

Why Does Something Exist? The Primacy of Identity

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Abstract: *This paper begins with a (surprisingly) radical interpretation of the law of identity as an assertion of the existence of identity, of self-sameness, and a brief discussion on the axiom's relation to humanity's claim to knowledge. From the recognition of the existence of self-sameness, it follows that, as all A is A, everything else that exists is reducible to identity. Self-sameness is the distilled essence of everything. Identity is the only primary; it is the causeless first cause. The paper then explores the implications of this concept as a solution to the central and fundamental metaphysical issue, "the question of existence," and examines the implications of this idea in the pursuit of an ultimate theory of the physical universe, the quest for a Theory of Everything.*

Keywords: Identity; Existence; Metaphysics; ToE; Causation; Axiom

Introduction

The First Principle

It is an incontrovertible truth that all A is A. Things are what they are. Everything (else) that exists must possess self-sameness. This, the law of identity, is the most basic axiom. An axiom is a self-evident truth (i.e., it proves itself). Axioms are also sometimes referred to as necessary truths because it is rationally inconceivable that they could be false. (Mates 1986)

Knowledge in the absolute sense is truth held with justifiable certainty. However sophisticated one's information about existence, without this ground of absolute certainty that can only be provided by the axiom, one's grip on reality is tenuous. The present state of humanity and the condition of the collective human mind are stunningly and disturbingly illustrative of this. Knowledge can only be achieved by recognizing the immutability of the axiom and the existence of identity.



In addition to being the first principle of reason and the only true foundation of knowledge, the law of identity is a description of something that exists; the axiom is ontological. Necessary truth asserts the existence of identity. Since all A is A and this asserts the existence of identity, all other things that exist are, in principle, reducible (i.e., can be mentally subdivided down) to identity, and identity is a prerequisite for the existence of all else (i.e., it is the first cause). Identity is the only primary thing; it is the only given. This thesis is referred to as the primacy of identity.

The axiom proves itself. Contrary to the claim that extrinsic facts somehow support the axiom, that we know that A is A because we observe the structure of reality, the proof of the axiom is intrinsic. If this is not acknowledged, it can never be extrinsically proven.

There are an incalculable number of necessary truths, but there is only one basic axiom, the law of identity. Many commonsense assumptions are thought to be necessary truths but may, in fact, not be true at all. The failure to distinguish between self-evident truth and commonsense assumptions has contributed to the erosion of man's intellectual confidence, while, conversely, his worldview has become more sophisticated. The axiom is not an assumption, but when widely held commonsense assumptions turn out to be false, as they often have, the axiom is seen to have fallen.

Self-evidence declares identity. Any axiom, if indeed it is a true axiom, is such because it asserts identity. This is the monistic view of axioms. The law of non-contradiction simply states the law of identity in the negative. It states that there can be no non-identity. A contradiction is the assertion of non-identity. The most basic example of a contradiction may be expressed as A is not A. It is by no means trivial to point out that this is also a basic example of a lie. It is, therefore, poetic irony when the critics of non-contradiction fall back on a childish puzzle fittingly called the liar's paradox. (The key to liberation from this conundrum is understanding and cognizance of meaning, assertion, and truth.)

Objectivity is rooted in the fact that the axiom is the supreme law of existence. The first principle can provide us with a simple, provable concept of objective reality. The objectivity of reality simply means that things, primarily, are what they are. Things may or may not concur with what one thinks they are, and certainly do not always agree with what one hopes they are, but always, things are what they are. Even the existence of subjectivity is objective. While they may not represent the exercise of objective reasoning, one's thoughts, hopes, or prejudices are part of reality and possess identity. Whatever effect they may have on other parts of reality, the existence of subjectivity and its consequences can only be so because they concur with the primary objective fact of the existence of identity.

It is also significant to note that when the metaphysical philosopher embraces the axiom as the supreme law of existence, this constitutes a fundamental epistemological claim to knowledge. The absolute ground of existence and knowledge is discovered together, and the fact that one is discovering both must be recognized. It is not enough for the axiom to be regarded as a principle of reason. It must be recognized as a metaphysical truth; it must be acknowledged as ontological, or it is not meaningful as a principle of reason. As the law of Identity is a principle



of metaphysics, though treated like an abused and unwelcome stepchild, human reason could be correctly described as applied metaphysics.

