Let us begin at the end, where Adams states simply the view that, he says, he has defended in his paper: “Thisnesses and transworld identities are primitive but logically connected with suchnesses.” (25-26) This view he calls *moderate haecceitism*. Now let’s see how he gets there.

I. Thisness and Suchness

Clarification of some basic terms.

*Individual* - any particular, such as persons, physical objects, and events. Not numbers or universals.

*Thisness* (or *haecceity*) - the property of being identical with a certain particular individual. That is, “identical with c” or “=c” is a thisness possessed by at most one object, c. As Adams points out, sometimes thisnesses are called *essences*, though essences are usually thought to be, or to be composed of, qualitative properties. [Later on in the paper he defends the view that individuals that have primitive thisness also have essential
properties in the traditional sense of the term essential.]

Adams defines thisnesses as properties, but he wants this term “to carry as light a metaphysical load here as possible.” (6) Adams does not think of properties as components of individuals. Hence he does not think of thisnesses, which are properties, as components of individuals.

Then he makes a supposedly clarificatory claim. To think of thisnesses this way is not to be committed to bare particulars. He defines a bare particular to be a substratum with all its qualitative properties “subtracted”. It seems that, as he uses the terms, an individual or particular can lack all qualitative properties, but still have its thisness and so not be “bare”.

This seems to have been the view of John Duns Scotus (1266-1308), but Adams says that his view differs from Scotus in that he does not regard properties as components of individuals, as components of the things that have them. I am not sure what this means. Perhaps it is just a denial that objects are bundles of properties.

It might seem, for instance, that one could strip an individual or particular of all its qualitative
properties and be left with its thisness or
haecceity, a unique non-qualitative property. I
would think of the result of this process as yielding
a bare particular, but Adams says his view is not
necessarily committed to the possibility of bare
particulars.

A suchness is a purely qualitative property--one
that does not refer to or rely for its understanding
upon reference to any particular object or
individual.

Adams distinguishes between basic suchnesses
(like ‘x is red’ and ‘(Ey)(y is a home & x owns y)’) and non-basic suchnesses, which are constructed out of basic suchnesses by certain logical operations, like negation, disjunction, and existential quantification. (He also allows “properties” like ‘x believes that p’ and ‘x wishes that p’ to express non-basic suchnesses if p is a suchness.)

II. The Leibnizian Position

Recall Adams’ claim that Leibniz is one of the archetypal believers in a purely qualitative universe. If he admits thisnesses, then Leibnizian
thisnesses must somehow be constructed out of purely qualitative properties. How is this done?

Suppose we have a list of the basic suchnesses---$S_1, S_2, \ldots, S_n$. Then a complete concept of an individual would be a (vast) conjunction, each conjunct of which would either be a basic suchness or the negation of a basic suchness. These complete concepts pick out or are true of or define precisely one individual.

If there are an infinite number of individuals, then we need infinite conjunctions in order to have individual concepts.

Also, if the suchnesses are not all logically independent of one another, at some point you will be able to stop. Thus Adams when he says:

What makes a thing an individual, in other words, is that, in the logical construction of its concept, differentia is added [by conjunction] to differentia until a concept is reached so specific that no new content can consistently be added to it. (9)

Presumably, if one conjunct is ‘$x$ is red’ then adding another conjunct ‘$\sim (x$ is green)’ adds no new content.
A Leibnizian complete concept expresses every aspect of the history or career of an object or individual. Leibniz inferred therefore that *that individual* could not differ in any way from the way it actually is. But Adams, quite reasonably, asks: why can’t complete concepts employ disjunction as well as conjunction. So even if the actual individual concept of some individual includes ‘x is married’, there is another individual concept like the first but which contains the conjunct ‘~(x is married)’ rather than ‘x is married’. If the disjunction of the two is an individual concept, then in some possible worlds that individual is married and in others not.

This is sketch of the view that all thisnesses are really complex suchnesses.

Modern theories of direct reference (Kripke, Putnam) suggest that there are primitive nonqualitative thisnesses. But that suggestion is inconclusive. Rather,

The purely qualitative conception of individuality stands or falls... with a certain doctrine of the Identity of Indiscernibles. (11)
Suppose that individuals are distinguished purely qualitatively (for instance, as Leibniz did). Then distinct individuals must differ in some quality or other. And if individuals differ in some quality or other, it seems that they must be distinct. [Adams has a very elaborate and, to me, somewhat opaque discussion of the relation between P InId and the view that individuals are distinguished purely qualitatively, but it seems to me to boil down to the simple relation just expressed.]

