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The Same F_1 but a Different F_2 – with Absolute Identity

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Abstract: Here I present an analysis of what it is for an x and a y to be the same F. Unlike the Fregean Analysis (FRE), according to which 'x is the same F as y' is equivalent to 'x is an F, y is an F, and $x = y$', the analysis presented and defended here allows that there are possible cases in which x and y are the same F_1 but not the same F_2 even though x is an F_2 and y is an F_2. The analysis offered here, FRE+, retains the conditions that FRE deems are necessary for being the same F while adding a further condition to allow that the same F_1 can be a different F_2. Although FRE+ is compatible with there being such cases, FRE+ shares with FRE that the identity mentioned in the analysis is nothing other than absolute identity. Thus, FRE+ offers a way to allow that the same F_1 can be a different F_2 while avoiding conflict with the traditionally accepted logic of identity, and I argue without conflict with the Indiscernibility of Identicals in particular.

Keywords: absolute identity; relative identity; relative sameness; same F; same F_1 but different F_2; relations; types

1 Introduction

A piece of clay in the shape of a statue might be remolded to have a very different statuesque shape. While it is the same piece of clay, it seems it is not the same statue. The adult Fido is the same dog as the former pup but not the same mass of matter. After receiving a new cerebrum, the individual is the same human organism but not the same person. Someone might be standing in the same river but in a different batch of water. Or so it seems.

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Examples such as these, and many others, appear to support the following thesis endorsed by Geach:

> **REL**: There are possible cases in which an x is the same F_1 as a y, but not the same F_2 (for some types F_1 and F_2), even though x is an F_2 and y is an F_2,[1]

where 'REL' abbreviates 'Relative Sameness'. REL specifies that x and y are F_2s, for there is no doubt that if x and y are not F_2s, then they are not the same F_2, even if they are the same F_1 (e.g., being the same dog but not the same aardvark). Also, the terms 'F_1' and 'F_2' used in REL are meant to pick out *types* or *sorts* of things. That is, both 'F_1' and 'F_2' are intended to represent general nouns (count nouns primarily) rather than adjectival predicates, for we can all agree that an x and a y can be the same height without being the same weight, or that an object can be the same rock without being the same color after it is painted.

While REL is compelling, there is an influential account of the expression 'the same F' that conflicts with REL. Geach wrote,

> Frege has clearly explained that the predication of "one endowed with wisdom" ("*ein Weiser*") does not split up into predications of "one" and "endowed with wisdom" ("*weise*"). It is surprising that Frege should on the contrary have constantly assumed that "x is the same A as y" does split up into "x is an A (and y is an A)" and "x is the same as (*ist dasselbe wie*, *ist gleich*) y" (1962, pp. 151–152).

On the view mentioned that Geach rejects, 'x is the same F as y' (for some count noun 'F') is equivalent to 'x is an F, y is an F, and $x = y$'. Given Geach's reference to Frege, let's follow Griffin (1977) and call this the "Fregean" analysis of statements of the form 'x is the same F as y'.[2] If the Fregean analysis ('FRE') is correct, then REL is false. For consider some x, y, and count nouns 'F_1' and 'F_2', and suppose that x is the same F_1 as y. Then according to FRE, $x = y$. But if $x = y$, and if x is an F_2 and y is an F_2, then on FRE, x and y are the same F_2. So one cannot consistently accept both FRE and REL.

One might argue that the examples used to support REL do not really support it.[3] Yet, I am inclined to endorse REL for it seems to me that at least some of the

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1 As Geach puts it, "On my own view of identity I could not object in principle to different *A*s' being one and the same *B*; [...] as different official personages may be one and the same man" (1962, p. 157).

2 See also Perry's (1970) reference to Frege when discussing (and endorsing) this account of being the same *F*.

3 One might agree with Perry that in the examples that seem to show that "x is the same F as y, but x and y are different G's," either "the referring expressions do not have the same referents in both conjuncts" (e.g., the statue is not identical with the piece of clay that constitutes it) or "one of the conjuncts does not assert or deny identity" (1970, pp. 199–200). Also see Quine (1964); and

examples that have been or might be offered in support of REL are genuine instances of the thesis. Inspired by a passage from Odegard (1972), I develop an alternative to FRE for analyzing 'the same *F*' which is compatible with REL and which is also independently plausible. The account, which I label 'FRE+', retains the conditions that FRE deems are necessary for being the same *F* while adding a further condition to be compatible with REL. FRE+ is presented and explained in Sections 2 and 3.

It's important to note that one can accept REL without endorsing another thesis often mentioned in discussions of relative identity, and also endorsed by Geach. Geach claimed that "'The same' is a fragmentary expression, and has no significance unless we say or mean 'the same X', where 'X' represents a general term" (1957, p. 69). Saying that *x* is identical with *y* "is an incomplete expression; it is short for '*x* is the same *A* as *y*,' where '*A*' represents some count noun understood from the context of utterance – or else, it is just a vague expression of a half-formed thought" (1967, p. 3). This is a denial of absolute identity, a denial of the view that there are meaningful, non-relativized, and complete identity claims of the form '$x = y$'. However, one can endorse REL without denying absolute identity.[4] One way to do so is to hold that in addition to absolute identity, there is another brand of identity that is not absolute, but relative. (See, for example, Deutsch (1998); Deutsch and Garbacz (2023); Garbacz (2002, 2004); Griffin (1977); Odegard (1972); and Routley and Griffin (1979)).[5]

The analysis proposed here, FRE+, offers another way to endorse REL without denying absolute identity. FRE+ agrees with FRE that *x*'s being the same *F* as *y* requires that *x* is an *F*, *y* is an *F*, and $x = y$, where the identity relation is none other than absolute identity. FRE+ adds to the analysis in a way that allows that REL is true, but the extra that's added is not itself an identity relation. So, like FRE, the only identity mentioned in FRE+ is absolute, unqualified identity. Thus, FRE+

see Wiggins's thorough discussion and rejection of examples purporting to show that the same F_1 can be different F_2s, which includes, among other points, emphasis on the 'is' of constitution (1967, §§1.3–1.8; 2001, ch. 1, §§3–9).

