

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THOMAS REID

VOL I.

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March 1996

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of The Australian National University.

Declaration

This dissertation was prepared under the supervision of Dr. Knud Haakonssen, formerly of the History of Ideas Section, Research School of Social Sciences, The Australian National University, and now at the Department of Philosophy, Boston University.

The work contained in this thesis, except where explicitly stated, is original research performed by the author under the guidance of Dr. Haakonssen. This work has not been submitted for a degree at any other university or institution.

The second volume of this thesis has been accepted for publication as a book by the Edinburgh University Press.

Deuk R. Sothos

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my profound indebtedness to Dr. Knud Haakonssen for his continual support, encouragement and academic guidance during the preparation of this dissertation.

I am deeply grateful to those who, in one way or another, have, over the years, been a source of love, friendship, humour and inspiration. In particular, I would like to thank Bill Andersen, Coralie Brookes, Robert Brown, Aidan Cahill, Sandra Dunn, Lisbeth Haakonssen, Jenny and Jonathan Ennis-King, Keith Mascord, Darlene and Mark Ferguson, Bev and Tim Forrest, Len Long, Jeremy Matson, Michael Richardson, Elizabeth Short, Andrew Sloane, and Ken Yamasaki.

My parents have, for as long as I can remember, been a model of self-sacrifice, unconditional love, and genuine humility. This dissertation is dedicated, in loving gratitude, to them.

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Sydney, Australia
March, 1996

Abstract

This dissertation is a reconstruction and analysis of Thomas Reid's epistemology, based upon an examination of his extant manuscripts and publications. I argue that, in Reid's view, there are three necessary conditions that are jointly sufficient for that degree of epistemic justification which constitutes knowledge: the agent must have a "sound understanding"; she must have a distinct conception of the object of her belief; and she must form the belief "without prejudice". By way of explicating these conditions, a wide range of Reid's philosophical views are examined. Beginning with the subject of knowledge, I present Reid's ontology of the mind and its operations. With a view to determining Reid's psychology of belief-formation and, in particular, the degree to which Reid is a voluntarist with respect to belief, I examine his account of causation, the distinction between scientific, causal and teleological explanations, the nature of moral liberty, the principles that influence or motivate voluntary action, the formation of instincts and habits, and the nature of 'self-evident' beliefs. I then examine Reid's account of the operation of judgment or belief and its objects, looking in particular at Reid's adverbialism, his account of universals, of general conceptions, his theory of meaning, and the obligations that attach to the voluntary intellectual powers. Having thus set out the relevant philosophical background, I concentrate directly on Reid's epistemology, beginning with his account of the nature of evidence and epistemic justification, and concluding with an examination of his three conditions for knowledge.

CONTENTS

Abbreviations	vi
Index of Manuscripts	vii
Introduction	xi
1 Mind	1
1 The mind-operation distinction	1
2 Knowledge of mind	2
3 Personal identity	4
4 Knowledge of personal identity	7
5 The uniqueness of mind	9
6 The internal-external distinction	10
2 Agency	12
1 Causation	12
2 Scientific explanations	17
2.1 Are explanations deductive?	20
2.2 Is the explanandum demonstrable?	21
3 Causal explanations	27
4 Teleological explanations	30
5 Voluntary action	33
6 Free action	35
7 The regress objection	36
3 Principles of Action	40
1 Inclinations	40
2 Moral liberty	42
3 Management of the animal principles	43
3.1 Moral obligation	43
3.2 Resisting animal principles	44
3.3 The obligation to resist animal principles	45
3.4 Explaining the resistance of animal principles	50
4 The proper function of animal principles	57
5 The mechanical principles	60
5.1 Instincts	60
5.2 Instinctive actions	62
5.3 Habits	62
6 Resisting mechanical principles	64

4	Judgment	69
1	Propositions	69
2	Truth-value	70
3	The act of conception	72
4	Three types of conception	75
4.1	Imagination	75
4.2	Conception of individuals	75
4.3	Universals	80
4.4	Possible worlds	82
4.5	Conception of universals	84
5	Referential theory of meaning	86
6	Voluntary intellectual operations	88
7	First principles	91
7.1	First principles as general propositions	92
7.2	Regulatory first principles	94
5	Epistemology	100
1	Evidence	100
2	Epistemic Justification	102
3	Externalism	105
4	Sound understanding	107
5	Distinct conception	112
5.1	Mere relative conceptions	112
5.2	First notions	113
5.3	Direct Realism	119
5.4	Immerwahr's interpretation	121
5.5	The role of sensations	124
6	The Prejudices	131
6.1	Self-evidence	131
6.2	Mere doxastic immediacy	132
6.3	Epistemic immediacy	134
6.4	Foundationalism	136
6.5	Doxastic instincts	138
6.6	Doxastic habits	142
6.7	Vicious doxastic habits	144
6.8	Overcoming prejudice	146
	Conclusion	147
	Appendix 1: First Principles	155
	Appendix 2: Manuscript Catalogue	157
	Works Cited	172
	Secondary Literature on Reid	176

ABBREVIATIONS

Works by Thomas Reid

- BA *A Brief Account of Aristotle's Logic*. In Lord Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, 2 vols, Edinburgh and London, 1774.
- HM *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*. Edited by Derek R. Brookes, Ph.D Dissertation (Vol. II.), Department of Philosophy, Australian National University, 1996.
- IP *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*. Edinburgh, Printed For J. Bell, Parliament Square, and G. G. J. & J. Robinson, London, 1785. (Hamilton editions include the 1785 pagination.)
- AP *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*. Edinburgh, Printed For J. Bell, Parliament Square, and G. G. J. & J. Robinson, London, 1788. (Hamilton editions include the 1788 pagination.)
- WH *The Works of Thomas Reid, D.D. with Notes and Supplementary Dissertations*, ed. W. Hamilton, 6th ed., Edinburgh, Maclachlan and Stewart, 1863, reprint Thoemmes press, 1994.
- UL "Unpublished Letters of T. Reid to Lord Kames, 1762-1782". Edited by Ian Ross, in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, VII, Spring, 1965.
- AC *Thomas Reid on the Animate Creation: Papers Relating to the Life Sciences*. Edited by Paul B. Wood, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1995.
- Orations* The Philosophical Orations of Thomas Reid delivered at Graduation Ceremonies in King's College Aberdeen, 1753, 1756, 1759, 1762. ed. D. D. Todd, trans. S. M. L. Darcus, *Philosophical Research Archives* 3 (1977): pp. 916-990.

Manuscript References

Manuscripts are identified by the MS catalogue number (e.g. 4/I/27) followed by the page or folio number (e.g. 4/I/27, 2r).

INDEX OF MANUSCRIPTS

The following index is a complete list of the manuscripts, portions of which are reproduced in this thesis. In subsequent references, the prefix '2131' for the MSS from the Birkwood Collection is not recorded. See Appendix 2 for more detail.

Aberdeen University Library Manuscripts

2131/1/I/3	2131/4/II/1	2131/8/II/5
2131/2/III/1	2131/4/II/2	2131/8/II/6
2131/2/III/8	2131/4/II/4	2131/8/II/10
2131/2/III/10	2131/4/II/12	2131/8/II/13
2131/2/III/11	2131/4/II/16	2131/8/II/16
2131/2/III/12	2131/4/II/19	2131/8/II/22
2131/3/II/3	2131/6/III/5	3107/1/3
2131/4/I/8a	2131/2/III/10	3061/1/4
2131/4/I/19	2131/6/III/6	3061/9
2131/4/I/23	2131/6/III/7	K160
2131/4/I/26	2131/7/V/16	

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THOMAS REID

Introduction

The objective of this thesis is to present an account of Reid's epistemology, in as philosophically concise and rigorous a manner as the textual evidence will permit. In the following, I provide a brief explanation as to how I intend to achieve this objective.

Reid claims that the source of Hume's scepticism was his mistaken account of the mind and its operations; and that the only adequate epistemological response would therefore be to provide an alternative, correct account.¹ The implication of this claim is that no exposition can hope to capture what Reid took to be his response to Hume's scepticism without, at the same time, exploring almost every aspect of his philosophy: his views on metaphysics, philosophy of mind, moral obligation, agency, and so on. It is this, little recognised feature of Reid's epistemology that explains the broad scope of the present thesis, and, of course, the title by which it has been adorned.

Reid is an exemplary systematizer. His work is characterised by numerous terms of art, such as 'power', 'operation', and 'instinct'. Each is given a definition or description, and, with rare exception, is thereafter used in that singular sense. This is, again, a feature of Reid's work that is often overlooked. I have thus provided, as a central feature of my exposition, a philosophical reworking or 'tidying up' of Reid's definitions (e.g. 'D₁') and analyses (e.g. 'A₁').²

Another key feature of this exposition is that it is grounded upon a revaluation and reworking of the existing category of relevant Reid manuscripts (see Appendix 2), the transcription of extensive portions of otherwise unreadable handwriting, most of which is not submitted here, and the preparation of critical editions of Reid's *Inquiry* and the *Intellectual Powers*, the former of which has been submitted as Volume II of this Ph.D. Dissertation. Given the enormity of textual material involved in this project, I have tried to assist the reader by providing, in footnotes, the key portions of text that I take to support my exposition, rather than supplying references only. Quotations presented in the main body of the thesis are, for the most part, limited to passages that require a close analysis or explanation.

¹ "as Mr Humes sceptical System is all built upon a wrong & mistaken Account of the intellectual Powers of Man, so it can onely be refuted by giving a true Account of them." MS7/V/4, 4.

² It should be noted that the definitions and analyses I present under labels such as 'D₁' are occasionally doctrines that I suggest Reid would have rejected.

It may appear from the forgoing that the focus of this thesis is predominantly historical. This is far from the truth. My primary intention is to construct a textually accurate *philosophical* exposition of Reid: that is, I am primarily interested in formulating his philosophical claims, arguments and distinctions, in exhibiting the coherence of various elements in his work, and in determining how, given the evidence available, Reid might have responded to various objections: all with as much precision and rigour as the available textual evidence will permit. In short, the aim of this thesis is not to provide a comprehensive intellectual biography of Reid, to record the nature of his academic environs, or to compare his work with either preceding philosophers or Reid's contemporaries.¹ Such information is utilized only in so far as it has been deemed necessary for philosophical purposes, for example, in clarifying an argument by identifying the view it is attempting to refute.

Finally, my philosophical defense of Reid is strictly limited to showing how, given the textual evidence, he might have responded to various objections. The philosophical labour exhibited herein should not therefore be taken to constitute an evaluation of Reid. It may or may not be possible to perform this task from the perspective of the late twentieth-century; and my exposition may or may not contribute to such an end. Whatever the case, this is not my objective here.

¹ For exemplary examples of this kind of work, see David Fate Norton, "From Moral Sense to Common Sense", Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Philosophy, University of California, 1966; Paul B. Wood, *The Aberdeen Enlightenment: The Arts Curriculum in the Eighteenth Century* (Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Press, 1993); and Paul B. Wood "Thomas Reid, Natural Philosopher: A Study of Science and Philosophy in the Scottish Enlightenment", Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Leeds, 1984.

1

Mind

INTRODUCTION

Reid claims that it is by the exertion of our intellectual powers that we may come to know the operations of our own minds and the external world. There are several key assumptions regarding the nature of mind, upon which the truth of such a claim depends. For example, what is it that stands in an epistemic relation to the world? Is it a substance we call 'mind', of which the operation of knowing is an attribute? Or is it merely the operation of knowing? Reid, as we shall see, holds the former. But this option is notoriously problematic. For example, how is it that we come to know of a mind if we are only conscious of its operations? How can there be a continuously existing subject of continuously changing operations? In this Chapter, I present Reid's response to such questions, looking in particular at his views regarding the distinction between the mind and its operations and the nature of personal identity.

1 THE MIND-OPERATION DISTINCTION

Reid holds that "every operation we are conscious of supposes an agent that operates, which we call mind".¹ The distinction Reid draws here, between the mind and its operations, is based upon the Aristotelian distinction between substance and attribute,² the definitions for which he gives as follows:

- D₁ x is a substance =_{df} (i) it is possible that x should exist by itself: that is, there is no y such that y is non-identical to x and x exists only if y exists; and (ii) x stands in the relation of 'being a subject of' to its attributes.³
- D₂ F is an attribute =_{df} it is not possible that F should exist by itself: that is, F exists only if there is some x such that x is non-identical to F and x stands in the relation of 'being a subject of' to F .⁴

Reid was not unaware of the philosophical controversy regarding this distinction. However, his approach is not to justify his adherence to the distinction by philosophical

¹ IP, p. 42.

² Reid describes Aristotle's distinction in BA, p. 317.

³ "Things which may exist by themselves, and do not necessarily suppose the existence of any thing else, are called substances; and with relation to the qualities or attributes that belong to them, they are called the subjects of such qualities or attributes." IP, p. 41.

⁴ "there are some things which cannot exist by themselves, but must be in something else to which they belong, as qualities or attributes." IP, p. 41.

argumentation; for the distinction, he suggests, is not a mere philosophical opinion, but rather a claim that has all the 'marks' of a first principle.¹ For example, (i) the distinction is reflected in all languages,² (ii) its denial leads to absurdities,³ and (iii) of any thing we perceive or of which we are conscious, it is self-evident to us that that thing must have a subject to which it belongs as an attribute.⁴ Thus, Reid advances the following as a first principle of metaphysics:

NP_{M1} The "qualities which we perceive by our senses must have a subject, which we call body, and . . . the thoughts we are conscious of must have a subject, which we call mind".⁵

2 KNOWLEDGE OF MIND

NP_{M1} implies that the *only* objects of perception and consciousness are qualities of body and operations of mind; hence, the knowledge of bodies and minds themselves could not be a deliverance of perception or consciousness. Reid therefore owes us an account of how such knowledge is otherwise obtained. To this end, he begins by distinguishing between three kinds of conception:⁶

- A₁ S has a direct conception of *x* if and only if *x* is an object of either the perception or consciousness of *S*.⁷
- A₂ S has a relative conception of *x* if and only if (i) *S* has a direct conception of *y*, and (ii) *S* conceives of *y* as bearing a relation *R* to *x*, where *Rxy* = either (a) *y* is an attribute of *x*, or (b) *y* is an effect of *x*, or (c) *y* is a relation that *x* bears to other things.⁸

¹ Reid's account of what constitutes a 'mark' of a first principle will be examined in Chapter 4, § 7.

² IP, p. 42

³ For example, Descartes' rejection of the distinction, Reid argues, led him to conclude that "the material world has no bounds nor limits", and that "the soul must have had ideas in its first formation, which, of consequence, are innate". Others, such as Hume, were led to infer that "body is only a collection of qualities to which we give one name; and that the notion of a subject of inhesion, to which those qualities belong, is only a fiction of the mind"; or again, that "the soul is only a succession of related ideas, without any subject of inhesion". IP, pp. 140-41. Along a similar vein, Reid rejects Priestley's claim that the term 'substance' is "nothing more than a help to expression, . . . but not at all to conception", that is, by arguing thus: "If the term Substance express any conception of the mind, though even an obscure conception, it must be a help to conception; and if it be no help to conception, it can express no conception clear or obscure, and then I apprehend it can be no help to expression but an incumbrance upon it, as all unmeaning words are." MS 3061/1/4, 5; in AC, p. 176.

⁴ Reid's concept of 'self-evidence' will be explained in Chapter 5, § 6.

⁵ IP, p. 444. For a complete list of Reid's first principles, see Appendix 1.

⁶ Reid uses the terms "knowledge", "notion" and "conception" interchangeably in speaking of direct and relative conceptions. But, as we shall see, they are strictly speaking, quite distinct.

⁷ More precisely, the objects of perception are primary and secondary qualities, and it is only the primary qualities of which we have a direct conception: "all the primary qualities of body . . . we have a direct and immediate knowledge from our senses. To this class belong also all the operations of mind of which we are conscious." AP, p. 9.

⁸ "A relative notion of a thing, is, strictly speaking, no notion of the thing at all, but only of some relation

- A₃ *S* has a *mere* relative conception of *x* if and only if (i) *S* has a relative conception of *x* and (ii) *S* does not have a direct conception of *x*.¹

Reid's claim, then, is that our conception of mind is *merely* relative. That is to say, (i) we have a direct conception of operations such as judgment and perception; (ii) we conceive of these operations as standing in the relation of 'being an attribute of' to a substance we call 'mind'; but (iii) we do not have a direct conception of this substance.

