibniz thinks the PII is grounded by divine wisdom. Because anything that is grounded by divine wisdom is contingent, the PII is contingent.

Does Leibniz say that the PII is contingent in the correspondence with Clark? And if so, do such statements conflict with other texts in the correspondence that assert its necessity? I examine the interpretations given by Rodriguez-Pereyra according to which Leibniz never says that the PII is contingent and I conclude that they are forced. Moreover, I consider the texts from the correspondence that are often taken to support the PII's necessity and argue that they are not best interpreted in this way.

I conclude by arguing that many of these disputes are partially a function of misconstruing the conception of modality that Leibniz is using in the correspondence. I argue that there is reason to think that the relevant conception of modality is Leibniz's *per se* possible conception. Once this conception is assumed, many apparent difficulties are resolved.