4 One reason not to deny absolute identity is that the principle $(x)(x = x)$ seems to be sensical and true without specifying any respect of sameness. Griffin points out "an obvious example of an absolute identity statement," i.e., "'$a = a$'" (1977, p. 130). Geach's reasoning against absolute identity is widely rejected. For a review of Geach's reasoning and objections to it, see Deutsch and Garbacz (2023, §5); Griffin (1977, §8.3); Noonan (2017, pp. 1019–1022); and Noonan and Curtis (2022, §3). Of course, a weak attack on absolute identity does not mean that absolute identity exists or that its denial cannot be adequately defended. See, for example, Molto's (2019) defense of what he calls "Strong Relative Identity," a thesis that includes the denial of absolute identity.

5 Garbacz (2004, §3) gives the label 'moderate relativism' to the view that there is both relative identity and absolute identity and the former is not reducible to the latter (and he uses 'extreme relativism' for the denial of absolute identity). Incidentally, a different way to endorse relative identity without denying absolute identity is to develop an account of relative identity that remains non-committal on whether absolute identity exists (e.g., van Inwagen 1988).

provides a way to accept REL without being committed to a type of identity that is itself relative.

However, with FRE+ we encounter a worry that we avoid with FRE. As Wiggins argued, any account of being the same *F* that supports REL conflicts with the Indiscernibility of Identicals.[6] In short, if same-*F*-ness is a type of identity, then given the Indiscernibility of Identicals if *x* is the same F_1 as *y*, *x* and *y* must have all of the same properties. So, since *x* is the same F_2 as *x* (given that *x* is an F_2), *x* must be the same F_2 as *y*. After the initial presentation of FRE+ in Sections 2 and 3, the worry about conflict with the Indiscernibility of Identicals is addressed and answered in Section 4. This is followed in Section 5 by further discussion of what FRE+ does and does not entail, and how FRE+ has the merit of remaining neutral on a number of issues regarding identity, sameness, and persistence conditions, thereby being amenable to those with differing views on these issues.

The overall goal of this discussion is to provide a plausible analysis of what it is for an *x* and a *y* to be the same *F* (for any count noun '*F*'), one which accommodates the intuition that in some cases *x* is the same F_1 as *y* but a different F_2 while also being acceptable to the widest range of theorists who endorse absolute identity.

2 The Same *F*: Adding to FRE

In explaining what he calls the "Lockean" view of relative identity, Odegard (1972, p. 31) mentions a case in which *a* and *b* are the same body ("in its pedestrian sense such that *a* and *b* can be the same body without having all the same parts") but not the same corpus (where "*a* and *b* are the same corpus only if all their parts are the same"). While describing how the Lockean view preserves the consistency of '*a* and *b* are the same body, but not the same corpus', Odegard mentions that on the Lockean account, '*a* is not the same corpus as *b*'

> is equivalent to the disjunction '$\sim(a = b)$ v $\sim$(*a* is a corpus) v $\sim$(*b* was a corpus) v $\sim$(*a* and *b* have exactly the same parts) v . . .' and is true if any one disjunct is true (p. 31, Odegard's ellipsis).

On this view, one can say that *a* and *b* are not the same corpus "on the ground that *a* and *b* do not have exactly the same parts, without having to sacrifice '$a = b$'" (p. 31).

6 Wiggins (1967, §1.2) rejects the claim that identity is sortal-relative, which he labels 'R', here rephrased as REL, although he does endorse a sortal dependency of individuation thesis, labelled 'D'. (See Snowdon's (2009) discussion of Wiggins's thesis D and formulations of it.)

Suppose we modify slightly and generalize what Odegard says here about the Lockean reading of '*a* is the same corpus as *b*' and propose the following:

> **FRE+**: For any type of thing *F*, there is a relation *R* such that necessarily, for any *x* and *y*, *x* is the **same *F*** as *y* if and only if *Fx*, *Fy*, $x = y$, and *Rxy*,

where '=' designates absolute, i.e., non-relative, numerical identity. I leave open whether FRE+ or the idea Odegard expresses in the passages above really are elements of Locke's views on identity.[7] Also note that while the passages above seem to motivate FRE+, there are components of the "Lockean" view Odegard describes that a proponent of FRE+ would not accept. The Lockean view Odegard endorses entails that '$a = b$' is equivalent to 'For some *F* (∃*F*), *a* is the same (identical) *F* as *b*'.[8] In discussing this equivalence thesis, which he labels '(c)', Odegard claims that "since a Lockean accepts (c), he must admit that there is a reason for the truth of '$a = b$' and that a statement of the reason will take the form of ['*a* is the same *F* as *b*']" (1972, p. 30, bracketed portion replacing symbolism). The proponent of FRE+ would deny that same-*F*-ness grounds the truth of '$a = b$'. The grounding is in the other direction with FRE+; same-*F*-ness is analyzed in terms of absolute identity, as it is with FRE.

In formulating FRE+ I use the phrase 'type of thing' and avoid reference to talk of *sortals* or *sortal terms* because I wish to remain neutral on the complex issue of what the word 'sortal' should be thought to imply.[9] Note, in particular, that the *types* or *sorts* of thing mentioned here are not confined to what a thing is essentially or fundamentally. So, as I am using the word 'type', the terms 'puppy', 'student', and 'adult' qualify as naming types of things.[10] I am using 'type of thing' here liberally enough to include anything designated by a count noun, and throughout this discussion, I use '*F*', 'F_1', and 'F_2' to indicate types/sorts in this broad sense.

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7 There is much debate on whether Locke endorsed relative identity and the incompleteness of absolute identity claims. For a helpful review of this debate see Boeker (2021, ch. 3).

8 See Odegard's symbolism (1972, p. 30). As Odegard mentions, Wiggins (1967) also endorses this equivalence (and see Wiggins 2001, p. 53). See also Stevenson's claim that "the 'absolute' relation of identity, $x = y$, means no more nor less than that for some count-noun '*S*', *x* is the same *S* as *y*" (1972, p. 158). Yet, unlike Wiggins and Stevenson, Odegard endorses REL.