The crucial issue, then, is how it is that we come to know that these operations do in fact bear this relation of 'being an attribute of' to something of which we do not have a direct conception. Reid's solution is to distinguish between two ways by which we come to know of relations:

- A₄ *S* knows that *Rxy* if and only if (i) *S* has a direct conception of *x* and *y*, (ii) *S* compares *x* and *y*, and (iii) upon making the comparison, either (a) *S* immediately judges that *Rxy*, or (b) *S* constructs a sound argument, the conclusion of which is that *Rxy*.²

For example, I know that "my foot is longer than my finger" just in case (i) my foot and my finger are both objects of my perception, (ii) I compare my foot with my finger, and (iii), upon making this comparison, I immediately judge that my foot is longer than my finger. Again, I know that "the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal" just in case I have a direct conception of both the angles at the base of the triangle, and I construct a sound argument, the conclusion of which is that these angles are equal.³

Now, A₄ is immediately ruled out as the means by which we come to know of the relation between an attribute and a substance: for we do not have a direct conception of any substance. However, to conclude that substances do not exist on these grounds alone would, Reid argues, be quite unjustified. For, upon careful reflection, we will discover a second source of our knowledge of relations:

- A₅ *S* knows that *Rxy* if and only if (i) *S* has a direct conception of *x*, (ii) *S* does not have a direct conception of *y*, and (iii) upon attending to *x*, *S* immediately judges that there must be some *y* such that *Rxy*.⁴

which it bears to something else." IP, p. 178; "Of other things, we know not what they are in themselves, but only that they have certain properties or attributes, or certain relations to other things; of these our conception is only *relative*." AP, p. 8.

¹ This definition is required given the possibility of a conception that is both direct and relative: "I can directly conceive ten thousand men or ten thousand pounds, because both are objects of sense But I can form a relative notion of the same number of men or of pounds, by attending to the relations which this number has to other numbers, greater or less." AP, p. 10.

² "by comparing the related objects, when we have before had the conception of both . . . we perceive the relation, either immediately, or by a process of reasoning." IP, p. 517.

³ IP, p. 517.

⁴ "by attention to one of the related objects, we perceive or judge, that it must, from its nature, have a

This is precisely the means, Reid argues, by which we know that the operations of which we are conscious are attributes of a substance. For we have a direct conception of these operations, and no direct conception of mind. Yet, upon attending to the operations, we immediately judge that they cannot exist without a subject to which they belong, and of which they are attributes.¹

By way of qualification, Reid is not claiming that the mere relative conception we have of substances is “clear and distinct”: it is rather an “obscure” conception.² Indeed, it is so obscure, he suggests, that *all* that we can claim to know about any substance, is that it is that subject without which certain attributes cannot exist.³

3 PERSONAL IDENTITY

We now have Reid’s account of how it is that we know that the operations of which we are conscious cannot exist without a subject, which we call ‘mind’.⁴ But several important problems remain. For example, Reid’s solution assumes that the operations of which a person is conscious belong to *one and the same* subject. But this claim requires some kind of defence, or at least an explanation as to how it might be possible. In other words, Reid owes us an account of the nature of personal identity.

Reid holds that one necessary condition of identity is continuous, uninterrupted existence. That is:

A₆ x and y are identical only if there is no time t such that x exists at t and y does not exist at t .

certain relation to something else, which before perhaps we never thought of; and thus our attention to one of the related objects produces the notion of a correlate, and of a certain relation between them.” IP, p. 517-518; “It is not by having first the notions of mind and sensation, and then comparing them together, that we perceive the one to have the relation of a subject or substratum, and the other that of an act or operation: on the contrary, one of the related things, to wit, sensation, suggests to us both the correlate and the relation.” HM, p. 35.

¹ “By attending to the operations of thinking, memory, reasoning, we perceive or judge, that there must be something which thinks, remembers, and reasons, which we call the mind.” IP, p. 518; cf. IP, pp. 257-58. Other examples of R_2 include the conception of causes by their effects, and of space by bodies. See IP, p. 518. Cf. J. H. Faurot, “Thomas Reid, On Intelligible Objects”, *Monist* 61 (1978) 229-244: p. 238-39.

² Reid argues in the *Intellectual Powers* that a mere relative conception must always be obscure, “because it gives us no conception of what the thing is, but of what relation it bears to something else.” IP, p. 236. However, in the AP, he allows that, “our relative conceptions of things are not always less distinct . . . than those that are direct” AP, p. 10. However, every example Reid gives is of an object of which we also have a direct conception, that is, the examples are of relative, rather than *mere* relative conceptions. They are also all examples in which the object of the relative conception is a number or quantity, rather than a quality of body or an operation of mind. Either or both of these differences together, may account for the difference in clarity and distinctness.

³ “Nature teaches us, that thinking and reasoning are attributes, which cannot exist without a subject; but of that subject I believe the best notion we can form implies little more than that it is the subject of such attributes.” IP, p. 441.

⁴ For Reid’s account of knowledge itself, see Chapter 5.

Thus, suppose x exists at t_0 , but then ceases to exist at t_1 , whilst y begins to exist at t_2 . In this case, x exists at a time that y does not exist, namely t_0 ; and y exists at a time that x does not exist, namely t_2 . So, by A_6 , x and y are not identical: their existence is successive, rather than continuous.¹

Now Reid's view is that the operations of mind are, "in their nature", successive. What he means by this, I take it, is that every individual operation of mind is of a limited duration: it begins to exist at a time and ceases to exist at a time.² And if any two individual operations are of the same kind and degree,³ then they could not exist at the same time; for then they would be one and the same individual operation. Hence they must occur successively, in which case, by A_6 , they could not be identical. Suppose a certain feeling of pain occurs at t_0 , but then ceases at t_1 . If a pain, of the same kind and degree as that which occurred at t_0 , begins to exist at t_2 , it could not, by A_6 , be identical to the former pain. Operations of mind that are of the same kind and degree, are therefore individuated by their successive existence.

The changes that occur in the operations of mind are not due merely to the successive occurrence of individual operations. There is also a succession of change in the degree or modifications of those operations. More precisely, Reid distinguishes between two kinds of attributes:

D₃ Primary attributes = *df* attributes belonging to individual objects.

D₄ Secondary attributes = *df* attributes belonging to attributes, such as a certain degree or modification of a primary attribute.⁴

For example, the primary attribute of *being removed* may have the secondary attributes of being quick or slow, rectilinear or curvilinear, accelerated or retarded, and so on.⁵ Likewise, the operations of mind may be strong or weak, of greater or lesser force and vivacity. In other words, A_6 does not apply merely to primary attributes: the

¹ "That which hath ceased to exist, cannot be the same with that which afterwards begins to exist; for this would be to suppose a being to exist after it ceased to exist, and to have had existence before it was produced, which are manifest contradictions." IP, p. 317.

² Reid states that operations "are all successive in their nature like time itself, no two moments of which can be the same moment." IP, p. 317. I take it that he does not mean to suggest that the succession of operations occurs with some kind of temporal regularity (e.g. one operation per second), or temporal extension (e.g. each operation endures for one second). Nor is he suggesting that operations are successive just because they have temporal parts: otherwise even space, being "at all times" (IP, p. 313), would be successive. Rather, Reid is merely attempting to describe the phenomena discovered to us by consciousness or reflection, namely, that our individual operations of mind are, by their nature, of a limited duration. They are not, in other words, like space, of which no limits can be set, "either of extent or of duration." IP, p. 262.

³ Reid clearly held that more than one operation could occur at a time; hence, he must have individuated such co-occurring operations according to differences in kind and degree, or so I will argue.

⁴ Reid's ontology of attributes is examined more detail in Chapter 4, § 4.3-4.

⁵ IP, p.p 433-34.

substituends for x and y could also be secondary attributes. Thus, every modification of an individual operation of mind is of a limited duration: it begins to exist at a time and ceases to exist at a time. And if any two modifications are of the same kind and degree, then they could not exist at the same time; for they would then be one and the same modification. Hence they must exist in succession. Suppose, for example, we feel a certain degree of pain at t_0 , which, at t_1 subsides or weakens, but then at t_2 increases to precisely the same degree of pain felt at t_0 . It follows that, by A_6 , the operations of mind occurring at t_0 and at t_2 are not identical. For although they are the of same kind and degree of operation, and there is even continuity with respect to the kind of operation it is, there is no continuity with respect to the degree of the operation. Operations of mind that are of the same kind and degree may therefore be individuated by the succession of their various degrees or modifications. In sum, the operations of mind, in Reid's view, change over time by virtue of their limited duration, successive existence, and the successive changes of their attributes.

The problem, then, is this: with such change occurring in the attributes of mind, how is it possible that the subject of such attributes should nevertheless have a continuous uninterrupted existence? In what does the mind's identity consist if its attributes are changing over time? Reid's solution is based on his rejection of the following principle:

- A_7 If x has a (primary or secondary) attribute F at t_1 and y does not have F at t_2 , then x is not identical to y .

That is to say, a change in a primary attribute does not necessarily imply a change in a substance: for example, a person may lose a limb, and yet remain the same person.¹ Likewise, a change in a secondary attribute does not necessarily imply a change in the primary attribute: for example, movement is still a movement, whether it is quick or slow. However, if the attribute concerned is essential to the object, rather than accidental, then the matter is quite different. That is, where:

- D_5 F is an essential attribute of $x =_{df}$ it is not possible that x should exist and fail to be F .²
- D_6 F is an accidental attribute of $x =_{df}$ it is possible that x should exist and fail to be F .

Reid would accept the following principles:

¹ "If [a man] has a leg or an arm cut off, he is the same person he was before. The amputated member is no part of his person" IP, p. 317.

² E.g., "a triangle cannot exist without a particular quality of angles and relation of sides" IP, p. 484.

- A₈ If x has an essential attribute F at t_1 and y does not have F at t_2 , then x is not identical to y .
- A₉ It is possible that x is identical to y , even if x has an accidental attribute F at t_1 and y does not have F at t_2 .

Thus, a person may lose a hand and yet remain the same person, simply because such a limb is an accidental, not an essential attribute of persons. This is, indeed, the force of Reid's objection to Hume's attempt to distinguish the operations of belief and conception in terms of their varying degrees of force and vivacity: that is, degrees of force and vivacity, he argues, are secondary accidental attributes of every operation of mind; hence, belief and conception cannot be defined by reference to them.¹

Now Reid's claim is that the mind has a continuous uninterrupted existence, even though its individual operations do not, just because the existence of this or that individual operation is an accidental, not essential attribute of mind. Hence, by A₉, it is possible that a mind which exerts one kind of operation at t_1 should be identical to a mind which exerts a quite distinct kind of operation at t_2 .

This is not to say that the mind has *no* essential attribute. However, as we have seen, our knowledge of mind is severely limited. Indeed, we know of only one essential attribute: the mind is that which stands in the relation of subject to its operations.²

4 KNOWLEDGE OF PERSONAL IDENTITY

We have seen that personal identity, for Reid, consists in the continuity of mind through the successive existence of its accidental attributes. The problem, as Reid recognises, is to show how it is that we *know* that the mind is thus continuous.³ For example, how can we rule out the possibility that there exists a multitude of unique substances, having *only one* operation per substance? Or that minds exist successively, being replaced periodically by other minds?⁴

¹ "To say . . . that two different classes, or species of perceptions, are distinguished by the degrees of their force and vivacity, is to confound a difference of *degree* with a difference of *species*" IP, p. 28. For a more detailed examination of Reid's objection to Hume, see Chapter 4, § 3.

² "There are other relative notions that are not taken from accidental relations . . . but from qualities or attributes essential to the thing. ¶ Of this kind are our notions both of body and mind. . . . if it should be asked, What is mind? It is that which thinks. I ask not what it does, or what its operations are, but what it is? To this I can find no answer; our notion of mind being not direct, but relative to its operations" AP, p. 8-9. Cf. IP, p. 326. This account, I believe, answers Chisholm's question regarding Reid's view on whether or not we can know the essential attributes of substances. See R. M. Chisholm, "Keith Lehrer and Thomas Reid", *Philosophical Studies* 60 (1990), 33-38: p.36

³ "How do you know; what evidence have you, that there is such a permanent self which has a claim to all the thoughts, actions, and feelings, which you call yours?" IP, p. 318.

⁴ For various other possibilities, see Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993): p. 51.

Reid's approach to this epistemic puzzle, is to appeal to two first principles relating to memory, that is:

CP₄ "those things did really happen which I distinctly remember"¹

CP₅ "[we have] our own personal identity and [a] continued existence, as far back as we remember anything distinctly"²

The full weight of this solution will surface in our discussion of Reid's epistemology of first principles. At this point, we need to explain just how it is that these two principles, taken together, might be understood to solve the puzzle. Suppose that *S* is conscious of an operation of mind *O* occurring at *t*₀. Suppose also that, at some later time *t*₅, *S* remembers having been conscious of *O*. Reid's claim is that, in accordance with CP₄, this act of remembrance would produce in *S* the following self-evident belief:

- (1) The person who was conscious of *O* at *t*₀ is identical to the person who is remembering *O* at *t*₅.³

Now it follows from (1) and A₆ that:

- (2) The person who is remembering *O* at *t*₅ has had a continued existence since *t*₀.⁴

Reid does not, however, suggest that *S* must perform any such act of reasoning in order to form the belief that she has had a continued existence since *t*₀. We know that this could not be Reid's solution since (2) is an instance of the first principle CP₅; and such beliefs are, by definition, not formed by way of reasoning.⁵ Reid's point, then, is this: if *S* remembers *O* at *t*₅, it would be self-evident to her, in accordance with CP₅, that she has had a continued existence since *t*₅. Thus, if *S* can remember distinctly an operation of mind *O* that occurred in her childhood, then it matters not if she fails to remember most of the operations that occurred between the occurrence of *O* and the time of her remembrance of *O*. For the mere remembrance of *O* produces in her the self-evident belief that she has had a continued existence since the time of *O*, and was thus the subject of all the operations of which she was conscious in the intervening duration, even those of which she has no memory.

¹ IP, p. 583.

² IP, p. 586.

³ "Every man in his senses believes what he distinctly remembers, and every thing he remembers convinces him that he existed at the time remembered." IP, p. 236.

⁴ "If it was done by me, I must have existed at that time, and continued to exist from that time to the present." IP, p. 318.

⁵ See Chapter 4, §7.

As for her existence prior to the earliest distinct memory, Reid argues that we have the evidence of testimony: that is, we may take, as good evidence, the reports of those who remember events of which we appear have been conscious during our infancy.¹

5 THE UNIQUENESS OF MIND

There is an apparent problem with this interpretation, however. Reid advocates a first principle which suggests that he thought memory was an unnecessary source of evidence with regard to the belief in our continuous existence, namely:

CP₂ “the thoughts of which I am conscious, are the thoughts of a being which I call *myself*, my mind, my person”.²

Or, with elaboration:

“The thoughts and feelings of which we are conscious are continually changing, and the thought of this moment is not the thought of the last; but something which I call myself, remains under this change of thought. This self has the same relation to all the successive thoughts I am conscious of, they are all my thoughts; and every thought which is not my thought, must be the thought of some other person.”³

Thus, for any operation of mind *O* of which I am conscious, it is self-evident to me that *O* belongs to the same identical subject, namely myself. Now Reid thinks that there is no thought of which we are not conscious;⁴ hence, all the operations of my mind belong to the same continuously existing subject, namely myself. But if so, the appeal to memory, as captured in CP₅, appears to be redundant.

However, it may be that Reid was intending CP₂, among other things,⁵ as a way of eliminating a related puzzle: Why should we think that each operation to which we attend, belongs to *only one* substance? We have nothing so far that would disallow the possibility that each operation to which we attend belongs not only to us, but to *another* distinct mind, or perhaps *several*.

Reid’s answer is given in the elaboration of CP₂ above: namely, that, for any operation of mind *O*, if I am not conscious of *O*, then some other mind with which I am not identical must be conscious of *O*. For example, suppose two individual operations

¹ “Although memory gives the most irresistible evidence of my being the identical person that did such a thing, at such a time, I may have other good evidence of things which befel me, and which I do not remember: I know who bare me, and suckled me, but I do not remember these events.” IP, p. 318.

² IP, p. 581.

³ IP, p. 582.

⁴ “an operation of mind of which we are not conscious, is, we know not what; . . . No man can think, without being conscious that he thinks.” IP, p. 222.