It is the function of philosophy to formally and explicitly formulate the axiom and recognize its significance and meaning. Historically, philosophy has failed, and humanity is offered mindless indulgence and mystic fantasy as the only alternatives to unfulfilled intellectual effectiveness and potency. This has constituted the most appalling and catastrophic failure in human history and experience.

At least, nonetheless, a latent, implicit acknowledgment is and must be present for humans to think. Necessary truth is implicit in any rational assessment of perceptual information. This implicit common sense has never been completely transformed into knowledge. Unable to achieve its proper status, this common sense, loathed and attacked, can only depreciate and decline. This can be seen in the horrendous intellectual environment, especially in a social or political atmosphere or controversy.

The law of identity is the most basic premise of reason, without which no reasoning is possible. (Sion 2008) This modest, unassuming, but certain truth elevates man's notions about the world to the lofty status of knowledge (i.e., truth held with justifiable certainty). Without the scrutiny of the axiom, all notions become equally arbitrary. This first principle ultimately validates all our knowledge, even first-hand perceptions. The profound importance of the axiom's relationship to knowledge is stated in metaphoric eloquence with the expression: "The buck stops here." The axiom must be uncompromisingly acknowledged as an all-inclusive, immutable absolute to supply an unwavering foundation for knowledge or even justified opinion. The ultimate implication of just one adulterous fling with absurdity is the abdication of any legitimate claim to knowledge. Even the concept of truth itself is obliterated when the identity principle is betrayed. If one imagined a fantasy domain of non-identity, logic, and mathematics would be nothing but mind games with completely arbitrary rules, but also, seeing would by no means justify believing. When embracing the delusion of embellished contradictions, often peddled as limitless possibilities, one possibility that must be surrendered is knowledge.

The foundation of man's greatest achievements and the accomplishments of Western culture is the first principle and identity philosophy (i.e., philosophy which acknowledges the axiom as absolute truth and profoundly important). Without this foundation, man's potential is limited. It is no coincidence that one directly precedes the other in history. Apparently, a more explicit identity philosophy emerged from implicit commonsense that was temporarily liberated from religious superstition. The most influential proponent of identity philosophy was, of course, Aristotle.

Mysticism is the deliberate embracing of contradiction. In an epistemological context, it is the notion that something other than the axiom can serve as the basis of knowledge. It is an attempt to exclude some notions from the scrutiny of the principle of self-sameness. Mysticism is the antithesis of identity philosophy. Even though the influence of identity philosophy has been



relatively brief and latent, weighed against the domination of mysticism, its effects have been profound. From identity philosophy sprang forth the creation and exercise of logic, mathematics, scientific method, technology, and the ideology of freedom. These are the greatest of Western values, and, predictably, misology and hatred of Western culture are intimately connected.

Will the loftiness of such achievements make it less likely that we are willing to return to the existence of the primitive, the brute, and the mystic, even if it means casting aside cherished vices? Or, similar to a building that lacks a sound foundation, does the very height of our achievement make the structure all the more precarious? Where will the "buck" stop when the theoretical promissory notes of reason must "float" against the currencies of irrationality, the most base of human emotions, in the blood-drenched financial market of history? It is, forebodingly, those same figures, the primitive, the brute, and the mystic, that are now idealized by the most conforming, feeble-minded, and self-loathing among our youth. If what remains of identity philosophy is lost, the grand structure of this culture will collapse because the rational beings it was constructed by and for will be gone.

It is with the reminiscence of class hatred that enemies of reason speak of the immutable status of the axiom, of necessary truth. But it is what makes human reason possible. Identity, the axiom, and the logical truth that asserts it is the only possible foundation of reason, and reason is the only sound basis for the advocacy of a free society. It is because man is a rational being and reason is competent and potent that a free society is appropriate for man. Reason does not function in an atmosphere of force and coercion. If man's claim to knowledge falls, however, so does his claim to freedom.

The law of identity, and the axioms and logical truths that mirror this first principle, are the true source of our "empowerment."

Identity as the Primary Part

Today, with ambiguous "logic" serving as blinders, abstinence from serious metaphysical inquiry is practiced with religious commitment (Ayer 1936). When most of what is regarded as philosophy consists of a cynical critique of the conceptual faculty and trivial examination of "language" detached from reality, it is necessary to point out very explicitly that the primacy of identity is an idea that pertains to metaphysics.