9 These issues include, among others, how narrowly a common noun must individuate to be considered a sortal term, whether 'sortal' should be reserved for that which provides a criterion of identity, and whether a genuine sortal term picks out what a thing is essentially and most fundamentally. See Grandy and Freund (2023) for presentation of many of the numerous issues regarding sortals.

10 The concepts *puppy*, *student*, and *adult* are what Wiggins calls "phase" or "phased" sortals (e.g., 1967, p. 7 and 2001, p. 30), concepts that indicate contingent features and that typically apply to only part of one's career (as opposed to *substance* sortals).

The requirement regarding relation *R* in FRE+ seems crucial to allowing that REL is true. According to REL, there are possible cases in which an *x* and a *y* are the same F_1 and not the same F_2 even though *x* is an F_2 and *y* is an F_2. It seems that the reason for accepting this is the belief that in some possible cases *x* bears to *y* whatever relations are necessary for being the same F_1 without bearing to *y* some relation that is necessary for being the same F_2. There might be cases where we are inclined to say that *x* is the same body as *y* but a different corpus because while *x* and *y* are causally continuous in the right sort of way, *x* does not bear to *y* the relation of being comprised of the same matter. Or we might be inclined to say that *x* is the same piece of clay as *y* but a different statue because while *x* and *y* are spatiotemporally continuous, *x* does not bear to *y* the relation of having a sufficiently similar statuesque shape. And there are cases where we might be tempted to say that a person *x* and a person *y* are the same human organism but not the same person because while *x* and *y* are biologically continuous in whatever way is necessary for being the same organism, *x* and *y* are not psychologically continuous in some way essential to being the same person. These are a few of the many possible examples that might be given of how, according to FRE+, the presence of one relation and the absence of another gives rise to REL-instances. These are examples of REL a proponent of FRE+ *might* give; FRE+ is open to differing views on which and how many REL-instances there are.[11]

If there is such a thing as absolute identity, then it seems the proponent of FRE is correct to believe that *x* and *y* are the same *F* only if $x = y$. That *x* is the same weight as *y* in no way contradicts the claim that *x* is something other than *y*; distinct things can have the same weight, or height, or shape, or color. But given that '*F*' indicates a type of thing, if there is absolute identity, where *x* is or is not *y* *simpliciter*, then there would seem to be some tension, at least, in claiming that *x* is the same *F* as *y* but *x* is not *y*. It does seem odd, if not contradictory, to maintain that *x* isn't *y* but it is the same statue, or the same ship, or the same organism. FRE+ maintains FRE's requirement that if *x* is the same *F* as *y*, then $x = y$. FRE+ also includes FRE's obviously correct stipulation that *x*'s being the same *F* as *y* requires that *x* is an *F* and *y* is an *F*. So what FRE deems as necessary for being the same *F* (i.e., that *x* is an *F*, *y* is an *F*, and $x = y$) are included in FRE+ as necessary conditions. FRE+ differs from FRE by adding another necessary condition. It adds the relation *R* requirement so that the analysis is compatible with REL.

11 The examples I am and will be using to illustrate REL are examples involving a concrete particular and what constitutes it (e.g., the statue and the piece of clay that constitutes it, the person and the constituting organism, and the rock and the constituting mass of matter). I give examples of this sort because I believe that constitution cases best illustrate REL. However, it is open to proponents of FRE+ to believe that there are other and perhaps better examples of REL.

The phrase '$x = y$' in FRE+ indicates absolute, unqualified identity, as it does in FRE. According to FRE+, relation R can vary with a change in F, but identity remains constant across Fs. When x and y are the same F_1 but different F_2s, that is *not* because x and y are numerically identical in one respect, as F_1s, but not numerically identical in another respect, as F_2s. According to FRE+, x's being the same F_1 as y requires that $x = y$, period. What makes it the case that x is not the same F_2 as y, even though x is an F_2 and y is an F_2, is not that $x \neq y$, but that x and y lack a certain relation that is necessary for being the same F_2.

FRE+ is meant to apply not only to instances of synchronic same-F-ness, but also to cases of *diachronic* same-F-ness (e.g., x at one time being the same body, or the same statue, or the same person as y at some other time). So given that FRE+ analyzes same-F-ness in terms of numerical identity, the analysis seems to presuppose an *endurantist* view of persistence, according to which, persistence over time requires numerical identity over time. Mainly for ease of exposition, I do phrase FRE+ and my discussion of it in endurantist terms. However, as shown at the end of Section 4, FRE+ is also open to perdurantists and 4-dimensionalists generally, with a rephrasing available in terms of temporal parts.

Although, for the proponent of FRE+, the question naturally arises, how can x and y not be the same F_2, or how can they differ in any other way, if $x = y$? The worry is that FRE+, and any thesis consistent with REL, conflicts with the Indiscernibility of Identicals. This worry is addressed in Section 4. As explained there, a key to avoiding logical conflict is to allow that REL-instances obtain only diachronically, with x at one time being the same F_1 but not the same F_2 as y at some other time. However, before we see in detail how FRE+ comports with the Indiscernibility of Identicals, it will help to learn more about what exactly FRE+ maintains.

One thing to get clear on is what the relation R does and does not involve. In a trivial sense, x's being identical with y is itself a relation that x bears to y (a relation that everything trivially bears to itself). Also, one might accept, with those who believe that there are criteria of identity, that x's being identical with y is itself due to some relation that x bears to y, e.g., a rock x at one time being identical with a rock y at some other time in virtue of x and y being spatiotemporally continuous.[12] So to better understand FRE+ and to better judge its plausibility, more needs to be said about the relation R that figures in the analysis, and with more detail about how R adds to the other three conditions mentioned.

12 As I indicated, according to FRE+ identity remains constant across Fs. This is consistent with FRE+'s allowing that there are criteria of identity that vary with the kind of thing under consideration. Among other important points about relation R in Section 3, it is shown in the latter half of the section how proponents of FRE+ can allow that an x's being (unqualifiedly) identical with a y is itself a function of how x relates to y, where the crucial relation depends on the type to which x (=y) belongs.