⁵ Reid’s objection to Hume’s bundle theory of mind in the context of CP₂ suggests that he takes it to perform a similar function to NP_{M1}, namely, giving us a self-evident belief in the operation-mind distinction.

of mind, O_1 and O_2 , occur at the same time and are of the same kind and degree. By A_6 , they should be identical operations. However, suppose I am conscious of O_1 and some other mind, with which I am not identical, is conscious of O_2 . Should we still say that O_1 and O_2 are identical? Could the very same individual thought of which I am conscious, also be that individual thought of which another mind is conscious? Reid's reply is that, whilst we may have no good *reason* to exclude this possibility, it is self-evident to us that O_1 and O_2 are not identical. More precisely, where S_1 and S_2 are non-identical persons or minds, and O is any individual operation of mind, it is self-evident to us, in accordance with CP_2 , that if O is an attribute of S_1 , then O is not an attribute of S_2 .

6 THE INTERNAL-EXTERNAL DISTINCTION

This brings us to a related point. Reid distinguishes between things that are 'in' the mind and things that are 'external' to the mind. What precisely does he mean by this distinction? What, for instance, would count as an 'external object' in Reid's view?

Reid makes two disclaimers regarding the preposition 'in'. First, it is not to be taken in a spatial sense: to say that a thing is 'in' the mind does not mean that it is located within the spatial dimensions of the mind, whether or not the mind has any such location.¹ Second, it is not to be taken in its figurative sense, where we say that something is 'in' our minds, meaning that it is the object of our thought.² The sense Reid wishes to advocate is this:

A_{10} x is in the mind if and only if x is an attribute of the mind.³

What, then, is Reid's criterion for a thing being 'external' to the mind? Taking it for granted that no mind can be external to itself:

¹ In his manuscripts, Reid indicates his uncertainty as to whether the mind or its attributes are spatially located. "Perhaps neither the Mind, nor the things said to be in it, can be said to be in any place; but whether this be so or not" 4/II/2, 13; cf. "When we speak of the place of a Body we know distinctly what we mean. But tho the mind may have a place for what we know, we have no knowledge [how or] in what manner it occupies a place, or how it is related to extension or space. As little can we ascribe place to its operations so as to understand (what) we mean. Let it be granted then that we cannot with propriety and understanding ascribe a place to a meer Sensation. We can only ascribe to it a subject, and that is the Mind or sentient Being." 8/II/24a, 2

² IP, p. 15

³ IP, p. 15; cf. "the things said to be in the Mind, are things that have a Relation to the Mind as their Subject". MS 4/II/2, 13. This distinction enables Reid to avoid the passive, mechanistic, or 'container' view of the mind upon which the Ideal System based its claim that external objects cannot be *immediate* objects of thought. As Ben-Zeev notes, "Since mental properties are not internal entities, but properties of a whole organic system, the internal-external dichotomy, which is at the basis of the theory of ideas, does not arise." A. Ben-Zeev, "Reid's Opposition to the Theory of Ideas", in M. Dalgarno and E. Matthews, eds. *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, PSS 42, 1989): p. 92.

A₁₁ x is external to a mind S if and only if x is either a substance, or an attribute that belongs to a substance that is not identical to S .¹

For example, this stone before me is a substance; hence, it is external to my mind. The motion, weight and dimensions of the stone are attributes; but they belong to the stone, and therefore, to a substance that is not identical to my mind; hence, they are external to my mind. Finally, your mind is a substance, and your thoughts are attributes of a substance that is not identical to my mind; hence, your mind and your thoughts are external to my mind.² In short, "Excepting the mind itself, and things in the mind, all other things are said to be external".³

¹ External things "are either other Substances that is other Minds, or bodies, which are not in any Subject, or the Accidents belonging to other Substances which have their own proper Subjects." MS 4/II/2, 13.

² "A House, a tree, or a Stone, are things that are not in the Mind but external to it, because these are Substances, and are not in any Subject. The motion of a Stone, the weight, or the figure of it, are not things in the Mind but external, because these, though they are accidents and therefore must be in some Subject, yet they are not in the Mind as their Subject but in the Stone. The Mind of another Man is not in my Mind because it is in no Subject, the thoughts of another man cannot be in my mind because they must be in his own Mind as their Subject." MS 4/II/2, 13-14.

³ "When we attend to any change that happens in Nature, judgment informs us, that there must be a cause of this change, which had power to produce it;" IP, p. 518.

2

Agency

INTRODUCTION

Reid claims that the intellectual powers, such as judgment, conception, consciousness and perception, are, to some degree, subject to the will.¹ Whether or not, or to what degree Reid is a voluntarist with respect to the operation of believing is, of course, crucial to determining his concept of epistemic justification.² However, we cannot formulate Reid's view on this matter with any precision without first exploring his account of what constitutes a voluntary action. And this, in turn, requires a full-scale examination of Reid's view of agency. We begin, then, with his account of causation.

1 CAUSATION

Reid claims that, upon attending to some event in nature *E*, we believe that there must be a cause that had the power to produce *E*.³ But how is it that we come to form this belief? Upon what grounds is it based?

Reid's answer here is to appeal to precisely the same process by which we arrive at our knowledge of mind, namely, that we have only a mere relative conception of causes. For, upon attending to any event in nature *E*, we find that: (i) we have direct conception of some event *E*, (ii) we conceive of *E* as bearing the relation of 'being an effect of' to some cause *C*, and (iii) we do not have any direct conception of *C*. It follows that our knowledge of the relation between cause and effect could not arrive by way of a comparison between *E* and *C*; nor could it arrive by way of any deductive or inductive argument. For example, if we observe that *E* has been regularly conjoined to a certain preceding event *D*, we would tend to pick out *D* as the 'cause' of *E*. But it is clear, Reid argues, that our observation gives us no warrant for claiming anything more than that *D* is related to *E* merely as a sign is to a thing signified.⁴ That is, we are so constituted that *D* functions as a sign signifying to us the occurrence of *E*, whether immediately or soon thereafter. But we can provide no explanation, in terms of the

¹ "the understanding is always more or less directed by the will, mankind have ascribed some degree of activity to the mind in its intellectual operations." IP, p. 67-68.

² For a recent comprehensive discussion of this issue, see William P. Alston, "The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification", in *Epistemic Justification* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989): Essay 5.

³ IP, p. 518.

⁴ "effects and causes, in the operations of nature, mean nothing but signs, and the things signified by them. We perceive no proper causality or efficiency in any natural cause, but only a connection established by the course of nature between it and what is called its effect." HM, p. 47.

nature of *D* and *E* themselves, as to *why* they should be regularly connected. More to the point, we can perceive no necessary connection between the two, such that we could confidently cite the occurrence of *D* as the *efficient cause* of *E*. We cannot cite *D* as that without which *E* would not have occurred. For all we can tell, *E* might well have occurred without *D*.¹

As a consequence, we have no grounds for ruling out the possibility that *D* and *E* might not be conjoined in the future; and we rarely have either the cognitive ability or the evidence to construct a sound inductive argument to the effect that the future will, in this respect, resemble the past; at least, not such evidence as to warrant the kind of certainty we ordinarily take ourselves to have in the uniformity of nature. Indeed, if we were so constituted that we could not obtain any confidence in the regularity of natural phenomena until we could provide a proportionate degree of evidence, we would perish for the lack of it.² For this reason, Reid suggests, we have been so designed that our belief in the regularity of nature is a first principle, namely:

CP₆ “in the phaenomena of nature, what is to be, will probably be like to what has been in similar circumstances”.³

In short, Reid concludes that our belief that some event *E* must be the effect of some cause *C* is produced in us by way of the same process that we form our belief that thinking is an attribute of the mind: upon forming a distinct conception of *E*, we immediately judge that there must be some *C* such that *E* is the effect of *C*.⁴

Reid is not, therefore, a regularity theorist: he does not accept the view that “priority and constant conjunction is all that can be conceived in the notion of a cause”.⁵ This might have been so, he argues, if our concept of causation arose merely from our observation of regularities in the material world.⁶ But this is not the case: it arises from

¹ “We see events, but we see not the power that produces them. We perceive one event to follow another, but we perceive not the chain that binds them together.” AP, p. 313.

² The epistemological framework within which Reid’s claims here must be understood, will be examined in detail in Chapter 5.

³ IP, p. 603; cf. “the principle is necessary for us before we are able to discover it by reasoning, and therefore is made a part of our constitution, and produces its effects before the use of reason.” Ibid

⁴ Reid draws this parallel explicitly in the following passage: “By attending to the operations of thinking, memory, reasoning, we perceive or judge, that there must be something which thinks, remembers, and reasons, which we call the mind. When we attend to any change that happens in Nature, judgment informs us, that there must be a cause of this change, which had power to produce it; and thus we get the notions of cause and effect, and of the relation between them.” IP, p. 518.

⁵ AP, p. 290. Reid attributed this view to Hume; but there is considerable scholarly disagreement as to whether or not Hume was indeed a regularity theorist. See Edward Craig, *The Mind of God and the Works of Man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); and Galen Strawson, *The Secret Connexion: Causation, Realism, and David Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

⁶ Reid also argues against the regularity theory on the grounds that (i) we would need to conclude that “night is the cause of day”, (ii) “all reasonings from final causes, must be given up as fallacious”, (iii) “we would have no reason to conclude, that every event must have a cause”; (iv) “we would have no reason to

the consciousness we have of the exertion of power in ourselves. When we are conscious of some change in the direction of our thought or when we observe some bodily movement, we again find ourselves with a conception of a cause that brings about these changes. However, unlike our conception of causes in nature, this is not a mere relative conception: for we have a direct conception of the cause in question, namely, our willing to exert some power of our mind.¹ It should be made clear that Reid does not claim that we have anything like a complete grasp of *how* our exertions of power bring about *E*.² However, we are at least conscious that *E* would not have occurred unless we had willed to exert some power of mind so as to bring about *E*. That is, upon comparing the event of our willing to exert some power with *E*, we immediately judge that *E must* have been produced, at least in part, by that willed exertion of power.³

Consequently, Reid argues, while we may obtain an obscure conception of a cause by attending to changes or events in nature, we can only obtain a distinct conception of a cause by means of the consciousness we have of our own volitions to exert a power of mind to bring about some effect.⁴ Thus, it is by virtue of their provenance, Reid suggests, that our concepts of cause, effect, power and action may be set out as follows:

- D₇ Cause = *df* a substance which, by willing the exertion of its power, brings about a change either in itself or in some other substance.
- D₈ Effect = *df* that change which is brought about by a cause.⁵

conclude that there was any cause of the creation of this world"; and (v) there exists a plausible definition of a cause which does not entail (i)-(iv), namely, Reid's own account. AP, pp. 342-43.

¹ More precisely, in any causal activity, we can only have a direct conception of the *exertion* of power. We do not, in Reid's view, have anything more than a mere relative conception of either the *mind* itself or any *power* of the mind. (See AP, p. 8).

² "when I attempt to comprehend the manner in which an efficient cause operates, either upon body or mind, there is darkness which my faculties are not able to penetrate." AP, pp. 52-3; Again, "That there is an established harmony between our willing certain motions of our bodies, and the operation of the nerves and muscles which produces those motions, is a fact known by experience. This volition is an act of the mind. But whether this act of the mind have any physical effect upon the nerves and muscles; or whether it be only an occasion of their being acted upon by some other efficient, according to the established laws of nature, is hid from us. So dark is our conception of our own power when we trace it to its origin." AP, p. 50.

³ "Power without will produces no effect; but, where these are conjoined, the effect must be produced." AP, p. 343.

⁴ "It is very probable, that the very conception or idea of active power, and of efficient causes, is derived from our voluntary exertions in producing effects; and that, if we were not conscious of such exertions, we should have no conception at all of a cause, or of active power" AP, p. 278. Cf. "If it be so that the conception of an efficient cause enters into the mind, only from the early conviction we have that we are the efficient of our own voluntary actions, (which I think is most probable) the notion of efficiency will be reduced to this, That it is a relation between the cause and the effect, similar to that which is between us and our voluntary actions. This is surely the most distinct notion, and, I think, the only notion we can form of real efficiency." AP, p. 40. Note, Reid, in this final phrase, is not ruling out the mere relative conception of causes we obtain from natural events. He is simply rejecting the regularity theory.

⁵ "That which produces a change by the exertion of its power, we call the *cause* of that change; and the change produced, the *effect* of that cause." AP, p. 13; "The name of a *cause* and of an *agent*, is properly given to

- D₉ Active power = *df* that attribute in a cause, the exertion of which is brought about by the agent's volition in order to bring about an effect.
- D₁₀ Act or operation = *df* that attribute in a cause, which is the exertion of a power to bring about an effect.¹

Now if these are indeed the concepts with which we are working, it is hardly surprising that we cannot locate any causes in the material world. For, as D₇ implies, a cause is that which exerts its power by the exercise of its will. But no inanimate thing has a will, and hence no active power.² It moves as it is moved: it does not perform 'actions', in the sense of D₁₀.³ To be sure, Reid argues, natural philosophers commonly state that matter has 'the power of gravitation', and other 'attractive or repulsive powers'. But philosophers also teach that matter is "a substance altogether inert, and merely passive"; and that the power of gravitation and other active powers are not inherent in the nature of matter, but are impressed upon it by some unknown, and unexplained external cause. Hence, either philosophers hold contradictory doctrines, or they expect their ascriptions of active power to matter "not to be understood strictly, but in some popular sense."⁴ Indeed, they would, with Reid, argue that to attribute causal powers to inanimate objects is the product of a pre-scientific understanding of natural causes. Upon perceiving changes in some inanimate object, a person, who is otherwise uninformed of the laws of nature, will, by analogy with the changes they themselves bring about, tend to ascribe a similar agency to the object itself. Reid thus takes his account of the origin of our concept of causation, to further provide a probable

that being only, which, by its active power, produces some change in itself, or in some other being." AP, p. 276.

¹ "The exertion of active power we call *action*" AP, p. 12; "every operation of the mind is the exertion of some power of the mind." AP, p. 7.

² "All proper Causation supposes activity, and we have no sufficient reason to believe that there is any real Activity in any part of the material System." MS 4/1/23, 2. Cf. AP, p. 41. Stalley argues that Reid cannot justify his position here: Reid, he states, "allows that we can form a conception of things of which we have no direct awareness - active power is itself a case in point. It is difficult to see therefore why he should think that we cannot conceive of any kind of power which could subsist in inanimate bodies." R. F. Stalley, "Causality and Agency in the Philosophy of Thomas Reid", in M. Dalgarno and E. Matthews, eds. *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, PSS 42, 1989): p. 276. However, whilst Reid would accept that we have only a mere relative conception of the active powers in ourselves, he would argue that we do have (i) a direct conception of our willed exertions of those powers and (ii) a relative conception of the necessary connection between such willed exertions and the effects they produce; and that it is this that marks the distinction between our conception of changes that occur in ourselves and changes that occur in nature. If this were otherwise, Reid would say, we should not so readily cast aside anthropomorphisms.

³ "To body we ascribe various properties, but not operations, properly so called; it is extended, divisible, moveable, inert; it continues in any state in which it is put; every change of its state is the effect of some force impressed upon it, and is exactly proportional to the force impressed, and in the precise direction of that force." IP, p. 16.

⁴ AP, p. 44.

explanation for the origin of anthropomorphisms.¹

Reid not only held that, for any event we observe, we immediately judge that it must have a cause; he also thought that we believe *every* event must have a cause. But on what grounds might we form such a belief? It could not be on the basis of our experience. For we have no experience of causation in nature; and our experience of causation in ourselves is insufficient evidence upon which to base such a general conclusion.² Indeed, no amount of such evidence *could* be sufficient. For the principle in question is a necessary truth; and no necessary truths can be derived from experience. Hence, not even the strongest inductive argument would suffice.³ In short, this belief has all the marks of a first principle, namely:

NP_{M2} “whatever begins to exist, must have a cause which produced it.”⁴

Now Reid held that there is, strictly speaking, no such thing as event-causation: the only causes are agent-causes. It follows that, if there is some event in nature which is not caused by some human agent, it must be ascribed to some non-human agent, namely God or some intermediate agent that serves as the instrument of God’s will.⁵ NP_{M2} is therefore equivalent to the occasionalist doctrine that:

A₁₂ Every event must be caused by either God or a created agent.⁶

¹ “it is a general prejudice of our early years, and of rude nations, when we perceive any thing to be changed, and do not perceive any other thing which we can believe to be the cause of that change, to impute it to the thing itself, and conceive it to be active and animated, so far as to have the power of producing that change in itself. . . . The origin of this prejudice probably is, that we judge of other things by ourselves, and therefore are disposed to ascribe to them that life and activity which we know to be in ourselves.” AP, p. 17.

² “Causation is not an object of sense. The only experience we can have of it, is in the consciousness we have of exerting some power in ordering our thoughts and actions. But this experience is surely too narrow a foundation for a general conclusion, that all things that have had or shall have a beginning must have a cause.” IP, p. 616. It is interesting to note, that Reid makes a similar objection against the regularity theory, namely, that it would give us “no reason to conclude, that every event must have a cause”, for this would require an inductive inference to a necessary truth. AP, p. 342.