Epistemologically speaking, existence, not identity, comes first in the formation of concepts; (i.e., "a thing" comes before "a thing is itself"). However, this epistemological fact is not a valid argument against the primacy of identity. Such a contention is the equivalent of deciding that since we are aware that we can see before we are aware that we have eyes, then we have eyes because we can see.

The order of our awareness is not relevant to the fact that we can see because we have eyes, nor is it pertinent to the primacy of identity.



Only a mind divorced from reason will fail to acknowledge that the law of identity must be universally true and all-embracing (i.e., all A is A). This fact is not a meaningless truth. The notion that the axiom states nothing of a thing is false and shallow. The axiom states nothing of a thing that can distinguish it from another because what it states of a thing is true of all things. What is stated is metaphysical. Among the historical tragedies of philosophy is the failure to recognize that meaningless truth (i.e., truth with no reference to reality) is a contradiction. Perceptions and ideas are true in the respect that they agree with the parts of reality they refer to. Meaning, (i.e., reference to reality, to things) is a prerequisite for truth. However, the concept of identity asserted here differs from the conventional meaning.

According to the prevalent interpretation, A is the identity of A. A thing's identity is all those things that constitute its objective reality. According to this view, the concepts of existence and identity are synonymous. Existence and identity, however, are not synonymous. Existence refers to the totality of everything. Identity is the most basic part of this totality, but other things exist besides identity. In the view defined in this thesis, A is the existence of A, but its identity is that basic part of its existence described by the law of identity, i.e., described by the statement A is A. This idea holds simply that identity is an existent thing, that the law of identity describes the most basic thing that exists.

Newton's law of universal gravitation describes something that exists: gravitation. Whether it is warped space, gravitons, or something else, his law nonetheless refers to something that exists, and so does the law of identity. However, while Newton's theory may be a flawed description of something complex and conditional, the law of identity is a perfect description of something simple and unconditional.

The axiom, A is A, does not describe or prove A. It describes and proves identity. It is undeniably true that unicorns are unicorns, but yet, there are no unicorns. The statement, nevertheless, is in some profoundly important way in agreement with reality; it tells us something about the world (i.e., it describes and proves the existence of self-sameness).

Identity does not exist because other things exist, much like a coat of paint applied over a house. This is not a good analogy for the primacy of identity. Identity is not an afterthought. It is not a result of the things that possess it. This puts the cart hopelessly before the horse. The things that possess it are ultimately a result of identity.

Referring back to the house, a better analogy would be to compare identity to the atoms that comprise the house. One could strip away the paint, yet you still would have a house. If, on the other hand, you took away the paint or removed a door or window, whatever parts you took away, the house would still contain atoms, and the parts you removed would also contain atoms.



As all A is A, identity is even more fundamental and all-inclusive than atoms. Its removal is rationally inconceivable. Since all other parts of existence are reducible to identity, identity must constitute the most basic part.

Matter, regardless of how small, is multifaceted. It possesses extension. The great metaphysical philosopher, G.W. Leibniz (1712), brilliantly reasoned that physical objects must be, in principle, reducible to something more fundamental than matter.

While there may seem to be a significant parallel between the monadology of Leibniz and the primacy of identity, even the metaphysical points of Leibniz and the points of reference in space/time hypothesized by modern physics are overstatements of the most basic thing that exists. The most fundamental constituent of existence is more fundamental than the monads hypothesized by Leibniz or the point particles of theoretical physics. Identity is more fundamental than anything tangible. It cannot be further reduced, for identity is a prerequisite for all else.

If one resists the temptation to imagine identity as an utterly immense number of fundamental points, it is not necessary to conceive of it as existing in plural quantities at all. From the singularity of identity, it would follow that all the other things that exist are not just reducible to the same type of fundamental substance, but rather, are ultimately reducible to the same monistic part. The idea that seemingly separate objects share the same single primary part runs contrary to a commonsense understanding of what constitutes a piece or component of a greater whole. Nevertheless, it does not counter the all-embracing and monistic quality of identity. Self-sameness, more fundamental than anything tangible, is the distilled essence of everything else that exists.