3 Relation *R*

Let us introduce the description 'same-*F* relational-component' and define it as follows:

A relation *R* is a **same-*F* relational-component** $=_{df}$

- For any *x* and *y*, *Rxy* is necessary for *x*'s being the same *F* as *y*, and
- for any *x* and *y*, *Fx*, *Fy*, $x = y$, and *Rxy* are jointly sufficient for *x*'s being the same *F* as *y*.

Also, let's use 'same-*F* *R*-component' to slightly abbreviate 'same-*F* relational-component'.

FRE+ entails that for any *F*, there is a same-*F* *R*-component, but the analysis leaves open what that relation might be. Proponents of FRE+ might believe that spatiotemporal continuity is an *R*-component for being the same *ship*, or they might insist that being the same ship requires some type of functional continuity. Or they might believe that the conjunctive relation of spatiotemporal continuity and functional continuity is a same-ship *R*-component, or they might think that some other relation altogether is required, conjunctive or otherwise. FRE+ advocates might (but needn't) believe that where *persons* are concerned psychological continuity is a same-*F* *R*-component, and clearly there are different options as to which brand or brands of psychological continuity might be considered essential. An intended merit of FRE+ is that it is consistent with a variety of different views about which relation serves as a same-*F* *R*-component for any *F*. One can also endorse FRE+ while being entirely undecided for some *F*s, or many *F*s, which relation should be considered a same-*F* *R*-component.

FRE+ also leaves open whether what serves as a same-*F* *R*-component is entailed by the meaning of the term '*F*'. For example, proponents of FRE+ might believe that biological continuity is a same-*F* *R*-component for *organisms* and that this fact follows from the meaning of the word 'organism'. Or they might maintain, if they wish, that while it is a necessary truth that being the same organism requires biological continuity, it is not an analytic truth.

It seems that in the case of maximally general count nouns, all it takes for *x* to be the same *F* as *y* is for there to be *x* and *y* and that $x = y$. It seems that all that's required for *x* and *y* to be the same *thing* is that there is *x* and *y* and $x = y$. A proponent of FRE+ can agree. According to FRE+, *x* is the *same thing* as *y*, if and only if there is some relation *R* such that *x* is a thing, *y* is a thing, $x = y$, and *Rxy*. But this allows that in the case of being the same thing, reference to relation *R* adds nothing to what's already entailed by the fact that *x* is a thing, *y* is a thing, and $x = y$. Suppose, for example, that in the case of being the same thing, *R* is nothing other than the identity relation. Then according to FRE+, it is true, albeit trivially

true with the last conjunct, that x is the same thing as y if and only if x is a thing, y is a thing, $x = y$, and Rxy. So proponents of FRE+ can maintain that the analysis applies to maximally general Fs by holding that a same-F R-component in the case of maximally general Fs does not involve any more than what's already secured by the fact that x is an F, y is an F, and $x = y$. Proponents of FRE+ who take this route would claim that in the case of maximally general Fs, being the same F requires no more than what FRE demands.[13]

To accept REL it's enough to believe that there are *some* types, F_1 and F_2, such that it is possible for an x and a y to be the same F_1 without being the same F_2 (even though x is an F_2 and y is an F_2). Maximally general kinds are no threat to this existential claim, although if FRE+ is true, they do seem to refute the universal counterpart of REL, i.e., the claim that for *any* types, F_1 and F_2, it is possible for an x and a y to be the same F_1 without being the same F_2 (even though x is an F_2 and y is an F_2). If the fact that there is x and y and $x = y$ is sufficient for x's being the same *thing* as y, then given FRE+ there is no type F such that x is the same F as y but a different thing, contrary to the universal claim.[14]

Recall that here we are using 'same-F R-component' (same-F relational-component) to designate a relation R such that Rxy is necessary for x's being the same F as y, and Fx, Fy, $x = y$, and Rxy are jointly sufficient for x's being the same F as y. As described two paragraphs ago, it is open to the proponent of FRE+ to maintain that where maximally general count nouns are concerned, a same-F R-component obtaining between x and y requires no more than that x is an F, y is an F, and $x = y$. A proponent of FRE+ can also maintain that this is true even in some cases where the count noun is not maximally general. For example, an FRE+ advocate could accept the following:

(i) – Necessarily, for any organism x and any organism y, $x = y$ if and only if x is biologically continuous with y,[15] and
– biological continuity is a same-organism R-component.

13 One might deny that maximally general count nouns qualify as *sortal* terms. Granted, FRE+ does not use the label 'sortal', but one might also question whether terms so general qualify as denoting any *type* or *sort*. Yet, I think that an analysis of what it is to be the same F should remain open to those who are willing to regard 'thing' as naming a type or sort (to which all belong).

14 See Rea's (2003) and Baber's (2016) discussion of the exceedingly if not maximally general term 'being'. In those essays, Rea argues against and Baber argues in favor of a relative identity solution to the paradox of the Christian Trinity.

15 One might wish to replace 'any organism x and any organism y' with 'any organism x and any y' in this first clause so that it applies to cases, if one believes there are such, in which an organism can continue to exist or has once existed without being an organism. The same point applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the identity clauses of (i′), (ii) and (ii′) that follow. (See Olson's (1997, ch. 2, §I) and Mackie's (1999, §IV) distinction between the narrow question and the broad/wide question of persistence.)

If (i) is true, then organism x being biologically continuous with organism y is exactly what is required for it to be the case that $x = y$. Also, according to (i), biological continuity is a same-organism R-component. So, given (i), there is a same-organism R-component that involves no more than what is guaranteed by the trio: x is an organism, y is an organism, and $x = y$.

One who endorses FRE+ might also accept the following:

(ii) – Necessarily, for any rock x and any rock y, $x = y$ if and only if x and y are spatiotemporally continuous, and
– spatiotemporal continuity is a same-rock R-component.