³ “the proposition to be proved is not a contingent but a necessary proposition. It is not, that things which begin to exist commonly have a cause, or even that they always in fact have a cause; but that they must have a cause, and cannot begin to exist without a cause. Propositions of this kind, from their nature, are incapable of proof by induction. Experience informs us only of what is or has been, not of what must be; and the conclusion must be of the same nature with the premises.” IP, p. 615.

⁴ IP, p. 613. A contemporary defence of this principle is given by T.D. Sullivan, “Coming To Be Without a Cause”, *Philosophy* 65 (1990), 261-270.

⁵ Del Ratzsch appears to hold a similar view: “there have been philosophers who have argued that our concepts of *cause*, *power*, and so forth have grown out of our own experiences as agents who cause things, who have various powers. If those concepts are indeed fundamentally agent-concepts, then in attributing them to other sorts of objects we may be anthropomorphizing nature (or agentmorphismizing it), whereas a more occasionalistic agent-based view may have some inherent conceptual advantages.” Del Ratzsch, “Nomo(theo)logical Necessity” in *Christian Theism and the Problems of Philosophy*, ed. Michael D. Beaty (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990): p. 205.

⁶ “When we say of any thing, that it is the work of nature, this is saying that it is the work of God, and can have no other meaning.” AP, p. 308; “it has pleased the Almighty to bestow upon some of his creatures,

2 SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATIONS

Reid pleads ignorance with respect to the precise means by which God brings about events in the natural world. He does, however, make two important claims: first, it is likely that God acts in the world either “immediately”, or by “subordinate intelligent agents”, or by “instruments that are unintelligent”.¹ Second, the regularity we perceive in natural phenomena may be explained or accounted for by reference to the laws of nature, which, in turn, are explained as being “the rules by which the Supreme Being governs the world”.²

This second claim regarding what it is to ‘account for a phenomena’³ is of utmost centrality to Reid’s philosophy, both in terms of his criticism of the ideal system, and his own constructive philosophy.⁴ It is an especially central claim in his epistemology. Hence, in the present section, I shall explore this claim in some detail.

We may gain a degree of clarity in our exposition of Reid’s Newtonian concept of ‘accounting for a phenomenon’, by reference to Hempel and Oppenheim’s “basic pattern of scientific explanation”.⁵ First, an explanation, they suggest, is an argument, the premises of which describe laws of nature together with antecedent or initial conditions (*explanans*). The conclusion describes the phenomenon to be explained, which may either be a particular event or a law of nature (*explanandum*). Second, they propose four conditions of adequacy for a scientific explanation:

particularly upon man, some degree of active power”. AP, p. 109. See AP, pp. 289-90, where Reid argues that there would be no reason to admit the existence of an intelligent cause of the universe, if the regularity theory is true. Cf. the discussion of Reid’s occasionalism in C.J. McCracken, *Malbranche and British Philosophy* (Oxford, 1983): pp. 308-11; and Alfred J. Freddoso’s definition of occasionalism in “Medieval Aristotelianism and the Case against Secondary Causation in Nature”, in T.V. Morris, ed., *Divine & Human Action: Essays in the Metaphysics of Theism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988): p. 80.

¹ AP, p. 34

² IP, p. 695.

³ Reid’s expression “accounting for a phenomenon of nature” is equivalent to the following: “solving it”, “shewing the cause of it” MS K160, 1; “the solution of natural phenomena” HM, p. 127; “to show us the cause of any natural effect”, the effect [a cause] is brought to explain” IP, p. 51; “investigation of what we call the causes of natural phenomena” Letter to Kames, in W H, p. 57a; “inquiries into the causes of natural appearances”, “to shew the cause of [natural] appearances”, “assign its cause” IP, p. 113; ““to explain the phenomena of Nature” IP, p. 134.

⁴ “accounting for a phenomenon, or showing its cause, . . . ought to be well understood, in order to judge of the theories by which Philosophers have attempted to account for our perception of external objects by the senses.” IP, p. 115.

⁵ Carl G. Hempel and Paul Oppenheim, “Studies in the Logic of Explanation”, (1948), in *Theories of Explanation*, J. Pitt, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988): p. 11. Hempel and Oppenheim’s account (later refinements notwithstanding) is a useful exegetical tool, given (i) the absence of modern technicalities, and (ii) their own acknowledgment that the description merely “summarizes and states explicitly some fundamental points which have been recognized by many scientists and methodologists” (p. 41, n.7), among which we would find Isaac Newton, of whose philosophy of science Reid was an avid disciple. See ‘Of Newton’s Rules of Philosophizing’ MS 361/1/4, 12-23; in AC, pp. 182-92.

“(R1) . . . The explanandum must be logically deducible from the information contained in the explanans; for otherwise, the explanans would not constitute adequate ground for the explanandum. (R2) The explanans must contain general laws, and these must actually be required for the derivation of the explanandum. . . . (R3) The explanans must have empirical content; that is, it must be capable, at least in principle, of test by experiment or observation. . . . (R4) The sentences constituting the explanans must be true.”¹

In the following, I will show that Reid’s notion of accounting for a phenomenon adheres to this schema, and to Hempel and Oppenheim’s four conditions of adequacy.

First, Reid argues that, among other things, explanations give us ‘rational ground’ for believing that a certain phenomenon will occur: those grounds consisting of antecedent conditions and the relevant laws of nature:

“A person who has lived so long in the world, as to observe that nature is governed by fixed laws, may have some rational ground to expect similar events in similar circumstances”²

Second, Reid regards the relationship between explanatory facts (“general rules”) and the phenomena to be explained (“conclusions”) to be such as to constitute an *argument*:³

“if ever our philosophy concerning the human mind is carried so far as to deserve the name of science, . . . it must be by observing facts, reducing them to general rules, and drawing just conclusions from them.”⁴

Third, Reid held that the premises of this argument must be true: that is to say, any claim regarding the existence of some phenomena or regularity in nature, must be sufficiently well supported by observation and experiment:

“laws of Nature, being general propositions, must be true or false. Sir Isaac Newton’s rule requires that none be admitted but such as are true.”⁵

¹ Carl G. Hempel and Paul Oppenheim, “Studies in the Logic of Explanation,” p. 11.

² AP, p. 116. cf. “With regard to the phænomena of nature, the important end of knowing their causes, besides gratifying our curiosity, is, that we may know when to expect them, or how to bring them about. This is very often of real importance in life; and this purpose is served, by knowing what, by the course of nature, goes before them and is connected with them; and this, therefore, we call the *cause* of such a phænomenon.” AP, pp. 44-45.

³ Reid does not give any explicit argument schema; nor does he state that, if the explanandum is a *particular* phenomenon, then at least one premise must include a description of the antecedent conditions. However, Reid was well aware that such a premise (i.e. a singular proposition treated as universal) would be required for a valid deductive inference. “Singular propositions have the force of universal propositions, and are subject to the same rules.” BA, pp. 367-68; cf. BA, pp. 348-49.

⁴ HM, p. 56.

⁵ MS 3061/1/4, 18; in AC, p. 187; cf. “whatever is built upon conjecture, is improperly called science; for conjecture may beget opinion, but cannot produce knowledge. Natural philosophy must be built upon the phænomena of the material system, discovered by observation and experiment.” IP, p. 40; “This is not true; and therefore it is no law of nature.” HM, p. 121.

Fourth, Reid claimed that explanations must, for epistemic reasons, be *deductive* arguments.¹ For example, he states that an explanation ought not to be “trusted”, unless the logical relationship between the explanandum and the explanans is “mathematical” or “demonstrative”: that is, the relationship between premises and conclusion must be such that it is impossible that the premises be true and the conclusion false:²

“The reasoning from the Laws of Nature to the Phænomena to be accounted for by them, ought to be strictly Mathematical & demonstrative, otherwise it cannot be trusted, nor ought to be admitted in Philosophy”³

Again, Reid states that, whether the explanandum is a description of a particular phenomenon or of a law of nature, it must be a “necessary consequence” of the explanans:

“By the cause of a phenomenon, nothing is meant but the law of nature, of which that phenomenon is an instance, or a *necessary consequence*.”⁴

¹ Reid’s use of the word “deduction” (and cognates) may refer to either deductive or inductive inference. For example, Reid often uses phrases such as “by mathematical reasoning, be deduced” HM, p. 91; “deduced by demonstrative reasoning” IP, p. 456, or “deduced, in a mathematical form” IP, p. 84. If “deduction” were equivalent to “demonstration”, the qualification would hardly be necessary. Again, Reid uses the word in contexts where the inference is clearly inductive: “The laws of nature . . . are justly deduced from observation: Like other general facts, they are not to be drawn from a few particulars, but from a copious, patient, and cautious induction” HM, p. 121; “We deduce [the laws of Nature] only from facts that fall within our own observation.” IP, p. 695. Perhaps the most explicit evidence is this: “if they can be shown to be deducible from selfevident truths by demonstrative or probable reasoning” MS 6/III/5, 7.

² “In every step of demonstrative reasoning, the inference is necessary, and we perceive it to be impossible that the conclusion should not follow from the premises. In probable reasoning, the connection between the premises and the conclusion is not necessary, nor do we perceive it to be impossible that the first should be true while the last is false.” IP, p. 675. See § 2.2 for an ambiguity in Reid’s use of the word ‘demonstration’.

³ Student notes from Reid’s King’s College lectures (Session 1757-58), MS. K160, 1.; Cf. “It is sufficient for our present purpose [to observe] that all just reasoning in Physicks is either inductive or mathematical, when we infer the laws of nature from Phænomena we reason by induction, . . . when we deduce the phænomena from the laws of Nature [we do so] by mathematical Reasoning” MS 4/I/23, 2; “In that branch of Natural Philosophy which explains phaenomena, there is no need of any other Rules of Philosophizing, than the rules of demonstrative reasoning. For a phaenomanon which is not demonstrated to be a necessary consequence of a law of Nature is not explained or accounted for.” MS, 3061/1/4, 13; in AC, p. 183.

⁴ Letter to Kames, in WH, p. 57b. Other examples: “we proceed to consider the phænomena of single and double vision, in order to discover some general principle to which they all lead, and of which they are the *necessary consequences*.” HM, p. 28; “from particular phænomena, we may, by induction, trace out general phænomena, of which all the particular ones are *necessary consequences*.” HM, p. 127; “Facts reduced to general rules, and the *consequences* of those general rules, are all that we really know of the material world.” IP, p. 697; “This relation and sympathy between corresponding points of the two *retinæ*, I do not advance as a hypothesis, but as a general fact or phænomenon of vision. All the *phænomena* before mentioned, of single or double vision, lead to it, and are *necessary consequences of it*.” HM, p. 132; “When we consider what a prodigious variety of effects depend upon the law of gravitation; how many phænomena . . . are shown to be the *necessary consequences of this one law*.” IP, p. 657; “If a Philosopher, therefore, pretends to show us the cause of any natural effect, whether relating to matter or to mind; let us first consider . . . whether the effect it is brought to explain *necessarily follows from it*.” IP, p. 51. (My italics)

“according to the just rules of philosophizing, we may hold it for a law of nature, until some more general law be discovered, whereof it is a necessary consequence.”¹

It might be thought that Reid is using the phrase “necessary consequence” to refer to a causal connection.² However, (i) the phrase is more often than not used in the logical sense³; (ii) Reid commonly fails to *articulate* the distinction between events and the statements describing them (e.g. “we infer the laws of nature from Phænomena”⁴); and (iii) Reid, as we have seen, claimed that we cannot discover any causal connections between natural events.⁵ Hence, there is good reason to think that Reid uses “necessary consequence” to refer only to the *logical relationship* between the explanandum and the explanans.

I shall now consider two possible objections to this exposition of Reid’s concept of explanation, both of which attempt to show that it is inconsistent with other claims that he makes.

2.1 ARE EXPLANATIONS DEDUCTIVE?

Reid seems not to allow the possibility of statistical or probabilistic explanations: that is, where law-statements are of a statistical form,⁶ and where the phenomenon is explained by showing that, given the antecedent conditions and the statistical laws, its occurrence is to be expected only with a high probability. However, Reid also held that law-statements, being obtained by induction, are, at best, only probable.⁷ If this is so, the objection goes, then Reid surely ought to have held that law-statements are of a

¹ HM, p. 118. “If we can discover any such general principle, it must either be a law of nature, or *the necessary consequence of some law of nature*” HM, p. 128. (My italics)

² Reid uses it in this sense when describing Leibniz’s views: “Every perception or apperception, every operation, in a word, of the soul, is a *necessary consequence* of the state of it immediately preceding that operation” IP, p. 221. (My italics)

³ “Thus the evidence of the fifth proposition of the first book of Euclid’s Elements consists in this, That it is *shown to be the necessary consequence* of the axioms, and of the preceding propositions.” IP, p. 273. (My italics)

⁴ MS 4/1/23, 2. Cf. “we can say that there is a relation of *logical necessity* between the laws and the initial conditions on the one hand, and the event-to-be-explained on the other - though it would be more accurate to say that the relation of logical necessity holds between the explanans-statements and the explanandum-statements.” W. C. Salmon, “The Causal Structure of the World”, in D. Ruben, *Explanation*, pp. 78-112 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993): p. 79.

⁵ This is particularly clear in the following passage, where Reid rejects the notion of ‘necessary consequence’, in this sense, as implying determinism: “that every event must be necessarily consequent upon something . . . that went before it . . . is a direct assertion of universal fatality, and has many strange, not to say absurd, consequences.” AP, p. 339.

⁶ That is, “assertions to the effect that if certain specified conditions are realized, then an occurrence of such-and-such a kind will come about with such-and-such a statistical probability.” Carl G. Hempel, “Explanation in Science and History” (1962), in D. Ruben, *Explanation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993): p. 23.

⁷ “General maxims, grounded on experience, have only a degree of probability proportioned to the extent of our experience, and ought always to be understood so as to leave room for exceptions, if future experience shall discover any such.” IP, p. 615.

statistical form, and so, that scientific explanations are probabilistic rather than deductive.

The problem with this kind of objection, as Hempel recognized, is that it fails to distinguish between the logical form of the *claim* made by a law-statement, and the *degree of probability* which it possesses. Statistical law-statements assert that some property is true of *a proportion* of the members of the class referred to by the subject term.¹ But Reid holds that law-statements are universal propositions as defined by classical logic: that is, they assert that some property is true of *all* the members of the class referred to by the subject term.²

2.2 IS THE EXPLANANDUM DEMONSTRABLE?

Before presenting the second objection, we shall require a few definitions. First, the expression “propositions with empirical content” will be used, in relation to Reid, to mean the following:³

- A₁₃ Proposition *p* has empirical content if and only if *p* describes either (i) the existence of any created things, (ii) their attributes and relations, or (iii) the laws of nature.⁴

Second, Reid defines contingency and necessity as follows, where *p* is any proposition:

- A₁₄ *p* is contingent if and only if the truth-value of *p* depends on some voluntary action.⁵
- A₁₅ *p* is necessary if and only if the truth-value of *p* is independent of some voluntary action.

¹ Hempel, pp. 23-4.

² “The Laws of Nature are general propositions, & the Phaenomena of Nature we derive from these are particular Propositions.” Student notes from Reid’s King’s College lectures (Session 1757-58), MS. K160, 1.

³ Reid does not use the word “empirical” anywhere in his works: “matters of fact”, or “the truths/objects of natural philosophy” would be equivalent expressions: for example, “The properties of body, and the laws that obtain in the material system, are the objects of natural philosophy, as that word is now used.” IP, p. 3.

⁴ “all the truths we know concerning the real existence of things; the truth of our own existence; of the existence of other things, inanimate, animal and rational, and of their various attributes and relations . . . may be called contingent truths.” IP, p. 543. The MS version adds after ‘relations’ the following: “the Laws by which they are governed and all matters of fact concerning them” MS 8/II/6, 6.

⁵ “That the planets of our system go round the sun from west to east, is a contingent truth; because it depended upon the power and will of him who made the planetary system, and gave motion to it. That a circle and a right line can cut one another only in two points, is a truth which depends upon no power nor will, and therefore is called necessary and immutable.” AP, p. 36; cf. IP, p. 576. Reid’s account of ‘voluntary action’ is examined in § 5.

Now Reid held that:

- (1) If p has empirical content, then p is contingent.¹

But, as we shall see, he also held that:

- (2) If p is the explanandum of any scientific explanation, then p has empirical content.