III. Dispersal Arguments against the Identity of Indiscernibles.

There seems to be a very straightforward argument against P IdIn, which we will consider now as a necessary truth, as holding in all possible worlds.

The argument is that there seems to be a possible world in which it is false: a world which consists only of Max Black’s qualitatively identical iron spheres or Kant’s two qualitatively identical drops of water. This claim, if it can be sustained, obviously subverts the claim that P IdIn is true in all possible worlds, which is what the claim of necessity requires.
The reason we think there are two spheres in Black’s example is that they are “dispersed spatially”—that is, located in different places. (One could also construct putative counterexamples to PIdIn based on temporally dispersed events, like sounds.)

At this point Adams turns to Ian Hacking’s paper, but his reaction to Hacking I find very puzzling. He quotes the following from Hacking’s paper.

> Whatever God might create, we are clever enough to describe it in such a way that the identity of observables is preserved. This is a fact not about God but about description, space, time, and the laws that we ascribe to nature. (255/6)

And let’s remind ourselves of something that Hacking says at the beginning of his paper:

> This paper argues that all such spatiotemporal examples [Kant’s two water drops or Black’s two spheres] are inconclusive. Even if we consider only objects which, unlike monads, occur in space and time, there is no possible universe that must be described in a manner incompatible
with I/I. Yet this fact is no proof of I/I, for some imagined universes may be described in a way that violates the principle. (249)

But if a world may be described in a way that violates P InId, then either (i) it is a possible world that really does violate P InId, and so the principle is not a necessary truth, or (ii) the world so described is not a possible world at all but rather an impossible one. But if the only ground for believing this is that the world violates P InId, then one is simply stipulating that it is a logical truth.

Hacking thinks that P IdIn is not a truth in worlds, but a truth about worlds. Perhaps he thinks it’s some sort of rule one might obey in constructing possible worlds, and so something not evaluated as true or false at all. But why not? The principle could always be evaluated in a world according to the usual semantics for second-order quantifier logic.

In conjunction with this idea, it is interesting to think about Hacking’s remark that “reflection on spatiotemporal examples is never enough” [to settle the status of P IdIn]. The insufficiency must trace back to a view that there is no real fact of the matter as to what the geometry of space is. This view is called (geometric) conventionalism.
IV. Arguments from the Possibility of Almost Indiscernible Twins

Here is an argument that is like the elaborate argument that Adams presents, but is simpler.

Premise 1. Let us suppose that an object, A, has properties $P_1,\ldots,P_n$.

Premise 2. Let us suppose that a second object, B, is distinct from A and has properties $P_1,\ldots,P_{n-1},\neg P_n$.

Premise 3. Suppose that $P_n$ is a contingent property of both A and B.

Premise 4. There is some possible world in which both A and B exist.

Premise 5. Changing only one contingent property of an object does not affect the identity of the object.

Conclusion 1. There is a possible world in which B acquires the property $P_n$ yet still remains distinct from A. (Follows from Premises 4 and 5)
Conclusion 2. In that possible world, A and B share all properties yet are distinct. (From premises 1-3 and conclusion 1)

Premise 6. $P_{\text{IdIn}}$ is a necessary truth.

Conclusion 3. $P_{\text{IdIn}}$, is false. (Follows from Conclusion 2 and Premise 6)

The premises all look to me to be true and the conclusion seems to me to follow from the premises.

As we have seen, Hacking would try to evade conclusion 3 by denying premise 6 and saying that $P_{\text{IdIn}}$ is not true in worlds but is true of worlds.

V. Primitive Transworld Identity

Adams’ thesis in this section: “if we accept nonqualitative thisnesses, we have a very plausible argument for primitive transworld identities.” (19)

This section addresses issue in the metaphysics of modality and is relevant only very indirectly to the issue of concern in this course.
VI. Thisness and Necessity

This section too raises questions that are very important in metaphysical investigations of necessity but only peripheral to the subject of this course.

Adams claims that even though thisnesses are nonqualitative and primitive, they must be logically connected to suchnesses.

The condition that there cannot be any purely qualitative necessary condition for the possession of a given thisness is absurd, however. It implies that you and I, for example, could have been individuals of any sort whatever--plutonium atoms, noises, football games, places, or times, if those are all individuals. (24)

Plausible as this may be, Adams offers no account of the logical connection that he supposes must exist.