If (ii) is true, rock x's being spatiotemporally continuous with rock y is what's required for it to be the case that $x = y$. And, according to (ii), spatiotemporal continuity is a same-rock R-component. So, given (ii), there is a same-rock R-component that involves nothing more than what is guaranteed by the fact that x is a rock, y is a rock, and $x = y$.

This is not to say that a proponent of FRE+ should endorse (i) or (ii). The examples are used to illustrate that a proponent of the analysis might (but needn't) hold that even for some non-maximally general Fs, a same-F R-component's obtaining between x and y requires no more than that x is an F, y is an F, and $x = y$. A proponent of FRE+ is free to reject (i) and (ii) and offer other examples to illustrate the point.

Suppose that (i) is true. Then given FRE+ the following is not possible: x is an organism, y is an organism, and x is the same person as y but not the same organism. For if x is the same person as y, then according to FRE+, $x = y$. If it's also true that x is an organism and y is an organism, then it follows, given (i), that x is the same organism as y. Granted, being the same organism requires biological continuity according to (i), but given (i) biological continuity is assured by the fact that organism x = organism y. Also, if (ii) is true, then according to FRE+ the following cannot obtain: x is a rock, y is a rock, and x is the same statue as y but not the same rock. For FRE+ entails that if x is the same statue as y, then $x = y$. If it's also true that x is a rock and y is a rock, then it follows, given (ii), that x is the same rock as y (with the spatiotemporal continuity that (ii) regards as necessary for being the same rock assured by the fact that rock x = rock y).[16]

16 So if FRE+ is true, then with (i) and (ii) we have a different type of counterexample to the universal variant of REL (different from the case of maximally general categories). Another, and more obvious, type of counterexample to the universal variant of REL is a case in which F_1 is not maximally general and is a subcategory of F_2. As Baber notes, "[i]t is surely not possible for x and y to be the same dog but not the same animal at least not in English or in orthodox biological theory" (2015, p. 164).

However, an FRE+ advocate who accepts (i) and (ii) can still allow REL-instances in the case of organisms and rocks. It is consistent with (i) that

(i′) – For any person x and any person y, it is possible that $x = y$ in the absence of psychological continuity, but
– psychological continuity is a same-person R-component.

According to (i′), for x and y to be the same person, psychological continuity is required (and the proponent of (i′) might insist on some specific brand of psychological continuity). However, if (i′) is true, then person x can persist and be identical with a person y at a later time without being psychologically continuous with y. So, according to (i′), there is a same-person R-component that requires more than what is guaranteed by the fact that x is a person, y is a person, and $x = y$. And recall that according to (i), organism x's being biologically continuous with organism y is enough to make it the case that $x = y$. Biological continuity, it seems, does not entail psychological continuity. So it seems that if (i) and (i′) are true, then given FRE+ it is possible for x to be a person, y to be a person, and x and y to be the same organism without being the same person.

Also, it is consistent with (ii) that

(ii′) – For any statue x and any statue y, it is possible that $x = y$ without having retained a similar shape, but
– being similar in shape is a same-statue R-component.

Having a similar shape is required to be the same statue, according to (ii′). But if (ii′) is true, then a statue x can persist and be identical with a statue y at a later time without being similar in shape. So, according to (ii′), there is a same-statue R-component that requires more than what is secured by the fact that x is a statue, y is a statue, and $x = y$. Also, recall that according to (ii), rock x's being spatiotemporally continuous with rock y ensures that $x = y$. Spatiotemporal continuity does not guarantee having the same shape. So if (ii′) is true as well as (ii), then given FRE+, it is possible for x to be a statue, y to be a statue, and x and y to be the same rock but not the same statue. Of course, these are just examples of how REL can be true given FRE+. A proponent of FRE+ might disagree with these examples and believe that others better illustrate REL.

As used here, 'REL' is short for 'Relative Sameness', and FRE+ certainly does allow for a type of relativity of sameness, by allowing that x can be the same F_1 as y but a different F_2. However, it is important to note that, like FRE, the only identity mentioned in the analysis is absolute identity. When x and y are the same F_1s but different F_2s, that is *not* because x and y are identical in one respect, but not identical in another respect. On FRE+, x's being the same F_1 as y requires that $x = y$, period. With FRE+, what makes it the case that x is not the same F_2 as y (although x is an

F_2 and y is an F_2) is not that in some respect $x \neq y$, but that x and y lack a certain relation, other than identity, that is necessary for being the same F_2.

I would like to further explain what FRE+ entails and what it does not entail, with more detail about how the analysis logically relates to FRE. But let us first address a concern that should be postponed no longer – the potential conflict with the Indiscernibility of Identicals.

4 FRE+, REL, and the Indiscernibility of Identicals

Let's abbreviate 'the Indiscernibility of Identicals' with 'LL'. ('LL', obviously, is short for 'Leibniz's Law', but to be clear 'LL' is used here to designate only the Indiscernibility of Identicals, not the Identity of Indiscernibles.) Wiggins rejects the "*relativisation thesis*" (which he labels 'R'), here rephrased as REL, arguing that the thesis conflicts with LL. Wiggins's (1967) reasoning is roughly as follows. Suppose that x is the same F_1 as y. Suppose also that same-F-ness is an identity relation. Then, given LL, whatever is true of x is true of y, and vice versa. So suppose that x is an F_2. By the reflexivity of the same F relation, x is the same F_2 as x. Given LL, it follows that x is the same F_2 as y. So, it seems, if x is the same F_1 as y, and same-F-ness entails identity, then given LL, x is the same F_2 as y. Simply put: How can it be that $x = y$ if x and y are different Fs, or differ in any other way, given LL? In Deutsch's words, "If x and y are strictly identical, then x and y cannot be two different students or two different *anything*" (1998, p. 194).[17]

With FRE+ I believe we can consistently accept REL without forfeiting LL.[18] To see that conflict with LL can be avoided with FRE+, let us first note that, as generally agreed, an object can continue to exist, remaining the same object, while changing properties. There is, of course, the question of how something's remaining the same over time while undergoing change is consistent with LL, and there are familiar strategies for explaining how surviving change accords with LL. There is the strategy of endorsing 4-dimensionalism and insisting that what has different properties is not the numerically same object, but different temporal parts of the same more temporally extended thing. With perdurantism and 4-dimensionalism generally, conflict with LL is avoided by claiming that diachronic sameness is not the numerical identity of an item at one time with the item at some other time but

17 Deutsch raises this question when discussing Gupta's (1980) account of relative identity. On Gupta's view, x's being the same F as y entails that x is strictly identical with y in the case of some count nouns, but not in the case of all count nouns.