Reid must therefore accept that:

- (3) If p is the explanandum of any scientific explanation, then p is a contingent truth.

Now, we have seen that Reid holds the following condition of adequacy:

- (4) A scientific explanation is adequate only if the inference from the explanans to the explanandum is demonstrative.

But if he accepts that some scientific explanations satisfy this condition, then, given (3), Reid must also accept that:

- (5) Some contingent truths are capable of strict demonstration.

The problem is that Reid explicitly argues in *Intellectual Powers* that:

- (6) "No contingent truth is capable of strict demonstration".²

Hence, Reid's first condition of adequacy appears to lead him into an inconsistency. Of course, this result could be avoided if we could find reason why Reid would have denied any of the above premises. Unfortunately, they are each non-negotiable claims in Reid's philosophy. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarifying Reid's position, it will be useful to explore the consequences for Reid, were he to deny premise (3), that is, claiming instead that:

- (3*) If p is the explanandum of any scientific explanation, then p is necessary.

First, Reid held that the conclusion of a sound argument "must be of the same nature with the premises".³ More precisely:

¹ "the truths of natural philosophy are not necessary truths, but contingent, depending upon the will of the Maker of the world" IP, p. 607; cf. IP, p. 577.

² IP, p. 689. "demonstrative reasoning can be applied only to truths that are necessary, and not to those that are contingent" IP, p. 675.

³ "whatever can, by just reasoning, be inferred from a principle that is necessary, must be a necessary truth, . . . no contingent truth can be inferred from principles that are necessary." IP, p. 577. Reid appears to

- A₁₆ Argument *A* is sound only if *A* is such that, (i) the conclusion is necessary if and only if the premises are necessary; and (ii) the conclusion is contingent if and only if the premises are contingent.

It follows from (3*) and A₁₆ that Reid must also hold that:

- (7) If *p* is the explanans of any scientific explanation, then *p* is necessary.

That Reid might have taken any particular antecedent condition to be a necessary truth is clearly out of the question. Suppose, however, that an explanation were to consist of only statements describing laws of nature. Is there any evidence that Reid understood law-statements to be necessary truths? Perhaps. First, Reid thought that a proposition that was independent of some voluntary action is such that it could not fail to be true. That is:

- A₁₇ *p* is a necessary truth if and only if “it is impossible [it] should not be true at all times and in all places”.¹

Second, Reid states that the laws of nature are “fixed and immutable”,² that the connections they describe will “continue from age to age”,³ or “to the end of the world”;⁴ that they are “invariable and uniform”, and that some are “exactly regulated by mathematical rules”.⁵ In short, he seems to hold that:

- A₁₈ If *p* is a law-statement, then *p* is true at all times and in all places.

Could it be that Reid held that law-statements were propositions with empirical content, that their truth-value depended on upon God’s voluntary action, but that, along with God’s existence, they were uniquely necessary truths? To ascribe this view to Reid, we would need to show that he held the following:

- A₁₉ If *p* is a law-statement, then (i) God brings it about that *p* is true, and (ii) it is impossible that God should, at any time or place, bring it about that *p* is false.

allow only one exception: “although the existence of the Deity be necessary, . . . we can only deduce it from contingent truths.” IP, p. 453. However, Reid, I believe, is inconsistent on this point, inasmuch as he argues that our belief in the existence of God is not grounded upon the evidence of reasoning. See § 3.

¹ IP, p. 543. In Chapter 4, § 6, I argue that a possible worlds interpretation of Reid’s view of modality best captures how it is that Reid perceives the connection between A₁₅ and A₁₇.

² HM, p. 151.

³ HM, p. 91.

⁴ IP, p. 603.

⁵ HM, p. 51.

For then, the truth-value of a law-statement could depend upon God's voluntary action even if it is, by definition, a necessary truth; and so, if explanations consist entirely of law-statements, (3*) would be true. Unfortunately, Reid would have rejected clause (ii). Although Reid thought that we have good reason to think that God will not at any future time permanently¹ alter the laws of nature,² he also held that God, being a free agent, *could* do so if and when he pleased.³ In other words, even if, for all practical purposes, we may take the laws of nature to be "fixed and immutable":

A₂₀ If *p* is a law-statement, then (i) God brings it about that *p* is true, and (ii) it is possible that God should, at some time or place, bring it about that *p* is false.

But then, given A₂₁, it follows that:

A₂₁ If *p* is a law-statement, then *p* is contingent.⁴

Must we conclude from all this, then, that Reid is simply inconsistent? I shall argue that we can avoid this implication by showing that Reid used the term 'demonstration', and cognates, ambiguously: that is, in (5), the sense of 'demonstrative' is logical; in (6) it is epistemological. More precisely:

A₂₂ *p* is logically demonstrated on the basis of *q* (call this 'L-demonstration') if and only if the relationship between *p* and *q* is such that, if *q* is true, it is impossible that *p* should be false.

A₂₃ *p* is epistemically demonstrated on the basis of *q* (call this 'E-demonstration') if and only if *q* affords the highest possible degree of justification for *p*: that is, *q* is such that we can be absolutely certain of the truth of *p*.

¹ Reid allowed for temporary alterations: "since everyone who acknowledges the Being of a Deity, must know that He governs the universe by fixed & Stated laws, what Absurdity is there in conceiving that this Superior Governor should for reasons known to Himself, deviate from & suspend for a little these laws in evidence of his Power & authority in some extraordinary manner?" Thomas Reid, "A System of Logic Taught at Aberdeen, 1763", *Lectures on Logic*, transcribed by John Campbell, 1774, Shelf Mark Dx. 3.2: p. 76 (Abbreviations are lengthened in my transcription.); cf. AP, p. 338.

² "because, if he did otherwise, we could learn nothing from what is past, and all our experience would be of no use to us." HM, p. 191. Cf. AP, p. 338.

³ "The laws of Nature may be changed by him who established them." IP, p. 697; "Neither miraculous events, which are contrary to the physical laws of nature, nor such ordinary acts of the Divine administration as are without their sphere, are impossible." AP, p. 345.

⁴ By way of additional evidence for this doctrine, Reid argues against Priestly's suggestion that the laws of nature are necessary truths: "although Aristotle taught the World long ago, that necessary Truths are onely known by Demonstration or by shewing the contrary to be imposible, & the World was so silly as to beleive him, yet Dr Priestly discovered a few months ago, that the proper Proof of necessary Truths is by Induction: And the evidence that any two things or Properties ae necessarily United. This was a great discovery. For it follows from it that before Mankind had ever observed Silver to be fusible by Heat it was necessarily hard. But as soon as this observation was made; A truth which before was necessary immediately changed its nature and became contingent." MS, 3061/9, 2, in AC, p. 133.

How do we obtain the kind of evidence required for an E-demonstration? Reid holds the following principle:

A₂₄ If an argument is deductive, then the degree to which the conclusion is justified for a person by virtue of the premises alone, will be equal to the degree to which the premises are justified for her.¹

So a conclusion is E-demonstrated just in case we have the highest possible degree of justification for the premises, and the argument is deductive. For then we will have the highest possible degree of justification for the conclusion: absolute certainty. The only kind of premises that will provide this kind of justification are necessary truths: for necessary truths are such that it is impossible that they should be false. It is for this reason that only necessary truths are E-demonstrable.²

L-demonstrations, on the other hand, afford no such certainty. For, if the degree to which the premises are justified for a person is only a high probability, then, by A₂₄, even if the argument is deductive, the degree to which the conclusion is justified for her by virtue of the premises alone, will be only a high probability.³ Now only contingent truths are such that the degree to which they can be justified for a person is a high probability. Hence, contingent truths can be L-demonstrable and can serve as premises in an L-demonstration. But then it seems our interpretative problem is solved. Reid is speaking only of L-demonstration when describing the nature of scientific explanation, which explains (5); but when he defines “demonstrative reasoning”, he is referring to E-demonstration, which explains (6).

The cause of the ambiguous usage is this: Reid seems to think that, for any argument, if it is impossible that the premises should be true and the conclusion false, then it is impossible that the conclusion should be false. In other words, if an argument is an L-demonstration then it must also be an E-demonstration:⁴

¹ “In every chain of reasoning, the evidence of the last conclusion can be no greater than that of the weakest link of the chain, whatever may be the strength of the rest.” IP, pp. 674-74; “no conclusion of reasoning can have a greater degree of evidence than the first principles from which it is drawn.” IP, p. 560.

² See IP, pp. 675-76.

³ “In games of chance, it is a first principle, that every side of a die has an equal chance to be turned up; and that, in a lottery, every ticket has an equal chance of being drawn out. From such first principles as these, which are the best we can have in such matters, we may deduce, by demonstrative reasoning, the precise degree of probability of every event in such games. ¶ But the principles of all this accurate and profound reasoning can never yield a certain conclusion, it being impossible to supply a defect in the first principles by any accuracy in the reasoning that is grounded upon them.” IP, p. 560.

⁴ This mistake is all the more surprising, given that Reid would have known from his reading of Aristotle that a deductive argument may be valid even if the premises are only probable: “When the premises are certain, and the conclusion drawn from them in due form, this is demonstration, and produces science. Such syllogisms are called *apodictical*; . . . When the premises are not certain, but probable only, such syllogisms are called *dialectical*.” BA, pp. 395-96.

"In every step of demonstrative reasoning, the inference is necessary, and we perceive it to be impossible that the conclusion should not follow from the premises. . . . ¶ Hence [it follows that¹] demonstrative reasoning has no degrees, nor can one demonstration be stronger than another, . . . Every demonstration gives equal strength to the conclusion, and leaves no possibility of its being false."²

The hidden premise in this inference, of course, is this: 'it is impossible that the premises should be false' - which explains why Reid thought that the premises of an E-demonstration must consist of necessary truths.

Further evidence for this confusion is found Reid's manuscripts. Take, for instance, John Campbell's transcription of Reid's 1763 lectures on logic: Reid begins by describing L-demonstrations ("the links of which are necessarily connected"), and then, apparently presupposing that if an argument is an L-demonstration it must also be an E-demonstration, he argues that an argument can be demonstrative only if the premises are mathematical, that is, necessary truths:

"Reasoning may be distinguished into that which is Probable & that which is Demonstrative. Mathematics afford the best Evidence of the latter kind, where from a few Axioms long trains of Reasoning are carried on, all the links of which are necessarily connected to with one another. . . . It has been disputed whether demonstrative evidence can be applied to any other subject than Mathematics. For my part I don't think it can . . . if any thing is once demonstrated, & that demonstration is satisfactory, there is no room left for us to determine. We are necessarily obliged to credit the Demonstration, & can bring no objection against it, unless some Paralogism has been committed"³

There is, however, a passage in which Reid appears to acknowledge the possibility that the premises of an L-demonstration could be neither necessary truths nor deducible from necessary truths: in which case, as we have seen, the conclusion could not be E-demonstrated. However, even here, Reid unhelpfully uses the single word "demonstration" to refer to both senses. To clarify his point I have supplied the prefixes 'L-' and 'E-':

¹ The text between the brackets is a variant from MS 7/V/16, 2/94.

² IP, p. 675.

³ Thomas Reid, "A System of Logic Taught at Aberdeen, 1763": pp. 83-84. (Abbreviations are lengthened in my transcription.) See Michael F.S. & E. "Reid's Hume: Remarks on Hume in Some Early Logic Lectures of Reid", *Monist* 70 (1988): pp. 508-526. In each of the following MS, Reid makes the same mistake: "Demonstration concludes necessarily so as that it is impossible the thing should be otherwise . . . There are many things to which Demonstrative Evidence cannot be applied nor ought it to be required." MS 4/II/12, 3-4; "Demonstration is chiefly used in Mathematical Conclusions and these indeed are peculiarly adapted to Reasoning of this kind." MS 4/I/26; "Mathematical Truths admit of Demonstration more than other truths" MS 4/I/19, 1.

"It is true, we often meet with L-demonstration in astronomy, in mechanics, and in other branches of natural philosophy; but I believe we shall always find that such L-demonstrations are grounded upon principles or suppositions, which have neither intuitive nor E-demonstrative evidence. ¶ Thus when we L-demonstrate, that the path of a projectile in vacuo is a parabola, we suppose that it is acted upon with the same force, and in the same direction through its whole path by gravity. This is not intuitively known, nor is it E-demonstrable: And in the L-demonstration, we reason from the laws of motion, which are principles not capable of E-demonstration, but grounded on a different kind of evidence."¹

3 CAUSAL EXPLANATIONS

We have seen that, in Reid's view, because we can perceive no necessary connection between any antecedent condition *C* and event *E*, we cannot explain *E* merely by reference to *C*. Put another way, our knowledge of the occurrence of *C* does not constitute sufficient evidence for the claim that *E* is to be expected. For we have only our experience of past conjunctions of *C* and *E*; and this gives us no guarantee that the future will resemble the past in this respect.²

We have also seen that the conjunction of law-statements with descriptions of antecedent conditions would, in Reid's view, constitute a valid deductive argument, the conclusion of which is a description of the phenomena in question: that is, we may infer that the phenomenon-to-be-explained is to be expected, given the laws of nature and the occurrence of certain antecedent conditions. In short, Reid held that the laws of nature *explain* regularities, in the sense that they provide us with some rational ground to which we can appeal when the Humean sceptic objects that we have no explanation as to why *this* event occurred in *these* conditions, rather than some other event.³

The problem with this account is that laws of nature, on Reid's view, are themselves contingent. Even if the laws are themselves explained by subsumption under higher-order laws, this approach will not give us the kind of explanation that would satisfy the Humean sceptic.⁴ One option is to conceive of the laws of nature as necessary truths. But this, as we have seen, is not an available option for Reid. Another possibility is to appeal, as Armstrong suggests, to an hypothesis which "traces back all appearance of contingency to a single necessary being, the Absolute, which is the sole reality."⁵

¹ IP, pp. 539-40.

² "experience informs us that they have been conjoined in time *past*: but no man ever had any experience of what is *future*: and this is the very question to be resolved" HM, p. 191.

³ Cf. "when making inferences to particular matters of unobserved fact . . . [it is] the supposed laws which ground our inferences. . . . on the supposition that there are no laws, the inferences would not be rational." D. M. Armstrong, *What is a Law of Nature?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983): p. 4.

⁴ Cf Armstrong, p. 159.

⁵ Armstrong rejects this option on account of its failure to produce explanatory results. Armstrong, p. 159.

Indeed, given Reid's occasionalism, it might look as if this is his preferred solution. For example, he writes:

"The chain of natural causes has, not unfitly, been compared to a chain hanging down from heaven: A link that is discovered supports the links below it, but it must itself be supported; and that which supports it must be supported, until we come to the first link, which is supported by the throne of the Almighty."¹

But precision is crucial here. We may perhaps best clarify what kind of explanation it is that Reid thinks the First Cause provides, by examining his discussion of Leibniz's Principle of Sufficient Reason as applied to natural phenomena, namely:

A₂₅ "for every event, . . . there must be a sufficient reason."²

Reid argues that the only plausible rendering of this principle, is to take 'sufficient reason' to refer to the explanans of a scientific explanation.³ But laws of nature are not, in Reid's view, causes; for a law is a mere conception of a general rule. Hence, Reid's appeal to laws as a sufficient reason, is not an attempt to provide a *causal* explanation.⁴ Laws of nature, then, are, in Reid's view, general rules conceived in the mind of God according to which God has a determination of the will or a 'fixed general purpose'⁵ to bring about, among other things, the general end of "enabling intelligent creatures to conduct their affairs with wisdom and prudence, and prosecute their ends by proper means."⁶ It is crucial to note that laws of nature do not necessitate God's action. Nor is he necessitated by any character trait, judgment or intention.⁷ In short, if, as Reid seems

¹ IP, p. 115.

² AP, p. 334. (The original italicization of this sentence has been removed.)

³ "When we say that a Philosopher has assigned a sufficient reason for such a phænomenon, What is the meaning of this? The meaning surely is, That he has accounted for it from the known laws of nature. The sufficient reason of a phænomenon of nature must therefore be some law or laws of nature, of which the phænomenon is a necessary consequence." AP, pp. 337-38.

⁴ "When an event is produced according to a known law of nature, the law of nature is not the efficient cause of any event. It is only the rule, according to which the efficient cause acts. A law is a thing conceived in the mind of a rational being, not a thing that has a real existence; and, therefore, like a motive, it can neither act nor be acted upon, and consequently cannot be an efficient cause. If there be no being that acts according to the law, it produces no effect." AP, 344; cf. "The laws of nature are the rules according to which the effects are produced; but there must be a cause which operates according to these rules." AP, p. 47.