Identity as the First Cause

Just as the law of identity is a necessary truth containing within itself its proof, identity is a necessary existent thing that requires no cause. It must exist; it cannot be absent. Identity must be everywhere in everything. Its absence would contradict the necessary truth. Once identity is seen as an existent part, it can be seen as the causeless first cause. Since everything must possess identity, everything is contingent on the existence of identity. Identity must be first in the order of contingency. It is the only causeless cause from which all other things derive their contingent existence. Fundamentally, identity is causation.

All axioms and all logical truths assert self-sameness. Fundamentally, it is all they assert and all they account for. Identity is the only thing that exists from axiomatic necessity. To assert anything but identity as a first cause is to assert that thing as not possessing identity and to violate the axiom. Nothing that identity does not cause can exist because there would be no basis for its existence. There can be no causeless effect, nor any inexplicable first cause. There are no things in all the vastness of reality that have been conjured. This simple, but imposing,



logic stands in contraposition with such notions as indeterminism and the prevailing metaphysical interpretation of quantum-level uncertainty.

The primacy of identity is not an affirmation of all the classic assumptions made about causality (e.g., the assumption that all causes precede the effect in time). There are many questions regarding causality, which may remain open. In a complex, commingled world, as well as contingent lineage, there exists a fundamentally reciprocal relationship. In such a dependency, a thing may exist only because of the presence of another and vice versa. The existence of one, nonetheless, is not derived from the other in the respect that one is not more basic than the other.

Understanding the monistic nature of what the axiom asserts and accounts for makes it clear that identity is the only thing that exists from axiomatic necessity and is a prerequisite for the existence of everything else. Within the context of the primacy of identity, this is what is meant by the term "first cause." As such, it provides a simple explanation of causality at its most fundamental causeless beginning. It also demonstrates that true causality is metaphysical and not a creation of the mind.

Everything that identity causes must exist, for its absence would contradict identity. Identity's existence is causeless but not independent of other things. The complex, diverse world owes its existence to this fact.

Note that identity can only be expressed as part of the greater whole. It is rationally inconceivable that identity can be anything but a reliant part. Identity is reliant in the respect that a cause is reliant on its effect because the absence of the consequence would deny the cause. This does not contradict identity's status as first in the order of contingency. It is a fundamental explanation of why identity is a cause.

Explanation of Everything

The axiom states something about existence, specifically the existence of self-sameness, of identity. Once the axiom is acknowledged as ontological, the rest of the primacy thesis becomes simple and inescapable logic. Given its absence in the history of philosophy, it is a surprisingly easily comprehended and "bulletproof" idea. Someday, perhaps, in a more enlightened, rational age, it will be taught to children as part of their primary education.

The apple does not fall from the tree because of the law of universal gravitation; it falls because of the existence of gravity. Laws are human assertions, which one hopes to describe, and perhaps explain correctly, the factors they refer to. These products of human consciousness can't create a universe. The primacy of identity holds that the universe was created by the most fundamental causeless factor, self-sameness, the existence of which is asserted by the law of identity. Any true explanation, any ToE, any fundamental accounting, Dunkley (2024), of the physical universe must start with this. Scientific efforts at an all-encompassing master theory without this foundation are doomed to fail (Sarah Scoles 2023).



The primacy of identity explains existence at its most fundamental level (Lange 2013). It answers the most basic (Brenner 2022) and valid metaphysical question: 'What is the given?' Apparently, this inquiry begot philosophy, or certainly Western philosophy. It was the central concern of pre-Socratic philosophy.

This, the question of existence, more ambitiously formulated as "Why does something exist?" is the central and rudimentary question of metaphysical cosmology (Heidegger 1959). While it has been claimed that such metaphysical questions are meaningless or beyond human reason, the primacy of identity is the ultimate validation of this question by providing a rational and comprehensible answer. Most other historical attempts to deal with this question and explain the world from some primary source did not constitute a true metaphysical theory derived from a metaphysical premise. They were, at best, speculative natural philosophy based on what proved to be quite limited information. Other metaphysical cosmologies, such as those found in religion, are not based on anything factual at all. While contemporary thinking may consider all metaphysical cosmology impossible or meaningless, the identist concept of identity can make such thinking obsolete, as Thales' primacy of water.