18 And 'without forfeiting LL' includes not resorting to a restricted form of LL that some advocates of relative identity propose. See, for example, Griffin (1979, p. 140); Odegard (1972, p. 36); Zemach (1974, p. 217); and Deutsch (1998, pp. 182, 186).

is instead a matter of having different temporal parts suitably related. However, even endurantists who believe that an object persists by being numerically identical over time can allow that an object's persisting through change is consistent with LL. There is the strategy of viewing properties as temporally indexed and insisting that the object has the same time-indexed properties throughout its career. Or one might instead, or in addition, endorse presentism while taking tense seriously, thereby insisting that the only properties of an object are those it *has*, and it is never the case that it *has* some property *P* and *has* not-*P*. Since endurantism is the historically mainstream view of persistence, it is widely held, and generally viewed as consistent with LL, that (a) an object can remain the same (numerically identical) over time while changing properties.

In addition to and because of (a), it is also true that (b) an object at one time can fail to bear a certain relation to itself (the numerically same thing) at some other time. An item at time *t* can differ in size from the way it is at some other time t^*, thereby failing to bear at *t* the same-size relation to itself at t^*. An individual can undergo psychological changes from time *t* to time t^*, thereby failing to bear at *t* the psychological-sameness relation to itself at t^*. Given that (a) is consistent with LL, so is (b); if LL allows that something can remain the same over time while changing properties, then LL allows that something at one time can fail to bear a certain relation to itself at some other time.

It is also true, of course, that (c) any object at one time can bear a certain relation to itself at another time. Something at one time can bear the same-size relation to itself at some other time, or it can at one time bear the psychological continuity relation to itself at some other time. And (c) clearly does not conflict with LL since instances of (c) involve properties being the same over time, not different. Given that (b) and (c) are consistent with LL, not only individually but jointly, it is consistent with LL that the following type of scenario obtains: an object at one time bears a certain relation to itself at a different time without bearing some other relation to itself at the latter time. The possibility of scenarios of this sort is all that's needed given FRE+ to generate possible instances of REL. With FRE+ the following is possible: *x* at time *t* is related to itself at t^* in a way that makes it the same F_1, and yet *x* at *t* is not related to itself at t^* in a way that is necessary for being the same F_2 (even though *x* is an F_2 at *t* and at t^*). Since the truth of (b) and (c) is all that's needed given FRE+ to generate possible instances of REL, and (b) and (c) are compatible with LL, FRE+ allows the truth of REL without conflict with LL.

But recall the reasoning expressed at the start of this section purporting to show that REL conflicts with LL. To repeat: Suppose that *x* is the same F_1 as *y*. Suppose also that same-*F*-ness entails identity. Then, given LL, whatever is true of *x* is true of *y*, and vice versa. So suppose that *x* is an F_2. By reflexivity, *x* is the same F_2 as *x*. Given LL, it follows that *x* is the same F_2 as *y*. With this way of putting it, there is no

focus on differences in time. It is true, time differences aside, that for any relation R, the reflexivity of R entails that for any item x, x bears R to x; and, time differences aside, according to LL, for any x and y, if there is any difference between x and y, then $x \neq y$. However, given that (a) an object can remain the same (numerically identical) over time while changing properties, and therefore that (b) an object at one time can fail to bear a certain relation to itself (the numerically same object) at some other time, we need to be sensitive to differences in time when applying reflexivity and LL. That a relation R is reflexive entails that for any item x and any time t, x at t bears R to x at t, which allows that x at t does not bear R to x at some other time t^*. And LL entails that if $x = y$ and x at t bears R to x at t, then x at t bears R to y at t, but this allows that x at t does not bear R to y at some other time t^*, even if $x = y$.

So suppose that being the same F entails identity (as it does with FRE+). And suppose that x at one time is the same F as y at the same time or some other time, and therefore that $x = y$. Also suppose that x is an F_2 at time t. The reflexivity of the same F relation entails that x at t is the same F_2 as x at t. Since $x = y$, it follows given LL that x at t cannot be a different F_2 from y at t. But it does not follow that x at t is not a different F_2 from y at t^*, where $t \neq t^*$ (since x at t can be a different F_2 from x at t^*, where $t \neq t^*$). So, then, if being the same F entails identity, what LL demands is the following: if x at t is the same F_1 as y at t and x is an F_2 at t, then since x at t is the same F_2 as x at t, x at t is the same F_2 as y at t. However, it is compatible with this that x at t is the same F_1 as y at t^* but a different F_2 from y at t^*, despite the fact that $x = y$, provided that $t \neq t^*$.

This means that when, and only when, the same F relation obtains or fails to obtain diachronically, there can be instances of REL that are consistent with LL. And FRE+ offers a plausible explanation of why there might be REL-instances in those cases. The explanation is that x at time t might be related to itself at t^* in a way that makes it the same F_1 without being related to itself at t^* in a way that is necessary for being the same F_2 (even though x is an F_2 at t and at t^*).

Given that the same F relation can obtain diachronically as well as synchronically, we might wish to add time indices to the formulation of FRE+.

> **FRE+**: For any type of thing F, there is a relation R such that necessarily, for any x and y, and any times t and t^*,
>
> x at t is the **same *F*** as y at t^* if and only if x is an F at t, y is an F at t^*, $x = y$, and x at t bears R to y at t^*.