⁵ For an examination of Reid's account of fixed general purposes, see Chapter 3, § 3.4. The application of the term 'general fixed purpose' in this context is, I suggest, confirmed by Reid's letter to James Gregory, in which he states: "A law of nature is a purpose or resolution of the author of nature, to act according to a certain rule . . . There must be a real agent to produce the phenomenon *according* to the law." WH, p. 66b. Thus, where Reid states that some events are "directed by particular acts of the Divine government", (AP, p. 338), I take this to refer to the 'particular fixed purposes' of God.

⁶ AP, p. 338.

⁷ "These laws of nature neither restrain the power of the Author of nature, nor bring him under any obligation to do nothing beyond their sphere." AP, pp. 344-45; "Every natural cause must have a cause, until we ascend to the first cause, which is uncaused, and operates not by necessity but by will." IP, p. 115.

to think, God's free action may be thought of as, in some sense, analogous to our own free actions, then we may present Reid's *causal* explanation of the regularities in nature as follows (A full explanation of this kind of analysis is given in § 7):

A₂₆ Antecedent circumstances *C* and event *E* are constantly conjoined in nature if and only if God's judgment regarding what is best upon the whole inclines him toward the exertion of his power of liberty so as to bring about a determination of will to act according to the rule: if, at any future time or place, *C* occurs, then bring about *E*.¹

We have seen that our belief that the future will resemble the past, is, in Reid's view, a first principle. However, he also held that this belief could be confirmed by reasoning: for we may appeal to the same kind of evidence we have for consistency in the future free actions of human agents. That is, our belief in the continuance of the laws of nature may be based on the evidence we have for the following two propositions:

- (1) God is consistently wise and good in exerting his power of liberty;
- (2) God's character is such that he is consistent in adhering to the determinations of his will.²

If God failed to adhere uniformly to the laws of nature, human agents could learn nothing from what is past, and their experience would be of no use to them. In such a case, they would be unable to bring about their own ends by efficient and proper means; and, as a consequence, would either be unlikely to survive as a species; or they would be unable to act with wisdom and prudence.³ But these would be the general ends of a wise and good creator. Hence, to the extent that we find regularities in nature, (1) and (2) tend thereby to be confirmed.⁴

¹ Del Ratzsch presents a contemporary defense of this kind of account regarding the laws of nature. In Chapter 3, I present Reid's attempt to fill the "one substantial incompleteness" Ratzsch acknowledges in his paper: namely, an explanation of the "relationship among character, choice and freedom". Ratzsch, p. 205. Cf. Strawson on occasionalism versus the regularity theory: "at least the Cartesians have God as the reason why there is regularity in nature. Their view is not simply crazy. But the standard modern 'Humean' view apparently has *nothing at all* as the reason why there is regularity in nature. And so it is that some positivists and 'Humeans', congratulating themselves on purging the excesses of the bad old metaphysics, finish up with the most rococo, the most magical metaphysics ever proposed." Strawson, pp.199-200, n.2.

² See Chapter 3, § 3.4 for a detailed examination of Reid's view of character, and what is involved in adhering to the determinations of one's will.

³ "We perceive that Nature is governed by fixed laws, and that if it were not so, there could be no such thing as prudence in human conduct; there would be no fitness in any means to promote an end; and what, on one occasion, promoted it, might as probably, on another occasion, obstruct it." IP, p. 603.

⁴ "if we believe that there is a wise and good Author of nature, we may see a good reason, why he should continue the same laws of nature, and the same connections of things, for a long time: because, if he did otherwise, we could learn nothing from what is past, and all our experience would be of no use to us. . . . this consideration, when we come to the use of reason, may confirm our belief of the continuance of the present course of nature" HM, p. 47.

And if, in any particular instance, God ‘suspends’ or ‘counteracts’ a law of nature,¹ he would do so precisely because he has judged that adherence to the law, in that circumstance, would fail to be what is best upon the whole: for example, bringing it about that human agents are, thereby, induced to acknowledge a dependency upon his providential power and purposes.²

4 TELEOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

Reid does not consider inquiries into the efficient causes of natural phenomena to be the proper task for ‘natural philosophy’. Rather they are to be thought of as a branch of ‘natural theology’ or ‘metaphysics’. The fixed purposes of God, Reid argues, are not discoverable by experiment and induction. The task of natural philosophy therefore is merely to discover, by “just induction”, the laws of nature; and so, it should be neutral with respect to any theological interpretation. For example, any claim regarding design or purpose, or, more precisely, whether or not there is a Supreme Being who acts according to the laws of nature to bring about certain general ends, is, Reid held, a matter to be decided upon by the metaphysician.³

Although Reid thus made a clear division between natural philosophy and metaphysics, he nevertheless argued that design and purpose could be ‘seen’ in natural phenomena: “final causes, good causes, are seen plainly everywhere: in the heavens and in the earth; in the constitution of every body and of mind”.⁴ More precisely, Reid argued that it was a first principle of metaphysics that:

NP_{M3} “design and intelligence in the cause, may be inferred, with certainty, from marks or signs of it in the effect.”⁵

Reid’s expression of this principle is ambiguous, and therefore requires comment.⁶

¹ AP, p. 345; cf. AP, p. 338.

² “it may be fit, that some particular events should not be fixed by general laws, but be directed by particular acts of the Divine government, that so his reasonable creatures may have sufficient inducement to supplicate his aid, his protection and direction, and to depend upon him for the success of their honest designs” AP, p. 338.

³ Letter to Kames, WH, p. 58a. See also Reid’s letter to Kames, 1 Oct. 1782 in Ross, pp. 60-61. This view is consistent with Hempel and Oppenheim’s condition of adequacy, (R3): Teleological explanations, they argue, “are intended somehow to express the idea that the purposes they refer to are inherent in the design of the universe, then clearly they are not capable of empirical test” Hempel and Oppenheim, “Studies in the Logic of Explanation”, p. 16

⁴ Letter to Kames, WH, p. 58b.

⁵ IP, p. 621.

⁶ Additional expressions of this principle are as follows: “from certain signs or indications in the effect, we may infer, that there must have been intelligence, wisdom, or other intellectual or moral qualities in the cause” IP, p. 628; “it is . . . a part of the human constitution, to judge of mens characters, and of their intellectual powers, from the signs of them in their actions and discourse . . . intelligence, wisdom, and other mental qualities in the cause, may be inferred from their marks or signs in the effect.” IP, p. 622; “That effects which have all the marks and tokens of design must proceed from a designing cause.” IP, p. 626.

First, NP_{M3} should not, I suggest, be read as follows:

NP_{M3} If argument A is such that (i) its premises assert that some event E exhibits signs of design and intelligence, and (ii) its conclusion asserts that E was brought about by the design and intelligence of some cause, then A is a sound argument.

Reid goes to considerable length in his discussion of NP_{M3} to show that we do not construct any such inference. Indeed, Reid mentions that he is aware of such an argument, based on the doctrine of chances, which attempts to show that it is improbable that the “regular arrangement of parts” in nature, “should not be the effect of design”. But even if this argument were sound, Reid argues, it could not be the means by which we have arrived at this belief. For (i) the argument is based upon a branch of mathematics that is less than a hundred years old; (ii) the conclusion would be more certain than the doctrine of chances upon which the argument depends; (iii) the argument is likely to be circular, given that the doctrine of chances may itself be a particular instance of the conclusion.¹

In short, the phrase “inferred, with certainty” should be taken in the same sense of the word “must” in NP_{M1} (“the thoughts we are conscious of must have a subject, which we call mind”²). For, as the following text indicates, Reid held that NP_{M3} produces the same kind of conception as NP_{M1} , that is, a mere relative conception:

“The mind is not an immediate object either of sense or of consciousness. We may therefore justly conclude, that the necessary connection between thought and a mind, or thinking being, is not learned from experience. ¶ The same reasoning may be applied to the connection between a work excellently fitted for some purpose, and design in the author or cause of that work. One of these, to wit, the work, may be an immediate object of perception. But the design and purpose of the author cannot be an immediate object of perception; and therefore experience can never inform us of any connection between the one and the other, far less of a necessary connection.”³

In other words, Reid’s claim is that we have a mere relative conception of “design and intelligence in the cause”, which arises immediately within us upon obtaining direct conception of “marks or signs of it in the effect”. More precisely:

¹ IP, p. 626.

² IP, p. 612.

³ IP, pp. 627-28.

A₂₇ *S* knows that event *E* was brought about by the design and purpose of cause *C* if and only if (i) *S* has a direct conception of *E*, (ii) *S* does not have a direct conception of the design and purpose of *C* and (iii) upon attending to *E*, *S* immediately judges that *E* must have been brought about by the design and purpose of *C*.

What, then, is the task of the natural theologian, in Reid's view? Given A₂₇, Reid's view is clearly not that she must defend or advocate her beliefs by constructing various design or cosmological arguments.¹ For we are so constituted, in Reid's view, that such beliefs are not formed on the evidence of reasoning. The natural theologian's task is, rather, as follows: Suppose a natural philosopher explains the occurrence of some event *E* by deduction from the occurrence of antecedent conditions *C* and a certain law of nature *L*. The aim of the natural theologian would then be to show that *C* is conjoined to *E* just because God's judgment regarding what is best upon the whole inclined him toward the exertion of his power of liberty to bring about a determination of will to act according to *L*, so as to bring about the general end of, say, the preservation and well-being of some organism.

Now while the natural theologian may, and, indeed, should use the findings of natural philosophy, she cannot construct an argument from those findings to her conclusion. For natural philosophy provides her with only contingent premises. And her conclusion is that *E* must have been brought about by the design and purpose of the Supreme Being, which, Reid argues, is a necessary truth.² Hence, the best she can do, by way of persuasion, is (i) to remove the prejudices that her audience holds against *E*, and (ii) to exhibit *E* in such a way that her audience perceives that it has the 'marks' of a first principle.³ The effect of this procedure, Reid suggests, would be that her audience might find themselves, upon attending to *E*, with the immediately formed judgment that *E* must have been brought about by the design and purpose of the Agent in question. In Reid's terms, she must 'appeal to their common sense'.⁴

¹ Stalley, among others, is thus mistaken in his interpretation of Reid at this point. (Stalley, pp. 280-81.)

² We cannot "learn from experience that certain effects must proceed from a designing and intelligent cause. Experience informs us only of what has been, but never of what must be." IP, p. 627.

³ "There are ways by which the evidence of first principles may be made more apparent when they are brought into dispute; but they require to be handled in a way peculiar to themselves. Their evidence is not demonstrative, but intuitive. They require not proof, but to be placed in a proper point of view." IP, p. 39. See Chapter 4 § 10 for an examination of the 'marks' of a first principle.

⁴ By way of example, Reid quotes from Cicero and from Tillotson, commenting thus: "Now, in all this discourse I see very good sense, and what is apt to convince every unprejudiced mind; but I see not in the whole a single step of reasoning. It is barely an appeal to every man's common sense." IP, p. 624; "although there is much good sense, as well as wit, . . . I cannot find one *medium* of proof in the whole." IP, p. 626.

5 VOLUNTARY ACTION

Reid's claim that human agents may bring about a change by the exertion of their powers, requires a considerable degree of qualification and explanation. For instance, Reid does not claim that *every* power of the mind may be thus exerted by the agent; or so I shall argue.

We can find in Reid a distinction between what I shall call first-order and second-order powers of the mind:

- D₁₁ Second-order power = *df* a power of the mind that (i) stands in an asymmetrical epistemic or active relation to certain first-order powers; and (ii) is lawfully connected to other first-order powers.
- D₁₂ First-order power = *df* a power of the mind that (i) stands in an epistemic or active relation to external things¹; and (ii) is lawfully connected to other first-order powers.

An example of a second-order power is the power of consciousness, which stands in an asymmetrical epistemic relation to all other powers of mind: consciousness, when exerted, give us "that immediate knowledge which we have of . . . all the present operations of our minds".² But the operations of which we are conscious, are not the means by which we know of our consciousness.³ Again, the power of consciousness is lawfully connected to the power of judgment, in that, if *x* is an object of *S*'s consciousness, then *x* is an object of *S*'s judgment.⁴

An example of a first-order power is perception, which stands in an epistemic relation to external objects: the power of perception, when exerted, gives us "the evidence which we have of external objects by our senses".⁵ Again, like consciousness, perception is lawfully connected to the first-order power of judgment, in that, if *x* is an object of *S*'s perception, then *x* is an object of *S*'s judgment.

Now, to say that a second-order power stands in an asymmetrical *active* relation to a first-order power is just to say that: (i) were the agent to exert the second-order power, this would bring about an exertion (or the cessation of an exertion) in some first-order

¹ The relation is not, by definition, asymmetrical, given that the object of a first-order power of the mind might be another mind. See Chapter 1, § 6 for Reid's account of what constitutes an 'external thing'.

² IP, p. 17.

³ See Keith Lehrer's "Reid on Consciousness" *Reid Studies* 1 (1986-87): pp. 1-9, for a discussion on the regress problem that appears to threaten Reid's view of consciousness by virtue of the fact that consciousness is itself an operation of mind, and therefore, such that we must be conscious of it.

⁴ "It is a Law of our Nature that the Operations of our Minds are attended with Consciousness, so that every man who thinks, knows by his Consciousness that he does think; and this Consciousness gives him infallible assurance of the Fact." MS 4/II/1, 48.

⁵ IP, p. 16.

power; and (ii) there is no first-order power such that its exertion could bring about the exertion of a second-order power. As it happens, there is only one second-order power that bears such a relation to a first-order power, namely, the will:

- D₁₃ The will = *df* a second-order power, the exertion of which involves the agent's determining to exert or not to exert a first-order power.¹
- D₁₄ Volition (or willing) = *df* the exertion of the will.²

Not all first-order powers stand in an active relation to the will. Those that do not, are called "mechanical powers"³; those that do are called "active powers":

- D₁₅ Active power = *df* a first-order power of the mind the exertion of which (i) is brought about by the agent's volition and which (ii) enables the agent to bring about an effect.⁴
- D₁₆ Mechanical power = *df* a first-order power of the mind the exertion of which (i) is not brought about by the agent's volition and which (ii) brings about an effect.

An action is said to be 'voluntary' if and only if it is subject to the will. More precisely, an exertion of some power of the mind in producing an effect is voluntary if and only if that exertion is brought about by the agent's volition. And since, by definition, only the exertion of active powers are brought about by the agent's volition, Reid distinguishes voluntary from involuntary acts in the following manner.

- D₁₇ Voluntary action = *df* the production of an effect by the exertion of an active power.⁵
- D₁₈ Involuntary action = *df* the production of an effect by the exertion of a mechanical power.

¹ "[The will is the] determination of the mind to do, or not to do something which we conceive to be in our power." AP, p. 60.

² "Volition . . . signifies the act of willing and determining, and will is put indifferently to signify either the power of willing or the act." AP, p. 59.

³ AP, p. 109. It should be noted that Reid does not always use this term to refer to powers of the mind, but also to the 'powers' ascribed to body (see IP, p. 253). The distinction between both uses of the term may be cashed out in terms of strict or literal usage. Given Reid's view that no body can, strictly speaking, be a cause, the term 'power', in its strict sense, is not applicable to body.

⁴ Many Reid commentators have used the term 'active power' to refer to the power of liberty and the power of the will. Reid is indeed ambiguous in his usage: in some instances, 'active power' is described in a way that would include the powers of liberty and the will: "Active power . . . is a quality in the cause, which enables it to produce the effect" AP, p. 276. Yet on other occasions, Reid uses the term to pick out just those first-order powers that are subject to the will, the implication being that the will is not itself an active power: "we are unable to conceive any active power to be exerted without will." AP, p. 38. For the purposes of clarity and consistency, I will use the term 'active power' only as defined in D₁₅, and shall refer to the 'power of liberty' and 'power of the will' using only those specific terms.

⁵ This definition assumes that the exertion of an active power is always brought about by the agent's volition: and hence, that volition is an essential component of any voluntary action. As Reid states, "In every voluntary action, the determination of the will is the first part of the action" AP, pp. 272-73.

6 FREE ACTION

The exertion of the will, as we have seen, involves a determination to exert or not to exert a certain kind of power to a certain degree. But what is it that brings about one particular determination, rather than another? If it is not the agent, then, Reid argues, the agent is not free with respect to his voluntary actions. For voluntary actions are brought about by a determination of will; and if the bringing or not bringing about of any such determination is not 'up to the agent', that is, if it is not within his power to will or not to will some voluntary action, then he is clearly not free with respect to that action.¹ More precisely, where *S* is an agent, *D* is a particular determination of *S*'s will, and ϕ is that voluntary action consequent to *D*, Reid holds that:

A₂₈ *S* freely brings about ϕ if and only if *S* brings about *D* and *S* could have refrained from bringing about *D*.