Existence is not a part or characteristic. There is no such thing as beingness. Existence (and things that exist) cannot be added to or subtracted from; existence is unchanging. Such concepts as non-existence or unreal have no valid metaphysical meaning. They only refer to notions that are out of sync with, and do not correspond with, existence, such as what is implied by the statement, "dragons are unreal". There can be nothing outside of existence. It is a necessary truth that existence is an all-inclusive totality. The totality of existence cannot be derived from something apart from that totality. This thesis is not an attempt to explain existence from non-existence. The primacy of identity recognizes that identity is the most basic foundational part of existence and establishes that it must be first in the order of contingency. It explains the ultimate origin of all contingent things that exist. It recognizes that identity must be the only causeless non-contingent part of reality.

Because identity is conceivable only as the primary part of a greater whole, the primacy of identity provides us with a deep and meaningful explanation of why such things as causality and time exist. It gives reason as to why a world exists with contingent effects and implies multi-faceted extension, two essential components of physical dimensions (i.e., spacetime). Causality (i.e., the order of contingency) refers to the hierarchical structure of existence. Its most basic foundation is identity. The totality of reality, this contingency order, is finite, yet unchanging and eternal.

The question emerges as to the link between this metaphysical foundation, identity, and the physical reality we perceive and experience. An answer may be derived from the reductionist reasoning that establishes identity as primary. As stated earlier, the metaphysical philosopher, Leibniz, reasoned that material objects are, in principle, reducible to dimensionless fundamental objects or point particles. Such dimensionless objects exist in relative positions in spacetime. Spacetime references the physical dimensions of relative position. Such objects



would be no more than points of reference in spacetime. Neither these fundamental objects nor spacetime is conceivable without the other. They exist in mutual causation. Dimensionless objects and relative positions are intrinsically featureless. The only intrinsic part they possess is self-sameness. This self-sameness is only achieved extrinsically. They achieve a specific relation to the whole. They achieve specificity. Specificity is identity understood as the primary part of all other parts. From this reductionism, it follows that extensionless objects in relative position are the link between the physical universe and its metaphysical foundation. If these monistic fundamental objects and spacetime are uniquely basic, it would indicate that the other features of the physical universe would follow from these constituents (Dunkley 2024).

The most intriguing and challenging implication of the primacy of identity is that the basic characteristics of the physical universe must ultimately be explainable from the first principle (i.e., an elucidation and detailed account of how identity caused the existence of the physical universe). While the emergence and acknowledgment of such an explanatory theory is yet to be fully realized, it is a reasonable goal of science. If this ultimate natural philosophy does emerge, the primacy of identity will supply its foundation and matrix. In addition, it can also supply its inspiration, because such a metaphysical view explicitly affirms an orderly, knowable, unified world. It validates the view that existence is a universe and its complexity must be reducible to simplicity.

Conclusion

The universe is not hopelessly inexplicable. The understanding of the existence of identity and its primacy constitutes a monumental argument against the mystic faith in uncertainty and those who insist that theoretical science has advanced as far as it can and will only leave us with irresolvable mysteries. The primacy of identity is a necessary conclusion derived from recognizing the meaning of the immutable axiom, the existence of identity. Once this idea is understood, there is nothing to be found in the higher esoteric mysteries of contemporary science, philosophy, or religion that can succeed in obscuring it. It might be maintained by the peddlers of perpetual uncertainty that one cannot assume that everything fits within this order because there are things in existence about which we know nothing. This is the equivalent of telling a mathematician that he is unjustified in saying that 2 plus 2 equals 4 because he has not yet counted every pair of objects in the cosmos. As a means of understanding the state of philosophy and the importance of the axiom, one might consider what would happen to mathematics if mathematicians could not accept with conviction a simple provable fact. This “open-mindedness” would make mathematics impotent and therefore worthless. Numerical computation would decline and be abandoned. The confusion, nevertheless, would not alter the value and need for the discipline.

The philosopher Aristotle (350 BCE) made a cursory reference to the absurdity of questioning identity and then proceeded to formulate the corollary principle of noncontradiction. This seems to exemplify the fact that the law of identity is so obvious that its monumental significance is ignored. The thing that law refers to, identity, fails to be acknowledged not because of its subtlety or complexity, but because of its monistic simplicity and absolute

bluntness. Nonetheless, its existence is incontrovertibly "verified" by the axiom that describes, asserts, and proves it; from this, it is clear that the rest must follow.

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