The reference to x at t and y at t^* (x as it is at time t and y as it is at time t^*) is not meant to indicate any commitment to temporal parts. Like the earlier formulation, this one is endurantist friendly. Indeed, the analysis presupposes endurantism, for

even when t and t^* are different times, the analysis states that being the same F requires numerical identity despite the difference in time.

Yet, while endurantism is the historically mainstream view of persistence over time, I wish to provide an analysis of being the same F that is open to those who believe that objects persist by having different temporal parts present at different times. To be amenable to perdurantists and 4-dimensionalists generally, FRE+ may be rephrased with reference to temporal parts being parts of the same F, with hyphens included, 'x-at-t' and 'y-at-t^*', to make clear that temporal parts are being designated, and with '$x = y$' replaced by 'x-at-$t = y$-at-t^* when $t = t^*$'. That is,

> For any type of thing F, there is a relation R such that necessarily, for any times t and t^*, and any temporal parts x-at-t and y-at-t^*,
>
> x-at-t and y-at-t^* are temporal parts of the same F if and only if x-at-t is an F, y-at-t^* is an F, x-at-t bears R to y-at-t^*, and x-at-$t = y$-at-t^* when $t = t^*$.

Proponents of this formulation who are attracted to REL would accept the temporal parts version of REL, according to which, there are possible cases in which x-at-t and y-at-t^* are temporal parts of the same F_1 but temporal parts of different F_2s. If the REL-instances are restricted to diachronic cases, where $t \neq t^*$, then x-at-t and y-at-t^* are different temporal parts, and so their differences are not even a potential threat to LL. However, as explained above, when it comes to diachronic instances of REL, conflict with LL is also avoided with the endurantist formulation of FRE+.

With concerns about clashing with LL hopefully eased, let's now have more detail about what FRE+ does and does not entail and how it logically relates to FRE. For the remainder, I resume the endurantist way of talking about persistence through time, and for simplicity I also avoid reference to time unless it matters to the points made.

5 FRE+ vs. FRE, and the Neutrality of FRE+

At the start of Section 3, the following definition was introduced:

A relation R is a **same-*F* relational-component** $=_{\text{df}}$

- For any x and y, Rxy is necessary for x's being the same F as y, and
- for any x and y, Fx, Fy, $x = y$, and Rxy are jointly sufficient for x's being the same F as y.

And 'same-F R-component' was used to slightly abbreviate 'same-F relational-component'. Now let's describe a same-F R-component as *robust* just in case the trio Fx, Fy, and $x = y$ does not guarantee that x bears R to y. If a same-F R-component is robust, then Fx, Fy, and $x = y$ are not jointly sufficient for x's being the same F as

y. *Rxy* in that case is an additional ingredient needed to ensure that *x* is the same *F* as *y*. For example, if position (i) described in Section 3 is true, then biological continuity is a same-organism *R*-component, but not a robust one, since according to (i), organism *x*'s being biologically continuous with organism *y* is necessary for it to be the case that $x = y$. However, according to (i′) described in Section 3, psychological continuity is a same-person *R*-component, and it is a robust one, since according to (i′), the fact that *x* is a person, *y* is a person, and $x = y$ does not guarantee that *x* and *y* are psychologically continuous. This is not to say that (i) and (i′) are true, but that if they are true, then psychological continuity is a *robust* same-person *R*-component, and biological continuity is a *non-robust* same-organism *R*-component.

An advocate of FRE could endorse FRE+ by insisting that for any type of thing *F* there is a same-*F R*-component, as FRE+ entails, but never a robust one, i.e., maintaining that the relation *R* mentioned in the formulation of FRE+ involves, for any type of thing *F*, no more than what is guaranteed by the fact that *Fx*, *Fy*, and $x = y$. Not only is FRE compatible with FRE+, it entails FRE+. If FRE is true, then for any *F*, there is a relation *R* such that necessarily, *x* is the same *F* as *y* if and only if *Fx*, *Fy*, $x = y$, and *Rxy*. It's just that in each case *R* is a non-robust same-*F R*-component, if FRE is true. That *R*-component might be none other than the identity relation. Or consider the non-robust relation of *sharing-F-with* (where the sharing-*F*-with relation is reflexive), which trivially holds between *x* and *y* if *Fx* and *Fy*.

Unlike FRE, FRE+ does not entail that for any type of thing *F*, *Fx*, *Fy*, and $x = y$ are sufficient for being the same *F*, since unlike FRE, FRE+ allows that for some (and even many or all) *F*s, there is a robust same-*F R*-component, i.e., a relation required for being the same *F* that is not guaranteed by *Fx*, *Fy*, and $x = y$. For example, it is open to the FRE+ advocate to hold that while *x* is a statue, *y* is a statue, and $x = y$, *x* and *y* are not the same statue because *x* and *y* are not similar in shape. The following case is also consistent with FRE+: *x* is a ship, *y* is a ship, and $x = y$, but *x* is not the same ship as *y* because some sort of functional continuity is lacking. Proponents of FRE+ could also maintain, if they wish, that while *x* is a person, *y* is a person, and $x = y$, *x* and *y* are not the same person due to a lack of psychological continuity. Since FRE+ allows that for at least some *F*s there is a robust same-*F R*-component, FRE+ unlike FRE is compatible with the relative sameness thesis REL.

However, as indicated in Section 4, to be compatible with LL, the REL-instances will need to be diachronic – for example, *x* at one time not being the same person as *y* at another time (due to lack of psychological continuity), but *x* at the former time being the same organism as *y* at the latter time (due to the presence of biological continuity). Even if psychological continuity is a robust same-person *R*-component (allowing cases in which *x* is a person, *y* is a person, and $x = y$, but *x* is not the same person as *y* due to a lack of psychological continuity), it's still the case, given LL, that *x* at *t* being the same person as *y* at the same time *t* requires no more than

that x is a person at t, y is a person at t, and $x = y$, with psychological continuity between x at t and y at the same time guaranteed to obtain if x is a person, y is a person, and $x = y$. So, to honor LL, the proponent of FRE+ needs to maintain that in synchronic cases FRE+ requires no more for being the same F than what FRE requires.