Now to say that a determination of the will is 'brought about', is to say that it is an effect. But an effect can only be brought about by the exertion of a power. Thus Reid posits what might be classified as a 'third-order' power of the mind, that is, a power bearing an asymmetrical active relation to the will. Reid calls this 'the power of liberty'.

D₁₉ The power of liberty = *df* a power of the mind, the exertion of which (i) is brought about by the agent, and which (ii) enables the agent to bring or not to bring about a particular determination of the will.²

Thus, in Reid's view, no voluntary action ϕ is such that it is within the agent's power to will or not to will ϕ , unless the determination of will to produce ϕ is brought about by the exertion of the agent's power of liberty. That is:

A₂₉ *S* brings about *D* and *S* could have refrained from bringing about *D* only if *S* exerts her power of liberty in bringing about *D*.

¹ "If, in any action, he had power to will what he did, or not to will it, in that action he is free. But if, in every voluntary action, the determination of his will be the necessary consequence of something involuntary in the state of his mind, or of something in his external circumstances, he is not free" AP, p. 267; cf. "If the person was the cause of that determination of his own will, he was free in that action, But, if another being was the cause of this determination, either by producing it immediately, or by means and instruments under his direction, then the determination is the act and deed of that being" AP, p. 273.

² "I consider the determination of the will as an effect. This effect must have a cause which had power to produce it", AP, p. 273; "By the *liberty* of a moral agent, I understand, a power over the determinations of his own will. . . . This liberty supposes the agent to have understanding and will; for the determinations of the will are the sole object about which this power is employed." AP, p. 267; "Liberty . . . extends to the determinations of the will only, and not to what is consequent to the will." AP, p. 272; "I grant, then, that an effect uncaused is a contradiction, and that an event uncaused is an absurdity. The question that remains is whether a volition, undetermined by motives, is an event uncaused. This I deny. The cause of the volition is the man that willed it." Letter to Gregory, WH., p. 88a.

It follows from A_{28} and A_{29} that an agent is free with respect to the production of an effect by the exertion of an active power if and only if the determination of her will to bring about that effect is brought about by the exertion of her power of liberty. In short:

A_{30} S freely brings about ϕ if and only if S exerts her power of liberty in bringing about D .

7 THE REGRESS OBJECTION

There is a serious problem with this account of freedom. As we have seen, Reid holds it to be a first principle that:

- (1) Every event E must have a cause which, by the exertion of its power, brings about E .¹

The problem is that Reid also thought of the exertions of power as effects; but since all effects are events, it follows that:

- (2) Every exertion of power is an event.

And so, Reid must also hold that:

- (3) Every exertion of power E must have a cause which, by the exertion of its power, brings about E .

We have seen that Reid holds that the determination of the will, being an effect, must have been brought about by the exertion of the power of liberty. But it follows from (3) that the exertion of the power of liberty itself must have been brought about by the exertion of yet another power in the agent. In short, (3) generates an infinite regress of powers and exertions of those powers. This regress is, of course, fatal to Reid's account of freedom. To bring about any determination of the will, the agent must bring about an infinite series of exertions. But then no agent can bring about any determination of will. Hence, no agent can perform free actions.²

¹ "In order to the production of any effect, there must be in the cause, not only power, but the exertion of that power" AP, p. 276; "every event must have a cause which had power to produce it" AP, p. 313; "an event uncaused is an absurdity" Letter to Gregory, H., p. 88a.

² I discovered this regress problem independently of reading Rowe's almost identical objection: "When conjoined with the principle that every event has a cause, Reid's theory of agent-causation leads to the absurdity of an infinite regress of agent-produced exertions for every act of will the agent produces." William Rowe, "Two Concepts of Freedom", *Proceedings and Addresses of APA*, vol. 61, no.1 (1987): pp. 53-54. See also William Rowe, *Thomas Reid on Freedom and Morality* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991): Chap. 8.

By way of clarification, the objection here is not that a regress arises if we couple (1) with the claim that every cause is an event-cause.¹ For Reid's view, as we have seen, is that only agents are causes. Rather the problem arises just because Reid claims that an agent cannot bring about an event other than by the exertion of some power, *and* that any such exertion is itself an event.²

William Rowe offers two possible solutions to the regress problem.³ The first requires, as Rowe acknowledges, a "significant change in Reid's view of agent-causation".⁴ First, Reid would need to incorporate the notion of a "basic act":

D₂₀ Basic act = *df* an exertion of power which the agent *directly* brings about, that is, not by any prior exertion of power.

Second, he could then argue that the agent *directly* brings about the determination of her will. In other words, he could modify A₃₀ as follows:

A₃₁ S freely brings about ϕ if and only if S's bringing about of D is a basic act: that is, S does not bring about D by any prior exertion of power.⁵

Since no prior exertion of power would thus be involved in bringing about the determination of will, the regress of exertions would have been effectively blocked.

The problem with this view is that it does not, as Rowe thinks, require a mere modification to Reid's view of agent-causation, but rather a wholesale rejection of that view. As we have seen, Reid's account of freedom depends crucially on his claim that the determination of the will is "effect" brought about by the power of liberty. And

¹ Cf. "Two Concepts of Freedom", p.50.

² The regress problem arises in a slightly different manner, as a consequence of Reid's presentation of the following argument: "In common life, when men speak of what is, or is not, in a man's power, they attend only to the external and visible effects, which only can be perceived, and which only can affect them. Of these, it is true, that nothing is in a man's power, but what depends upon his will, and this is all that is meant by this common saying ¶ But this is so far from excluding his will from being in his power, that it necessarily implies it. For to say that what depends upon the will is in a man's power, but the will is not in his power, is to say that the end is in his power, but the means necessary to that end are not in his power, which is a contradiction." AP, p. 274. Now, Reid holds that any particular determination of the will is the end, or effect, of which the exertion of the power of liberty is the necessary means. It follows from his argument above, therefore, that the exertion of the power of liberty must be in our power. But that is just to say that there must be some further power, the exertion of which is the necessary means for bringing about the exertion of the power of liberty, and so on, *ad infinitum*.

³ Rowe rejects other options as inconsistent with Reid's other views: "we must either accept the absurdity of the infinite regress, view some act of the agent as itself uncaused (thus abandoning the causal principle [i.e. NP_{MD}]), or take the view that an act of will is not itself an event and, therefore, does not fall under the causal principle. This last move, however, would leave the act of will as a surd in Reid's theory and plainly conflicts with his stated position that acts of will are effects." Rowe, "Two Concepts of Freedom", p. 54.

⁴ Rowe, "Two Concepts of Freedom", p. 54.

⁵ "Acts of will that are produced by the agent whose acts they are, we shall say, are such that the agent causes them but not by any other act or any exertion of the power she has to produce the acts of will." Rowe, "Two Concepts of Freedom", p. 54.

Reid explicitly denies the possibility of an agent bringing about an effect *without* the prior exertion of some power. The analysis in A₃₁ is not, therefore, available to Reid.

One option that may be available to Reid, is this:¹ Reid states that some universal propositions admit exceptions, in particular, propositions that express an asymmetrical causal relation. That is, when we say that ‘all things depend upon *x*’, *x* itself is not included in the subject term:

“In many propositions which we express universally, there is an exception necessarily implied, and therefore always understood. Thus when we say that all things depend upon GOD, GOD himself is necessarily excepted. In like manner, when we say, that all that is in our power depends upon the will, the will itself is necessarily excepted: For if the will be not, nothing else can be in our power.”²

We can use this line of reasoning to construct a deductive argument from premises that Reid holds, to a conclusion which states that exertions of the power of liberty are not events. First, Reid, as we have seen, holds that:

- (4) All exertions of power are (ultimately) brought about by an exertion of the power of liberty in a cause.

Of course, Reid would mean by this that the class denoted by the subject term in (4) *excludes* exertions of the power of liberty. Second, Reid also held that:

- (5) All exertions of the power of liberty in a cause (ultimately) bring about events.

And (4) together with (5), yields the conclusion that :

- (6) All exertions of power are events.

However, since the subject term of (4) does not include exertions of the power of liberty, neither can the subject term of (6): that is, if (4) and (5) are true, the exertion of the power of liberty cannot be an event. Hence, we can deny (2), and replace it with the following:

- (2*) Every exertion of power, *except* the exertion of the power of liberty, is an event.

Since (3) does not therefore apply, there is no need for some prior exertion of power to produce the exertion of the power of liberty; and so, the regress is blocked. Put another way, the agent *directly* brings about the exertion of the power of liberty, not by any prior exertion of power: the exertion of the power of liberty is thus a basic act.

¹ This option is similar to Rowe’s second solution, but is expressed in a manner that has more substantive textual support. See “Two Concepts of Freedom”, p. 63, n.19.

² AP, p. 274.

The problem, of course, is that this is precisely the kind of move we could have made (and indeed tried to make) with respect to the determination of the will: that is, by revising (2) to the following:

(2**) Every exertion of power, *except* the exertion of the power of will, is an event.

So why should we attribute (2*) to Reid, but not (2**)? There are two reasons: First, if (2**) were true, then the exertion of the power of will could not be an effect; and if (2*) is false, Reid must face an infinite regress. In either case, Reid's account of freedom would collapse. Second, Reid explicitly states that "the determination of the will is an effect". Nowhere does he claim that the exertion of the power of liberty is an effect. It seems, then, that Reid could well have thought of the exertion of the power of liberty as a basic act. We can therefore modify Reid's definition of liberty thus:

D₂₀ The power of liberty = *df* a power of the mind, the exertion of which (i) is a basic act, and which (ii) enables the agent to bring about or not to bring about a particular determination of the will.

3

Principles of Action

INTRODUCTION

Our exposition of Reid's account of voluntary action is, as yet, lacking a crucial element: namely, the principles that influence or motivate the agent to act, such as beliefs, passions, and instincts. Now exertions of the power of judgment or belief, as we shall see, arise upon the 'influence' or 'government' of certain 'principles of belief'; principles which Reid also calls the 'original evidences'. In other words, Reid's concept of evidence falls, into the category of principles of action. This point in itself is central to understanding his concept of epistemic justification. However, there are three kinds of principles of action in Reid's taxonomy: 'animal', 'rational' and 'mechanical'; and, as we shall see, it is of utmost importance that we correctly identify into which of these categories we ought to place Reid's concept of 'evidence'. To this end, however, we must first explore Reid's concept of the principles of action.

1 INCLINATIONS

Having the power of liberty over the determinations of will is necessary, but not sufficient for the agent's bringing about some effect. For without some "preceding state of the mind" to *incline us toward* some determination, Reid argues, we would never exercise our power of liberty over *any* determination, and so would be "altogether inactive, and never will to do any thing". In this section, I shall examine in detail Reid's account of this requirement.

First, these 'preceding states of mind' are otherwise called "principles of action". The relation between principles of action and their objects are picked out by a range of terms: "influence", "motive", "inclination", "impulse", "impulsive force", "tendency", "proneness", that which "disposes", "draws", "directs", "leads", "incites", and so on. For clarity, I shall refer to this relation by the single term "inclination" (and cognates). The *direct object* of this inclination, or that which the principle immediately inclines, appears to be the agent. The *indirect object*, or that which the agent is inclined toward, is the exertion of some power. Thus:

D₂₁ Principles of action = *df* that which inclines an agent toward the exertion of a certain power² of the mind so as to bring about an effect.³

¹ AP, p. 66.

² I have used the term 'power' rather than 'active power', because some principles of action, namely

Reid argues that there are three basic kinds of principles of action: rational, animal and mechanical, each of which is defined by its relation to the power of will and “practical judgment”, which Reid defines as follows:

D₂₂ Practical judgment = *df* “the judgment to discern one determination [of the will] to be preferable to another, either in itself, or for some purpose which [the agent] intends”.¹

The three basic kinds of principles may thus be defined as follows:²

D₂₃ Mechanical principles (instincts, habits) = *df* that which inclines an agent toward the exertion of a power of the mind to produce an effect, without the exertion of the agent’s will or practical judgment.³

D₂₄ Animal principles (appetites, affections, passions) = *df* that which inclines an agent toward a particular determination of the will, without the exertion of the agent’s practical judgment.⁴

D₂₅ Rational principles (prudence, duty) = *df* that which inclines an agent toward the exertion of her power of liberty to bring about a particular determination of the will, and which involves the exertion of the agent’s practical judgment.⁵

Although the logic of ‘inclination’ requires the agent for its direct object, this does not entail that the agent is causally responsible for *all* the resulting exertions to which he or she is inclined thereby. For instance, animal and mechanical principles incline the agent toward the exertion of some power without the exertion of the will; but no involuntary action can be said to have been brought about by the agent.⁶ In short, the term ‘agent’ in D₂₃ and D₂₄ should not be taken to imply agency or causality. It merely picks out that substance of which the exerted power is an attribute.

mechanical principles, are not subject to the will and so do not fall under Reid’s strict sense of the term ‘active power’, which is the *only* sense of the term used in this exposition.

³ “By *principles* of action, I understand every thing that incites us to act.” AP, p. 77.

¹ AP, p. 267.

² Reid leaves the term ‘intention’ (and cognates) undefined. My suggestion is that he thought of intention as a purpose or resolution to perform an action to bring about some end; in which case intentions would fall into Reid’s category of general and particular fixed purposes (See § 3.4). But fixed purposes are acts of the will; hence, we may take intentions to be included in references to ‘will’, as indeed I have done in the following definitions.

³ “Mechanical principles produce their effect without any will or intention on our part.” AP, p. 205; “By instinct . . . and by habit, we do many things without any exercise either of judgment or will.” AP, p. 67.

⁴ Animal principles “operate upon the will and intention, but do not suppose any exercise of judgment or reason.” AP, 121. “Appetite, affection, or passion, give an impulse to a certain action. In this impulse there is no judgment implied.” AP, p. 68.

⁵ “Rational principles . . . , in all their exertions, require, not only intention and will, but judgment or reason.” AP, p. 205.

⁶ As we shall see, it does not follow that agents are in no way morally accountable for those actions toward which they are inclined by animal or mechanical principles. For example, an agent may exert his will so as to *resist* their inclination.

2 MORAL LIBERTY

We have seen that there are two principles of action, animal and rational, which incline an agent toward determinations of the will. We have also seen that only the rational principles incline the agent toward the exertion of the power of liberty over a particular determination of the will. But why should we think this? Can we not say that animal principles also incline an agent toward the exertion of the power of liberty? Reid takes this as a serious possibility, and thus distinguishes between what we may call *mere* liberty, and what he calls *moral* liberty:

- A₃₂ An agent has *moral* liberty over determination of the will *D* only if a rational principle inclines her toward the exertion of her power of liberty to bring about *D*.
- A₃₃ An agent has *mere* liberty over determination of the will *D* only if it is an animal principle alone¹ that inclines her toward the exertion of her power of liberty to bring about *D*.

Now although Reid thinks that mere liberty is a possibility,² he argues that no actual being has it: As we shall see, a determination of the will is morally evaluable only if a rational principle inclines the agent toward the exertion of her power of liberty to bring about that determination. Hence, no determination of the will brought about by mere liberty is morally evaluable. But then there is no difference, in respect of moral evaluability, between (i) an animal principle inclining an agent toward *the exertion of her power of liberty to bring about* a determination of the will, and (ii) an animal principle inclining an agent *merely* toward a determination of the will. The power of mere liberty is therefore a power without a purpose. But no power is given in vain. Hence, no actual being has mere liberty.³

In sum, having the power of liberty over the determinations of the will is not sufficient for moral liberty: the agent must be inclined toward the exercise of that power by a rational principle.

¹ An agent may be inclined by both rational and animal principles in exerting her moral liberty (see § 4).

² Weinstock argues that Reid is inconsistent in allowing this possibility: "Although Reid first tells us that power over one's will implies judgment and reason, very shortly afterwards he tells us that it is at least conceivable that this power may be possessed by a being who has no reasoning abilities at all." Jerome A. Weinstock, "Reid's Definition of Freedom", *Philosophical Monographs* 3 (1976): p. 97. But these claims must be correctly interpreted. Reid's point is simply that, in the actual world, any agent with the power of liberty will also have judgment and reason just because there would be no purpose in giving such a power to a being who does not have judgment and reason. There is no inconsistency here. For a slightly different solution, see W. D. Hazelton, "On an Alleged Inconsistency in Reid's Theory of Moral Liberty", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 16 (1978): pp. 453-55.

³ AP, p. 268.

