# Leibniz's arguments from the PSR to the PII

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My aim in this paper is to interpret and evaluate three arguments that Leibniz gives from the principle of sufficient reason (PSR) to the principle of identity of indiscernibles (PII). The first of these arguments is found in *Primary Truths*; the other two are found in the correspondence with Clarke.

According to the *no reason argument*, there would be no sufficient reason for the numerical distinction between indiscernibles. This is because such a reason would have to appeal to a difference in their properties, when by hypothesis there is no such difference. Contrary to other interpreters, I will argue that the no reason argument does not rely on such Leibnizian claims as that all truths have *a priori* proofs, or that all substances have complete concepts. Having interpreted the argument I will go on to provide an objection. The objection is that the reason for numerical distinction could be sought in a difference in relational properties. I consider how Leibniz might respond to this objection, particularly by invoking his view that a difference in relational properties implies a difference in intrinsic properties. But I will argue that such a response makes redundant the very argument that it was invoked to defend.

Leibniz does, however, have two other arguments from the PSR to the PII. Both of these arguments are to be found in his correspondence with Clarke. According to the *switch argument*, God has no sufficient reason to create a world with indiscernibles. This is because there is an equally good world whose only difference is that those indiscernibles are spatially switched, and God will not create one of two equally good worlds. I will argue that, contrary to other interpreters, this argument does not rely on space being absolute. I will also observe that the temptation to think that it does may arise from confusing the switch argument with an argument found earlier in the correspondence with Clarke. I will then go on to provide an objection. The objection is this: if a different but equally good world can be created by switching the spatial location of indiscernibles, then, given Leibniz's views on what makes a world good, it is possible for an equally good world to be created by switching the spatial location of very similar discernibles. Given that our world contains such very similar discernibles, it follows that God could not have created our world. Needless to say, this is a conclusion that Leibniz could not accept.

The final argument from the PSR to the PII is the *good reason argument*. According to this argument God has good reason to create a world without indiscernibles. Because God always acts for a sufficient reason, God must have created such a world. The chief interpretive question is why Leibniz considers such rampant qualitative variety to be such a good thing. My answer will be that its value is grounded in the perceptual pleasure that it provides to rational agents. However, I will also object that counterexamples can be constructed in which the value to be gained from indiscernibility seems greater than the value to be gained by perceptual pleasure from discernibility. I will therefore conclude that all three of Leibniz's arguments from the PSR to the PII, though powerful, are ultimately unsuccessful.