One might worry that FRE+ insists on a same-F R-component for *all* types, with no exceptions. If it were required that for all types, there is a *robust* same-F R-component, then there would be a concern. But FRE+ does not require that. A proponent of the analysis can and arguably should allow that for some Fs, there is no robust same-F R-component. An advocate of FRE+ can and probably should maintain that for maximally general kinds, there is no robust same-F R-component; as mentioned in Section 3, it does seem that if there is something x and something y and $x = y$, then it is guaranteed that x is the *same thing* as y. We also saw in Section 3 that FRE+ is open to those who maintain that there is a non-robust same-F R-component, and therefore no robust same-F R-component, even for some non-maximally general Fs.[19] So FRE+ allows (but does not require) that in the case of some types of thing, there is no robust same-F R-component, i.e., that for some Fs, Fx, Fy, and $x = y$ are jointly sufficient for x's being the same F as y. (Indeed, FRE+ allows, but certainly does not require, that in the case of *all* types, there is no robust same-F R-component. So proponents of FRE are actually committed to FRE+, the marginal brand of FRE+ in which for any type of thing F, there is no robust same-F R-component.) Also remember that FRE+ is neutral on, and thereby consistent with a variety of different views about, which Fs require a robust same-F R-component and what that relational component might be.

FRE+ is also neutral on whether *endurantism* is true. The original formulation of the analysis presupposes with the endurantist that diachronic sameness involves numerical identity, objects persisting by being numerically identical over time. However, I wish to provide an account of being the same F that is open to those who believe that objects persist by having different temporal parts present at

19 Suppose that for some type F, R is a *non-robust* same-F relational-component. Then while Rxy is necessary for x's being the same F as y, Rxy is guaranteed by the trio Fx, Fy, and $x = y$, and that trio is jointly sufficient for x's being the same F as y. In that case, there is no robust same-F R-component (for if there were, then the trio would not be jointly sufficient). For example, if biological continuity is a non-robust same-organism R-component, then the following are jointly sufficient for x's being the same organism as y: x is an organism, y is an organism, $x = y$, and x is biologically continuous with y. But x's being biologically continuous with y, if it's a non-robust same-organism R-component, is secured by the fact that x is an organism, y is an organism, and $x = y$. In that case, the trio is sufficient for x's being the same organism as y, in which case, there is no robust same-organism R-component.

different times, and as explained in Section 4, to be amenable to 4-dimensionalists, FRE+ may be rephrased in terms of temporal parts.

Since FRE+ is compatible with REL, it is compatible with an important type of sameness that deserves the label 'relative sameness', the type of relative sameness in which x is the same F_1 as y but a different F_2. It is worth noting, however, that FRE+ is compatible with there being other relations one might wish to label 'relative sameness' or 'relative identity'. For example, suppose that x and y are not numerically identical, but share many of the same properties. That seems to qualify as an important type of relative sameness/identity. (See Deutsch (1998) and Deutsch and Garbacz (2023).) Maintaining that the labels 'relative sameness' and 'relative identity' apply in that case, and perhaps others, is perfectly compatible with the account of being the same F that FRE+ provides and the instances of REL that FRE+ allows.

6 Recap

It is tempting to say in some cases that x and y are the same F_1 but not the same F_2 even though x is an F_2 and y is an F_2. It is, therefore, desirable to have an account of being the same F that is at least compatible with there being such cases, i.e., an analysis of being the same F that is consistent with REL. So FRE+ was offered. FRE+ is an analysis of being the same F that is consistent with REL, and it also offers a plausible explanation of why something would qualify as an instance of REL. The explanation, described in detail in the previous sections, is that sometimes a relation necessary for being the same F_2 fails to obtain between x and y, while no relation necessary for being the same F_1 fails to obtain between x and y.

FRE+ captures much of what one might find attractive about the Fregean analysis FRE. Each of the conditions that are necessary for being the same F according to FRE (i.e., that x is an F, y is an F, and $x = y$) are necessary for being the same F according to FRE+. FRE+ adds to those conditions in a natural and plausible way in order to accommodate REL. Being compatible with REL is to allow what might be called "relative identity." However, like FRE, the only identity relation mentioned in the analysis is absolute, non-relative identity. So a proponent of FRE+ can join the FRE advocate in denying that identity itself is relative. While FRE+ is compatible with REL, it was shown in Section 4 that one can endorse the analysis and accept REL without fear of conflict with the Indiscernibility of Identicals.

As emphasized in Section 3, FRE+ allows differing views about which relation, for any F, is best considered a same-F R-component. Also, as noted in Section 5, FRE+ is consistent with differing views about which Fs involve a *robust* same-F R-component (i.e., a relation that requires more for being the same F than that x

is an F, y is an F, and $x = y$). So FRE+ is consistent with different opinions regarding which cases are genuine instances of REL. The goal of the analysis is to show how one can allow REL-instances regardless of one's stance on which Fs involve a robust same-F R-component, and what that relation is. FRE+ is neutral as well on whether there even are any possible REL-instances; it allows but does not entail that there are possible cases in which x is the same F_1 as y but a different F_2. So FRE+ is actually compatible with FRE. Indeed, FRE entails the marginal brand of FRE+ where for any type of thing F, there is no robust same-F R-component (i.e., none that requires more for being the same F than what FRE requires). So proponents of FRE are actually committed to FRE+; anyone who endorses the former thereby endorses the latter. Yet, proponents of FRE+ need not accept FRE, and proponents of FRE+ who accept REL will reject FRE, believing that for at least some Fs, there is a robust same-F R-component.

By being compatible with REL, FRE+ allows what is clearly a type of relative sameness – being the same F_1 but not the same F_2. However, it is consistent with FRE+ that there might be other relations that deserve the label 'relative sameness'. Also, as explained in Section 4, there is a rephrasing of the analysis in terms of temporal parts, for those with 4-dimensionalist leanings. Overall, FRE+ is intended to be a plausible account of what it is to be the same F, an account that is compatible with REL, and one that can be accepted by the widest range of theorists who endorse absolute identity.

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