3 MANAGEMENT OF THE ANIMAL PRINCIPLES

Reid likens the mind to a “state”, or “commonwealth”, in which the “good of the whole” requires a division of powers into two classes: those that “ought to govern” and those that “ought to be subordinate”.¹ In the former class, Reid places the rational principles; in the latter, the animal principles.² This subordination does not entail that animal principles are such that they ought *never* to incline the agent. Actions that arise from the inclination of animal principles alone are not, in themselves, morally evaluable.³ It is only when any such inclination stands in *opposition* to a rational principle, that the agent ought to exert his power of liberty so as to resist the inclination of that animal principle. In such cases, the agent is morally accountable, not for being inclined by an animal principle, but rather for resisting or not resisting those animal principles that she believes she ought to resist.

In this section, I shall articulate the detail of Reid’s account regarding the management of the animal principles.

3.1 MORAL OBLIGATION

To say that an animal principle *ought* to be resisted, is to say that we have a *moral obligation* to so resist. But what precisely is a ‘moral obligation’ in Reid’s view? First, it is not, Reid argues, an attribute of either the action or the agent: but rather a *relation* between the two. For an agent cannot be under a moral obligation if there is no action which he is obligated to perform. Likewise, it makes little sense to say that an action ought to be performed, where no agent is under a moral obligation to do so. Thus:

A₃₄ Moral obligation *M* exists if and only if there exists some agent *S* and some action ϕ such that *S* bears the relation *M* to ϕ .⁴

Now certain conditions must be satisfied if the relation of moral obligation is to hold. Where an agent *S* is culpably ignorant of *p* if and only if it is within *S*’s power and means to bring it about that she knows that *p*, but fails to do so.⁵

¹ AP, pp. 187-88, 233-34.

² AP, pp. 72, 75-6.

³ “our natural appetites have in themselves neither virtue nor vice” AP, p. 130.

⁴ AP, p. 234.

⁵ AP, p. 235; cf. An agent “may be very culpable for not using the means of having his judgment better informed.” AP, p. 256; “culpable ignorance does not excuse a fault” AP, p. 326; “The axiom, That invincible ignorance takes away all blame, is only a particular case of the general axiom, That there can be no moral obligation to what is impossible; the former is grounded upon the latter, and can have no other foundation.” AP, p. 326.

- A₃₅ *S* is morally obliged to perform action ϕ only if (i) *S* has moral liberty over the determination of her will to bring about ϕ , and (ii) *S* is not culpably ignorant of her obligation to perform ϕ .¹

3.2 RESISTING ANIMAL PRINCIPLES

As we have seen, Reid states that an action is free just in case some rational principle of action inclines the agent toward exerting her power of liberty over some determination of the will. We have also seen that the inclination of an animal principle is not thus mediated by the power of liberty. The question is, what would occur if an animal principle were opposed to a rational principle? Surely, to preserve the agent's freedom to act according to the rational principle, the inclination of the animal principle cannot be deterministic: that is to say, the agent must be able to *resist* such inclinations.² More precisely, let the relation of opposition be analysed as follows:

- A₃₆ Principles of action *A* and *B* are opposed for agent *S* if and only if (i) *A* inclines *S* toward a determination of the will to perform action ϕ at *t*, (ii) *B* inclines *S* toward a determination of the will to perform action γ at *t*, and (iii) *S* cannot perform both ϕ and γ at *t*.³

Suppose, then, that some rational principle is opposed to an animal principle. In such a contest, which inclination would prevail? First, as we shall see, Reid would hold that the rational principle certainly *ought* to prevail: for rational principles incline the agent toward either what is good upon the whole or duty.⁴ That is, where these are defined as follows:

- D₂₆ Good upon the whole (or what is prudent) = *df.* "That which, taken with all its discoverable connections and consequences, brings more good than ill."⁵

¹ Reid includes the following five necessary conditions for moral obligations, but they are all captured by (i), given our definition of moral liberty: (a) ϕ is a voluntary action; (b) ϕ is the action of *S* and not of some other agent; (c) *S* is an agent, not an inanimate thing; (d) *S* has understanding and will, and some degree of active power; (e) ϕ is within the sphere of *S*'s "natural power". Regarding condition (e), it is not clear to what kind of power Reid is referring. His use of the phrase elsewhere suggests that it denotes *every* power of which an agent is the subject: "Our natural power of discerning between right and wrong, needs the aid of instruction, education, exercise, and habit, as well as our other natural powers." AP, p. 255.

² AP, p. 267, pp. 272-73.

³ This analysis makes no reference to the strength of opposing principles; for two principles of action *A* and *B* may be opposed, even though the strength of *A* be neither equal to nor greater than *B*: for example, as we shall see, where *A* is the agent's judgment that he ought not to yield to *B*.

⁴ "in innumerable cases in common life, our animal principles draw us one way, while a regard to what is good on the whole, draws us the contrary way. . . . That in every conflict of this kind the rational principle ought to prevail, and the animal to be subordinate, is too evident to need, or to admit of proof." AP, p. 211.

⁵ AP, p. 210.

D₂₇ Duty = *df* “what we ought to do, what is fair and honest, what is approvable, what every man professes to be the rule of his conduct, what all men praise, and what is in itself laudable, though no man should praise it.”¹

Second, the rational principles *ought* to prevail only if (i) the agent can resist the inclinations of the animal principles; and (ii) the agent need not yield to the inclinations of the rational principles. In other words, the inclinations of both the rational and the animal principles must be such that they do not necessitate the determinations of the will.² Note, Reid’s use of the term “motive” is equivalent to “principle of action”:

“Motives . . . may be compared to advice, or exhortation, which leaves a man still at liberty. For in vain is advice given when there is not a power either to do, or to forbear what it recommends. In like manner, motives suppose liberty in the agent, otherwise they have no influence at all.”³

Reid’s account of this non-deterministic inclination is as follows: Animal and rational principles are not ‘things that exist’, but rather ‘things that are conceived’.⁴ But only things that exist can either act or be acted upon. Hence, these principles of action are not causes.⁵

This raises an important question: how is it that the inclination of a rational principle is able to prevail over an animal principle. Reid answer is this: if it were the case that, of two opposing principles *A* and *B*, *A* would prevail only if the impulsive force of *A* was

¹ AP, p. 228. Reid argues that what is good upon the whole for an agent coincides with her duty if and only if she inhabits a theistic universe: “While the world is under a wise and benevolent administration, it is impossible, that any man should, in the issue, be a loser by doing his duty.” AP, p. 264. A contemporary version of this view is advanced by G. Mavrodes, “Religion and the Queerness of Morality”, in *Rationality, Religious Belief & Moral Commitment* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986): pp. 213-26.

² I disagree here with Rowe’s interpretation: “when an animal motive occurs in a human agent in circumstances where no contrary motives are of equal force, then, providing the motive and the circumstance are causally sufficient for the agent’s lacking sufficient active power to overcome the force of that animal motive, I see no reason why that motive should not be viewed as the event-cause of the ensuing volition.” W. Rowe, *Thomas Reid*, pp. 177-78. As we shall see, Reid argues that *no* animal principle is utterly irresistible: or, in Rowe’s terminology, *no* conjunction of animal motive and circumstance is causally sufficient for an agent’s lacking sufficient active power to overcome the force of that motive. Hence, no motive (in a human) can be an event-cause of a volition.

³ AP, pp. 292.

⁴ See Chapter 4, § 4. for a full account of this distinction.

⁵ “the influence of motives is of a very different nature from that of efficient causes. They are neither causes nor agents. They suppose an efficient cause, and can do nothing without it. We cannot, without absurdity, suppose a motive, either to act, or to be acted upon; it is equally incapable of action and of passion; because it is not a thing that exists, but a thing that is conceived; it is what the schoolmen called an *ens rationis*. Motives, therefore, may *influence* to action, but they do not act.” AP, pp. 291-92. Rowe argues that this passage, “makes good sense *provided* Reid is restricting his discussion to rational motives.” W. Rowe, *Thomas Reid*, p. 177. However, as Rowe recognises, this passage occurs in a context in which Reid is referring to both animal and rational motives. The only text that might support Rowe’s view is where Reid admits that the term “motive” normally denotes the inclination of rational principles: “Let us next consider rational motives, to which the name of *motive* is more commonly and more properly given”. AP, p. 298. However, Reid does not state that *he* himself will be or has been using the term “motive” in this specific manner.

stronger than that of *B*, then the inclination of a rational principle would never prevail over the inclination of an animal principle. For the inclination of a rational principle has no impulsive force whatsoever. Its inclining power consists only in its “authority”, that is, in the agent’s judgment that she ought to resist the opposing animal principle.¹ In short, the inclination of a rational principle will prevail over an animal principle if and only if the agent exerts her power of liberty over the determination of her will: that is, the agent must, in such cases, exercise “self-government”²

Now if two principles are opposed, an agent cannot yield to both. Hence to ‘resist’ the inclination of an animal principle is just to ‘yield’ to an opposing rational principle. Moreover, since the function of a rational principle is to incline an agent toward the exertion of her power of liberty over some determination of the will, it follows that to yield to the inclination of a rational principle is just to exert one’s power of liberty over some determination of the will. Thus:

A₃₇ If, for agent *S*, a rational principle *A* is opposed to an animal principle *B*, then *A* will prevail if and only if *S* resists the inclination of *B*.

3.3 THE OBLIGATION TO RESIST ANIMAL PRINCIPLES

Reid holds that we are under a moral obligation to resist animal principles that are opposed to the rational principles.³ There are two important qualifications here. The first is this: Reid argues that we are not morally blameworthy for failing to resist an animal principle unless we have *judged* that we ought to resist it, that is, where moral blame and praise are properly ascribed according to the following principle:

A₃₈ *S* is morally praiseworthy in performing action ϕ if and only if *S* judges that she ought to perform ϕ ; and *S* is morally blameworthy in performing ϕ if and only if *S* judges that ϕ she ought not to perform ϕ .⁴

¹ “it may happen, that, when appetite draws one way, it may be opposed, not by any appetite or passion, but by some cool principle of action, which has authority without any impulsive force: . . . In cases of this kind, the man is convinced that he ought not to yield to appetite, yet there is not an equal or a greater impulse to oppose it.” AP, p. 129.

² “Every one knows, that when appetite draws one way, duty, decency, or even interest, may draw the contrary way; and that appetite may give a stronger impulse than any one of these, or even all of them conjoined. Yet it is certain, that, in every case of this kind, appetite ought to yield to any of these principles when it stands opposed to them. It is in such cases that self-government is necessary.” AP, p. 130.

³ “though our natural appetites have in themselves neither virtue nor vice, though the acting merely from appetite, when there is no principle of greater authority to oppose it, be a matter indifferent; yet there may be a great deal of virtue or of vice in the management of our appetites; and that the power of self-government is necessary for their regulation.” AP, pp. 130-31. cf. AP, p. 211, p. 76.

⁴ “If he does a materially good action, without any belief of its being good, but from some other principle, it is no good action in him. And if he does it with the belief of its being ill, it is ill in him.” AP, 235. This principle does not entail that Reid held moral praiseworthiness to be an entirely subjective matter. Reid is most certainly an ethical realist. (e.g. [duty] is what we ought to do, . . . and what is in itself laudable, though

Now rational principles, as we have seen, consist of judgments that we ought or ought not to perform certain actions, given their tendency to satisfy the ends of either prudence or duty. Hence, suppose that *S* fails to judge that she ought not to perform action ϕ . Suppose also that some animal principle *A* inclines *S* toward willing to perform ϕ . Finally, suppose that, as it happens, ϕ is *in fact* inconsistent with prudence and duty, and so, such that *S* ought to resist it. In such a case, Reid would argue, *S* may well be blameworthy for failing to judge that she ought to resist *A*: that is, if she is culpably ignorant. But she is not blameworthy for failing to resist *A*. For *A* is not opposed to any rational principle in *S*. In other words, to say that we are not morally blameworthy for failing to resist an animal principle unless we have judged that we ought to resist it, is just to say that we are not morally blameworthy for failing to resist an animal principle unless it is opposed to a rational principle.

The second qualification is this: Reid claims that, normally, the impulsive force of an animal principle is difficult to resist;¹ but if it were ever of such 'violence' that it was not within our power to resist, then, by A_{35} , it would follow that we are not morally obliged to resist such a principle.²

However, there are two cases in which an agent may be held culpable even if an animal principle is irresistible. First, suppose that, for agent *S*, some animal principle *A* is opposed to a rational principle; and that, over a certain period, *S* continuously fails to resist *A*. As a consequence of this 'indulgence', the strength of *A*'s inclination increases to such an extent that it is no longer within *S*'s power to resist *A*. In such a case, Reid would argue, *S* is morally blameworthy for yielding to the inclination of *A*, even though it is not within *S*'s power to do otherwise. We will call such a principle *culpably state-irresistible* for *S*:³

The second case is this: Suppose again that, for agent *S*, some animal principle *A* is opposed to a rational principle, and that *S* knows that the inclination of *A* is irresistible; but suppose she also knows that *A* inclines her only in certain circumstances *C*; and that, for the most part, she is free with respect to whether or not she places herself in *C*.

no man should praise it." AP, p. 228.) He is also a moral sense theorist: thus if it is self-evident to *S* that she ought to perform action ϕ , then it is more likely than not that she ought *in fact* to perform ϕ . See R. Stecker, "Thomas Reid on the Moral Sense", *Monist* 70 (1988): pp. 453-64.

¹ "Appetites, affections, passions, . . . draw a man toward a certain object, without any farther view, by a kind of violence; a violence which indeed may be resisted if the man is master of himself, but cannot be resisted without a struggle." AP, p. 73.

² "If the passion be conceived to be irresistible, the action is imputed solely to it, and not at all to the man. If he had power to resist, and ought to have resisted, we blame him for not doing his duty". AP, p. 74.

³ "I believe our natural appetites may be made more violent by excessive indulgence, and that, on the other hand, they may be weakened by starving. The first is often the effect of a pernicious luxury, the last may sometimes be the effect of want, sometimes of superstition. I apprehend that nature has given to our appetites that degree of strength which is most proper for us; and that whatever alters their natural tone, either in excess or in defect, does not mend the work of nature, but may mar and pervert it." AP, pp. 124-25.

In such a case, Reid argues, *S* would be morally blameworthy for yielding to the inclination of *A*, even if *A* is irresistible. We may call this principle *culpably circumstance-irresistible for S*:¹ Thus:

A₃₉ If, for agent *S*, animal principle *A* is opposed to a rational principle, then *S* is morally obliged to resist *A* only if *A* is either resistible or culpably state- or circumstance-irresistible for *S*.

And, of course:

A₄₀ If, for agent *S*, animal principle *A* is opposed to a rational principle, then *S* is morally praiseworthy for resisting *A*, and *S* is morally blameworthy for failing to resist *A* only if *S* is morally obliged to resist *A*.

Now, having said all this, Reid would add the following rider: no animal principle is such that it is not within our power to resist it. It is not the case that there are two classes of animal principles divided into the resistible and the irresistible. Rather, as the following text indicates, the inclination of animal principles is “never” so violent as to be irresistible:²

“We allow that sudden and violent passion, into which a man is surprised, alleviates a bad action; but if it was irresistible, it would not only alleviate, but totally exculpate, which it never does, either in the judgment of the man himself, or of others.”³

There are two consequences of this: First, the failure to resist an animal principle when it is opposed to a rational principle is *always* morally blameworthy. For, by A₄₀, an agent is morally praiseworthy in resisting an animal principle only if she is morally obliged to resist it. But no animal principle is either naturally or culpably irresistible. Hence, by A₃₉, there is no animal principle opposed to a rational principle that an agent is not morally obliged to resist. Hence, failure to resist in this way is always morally blameworthy. In short:

¹ “[practical judgment] directs us, not only to resist the impulse of passion when it would lead us wrong, but to avoid the occasions of inflaming it.” AP, p. 74.

² Reid argues that we can evaluate the comparative strengths of two animal principles by the “animal test”, and of two rational principles by the “rational test”: “The strength of [animal motives] is perceived, not by our judgment, but by our feeling; and that is the strongest of contrary motives, to which he can yield with ease, or which it requires an effort of self-command to resist; and this we may call the *animal test* of the strength of motives.” AP, p. 298. “If there be any competition between rational motives, it is evident, that the strongest, in the eye of reason, is that which it is most our duty and our real happiness to follow. Our duty and our real happiness are ends which are inseparable; and they are the ends which every man, endowed with reason, is conscious he ought to pursue in preference to all others. This we may call the *rational test* of the strength of motives. A motive which is the strongest, according to the animal test, may be, and very often is the weakest according to the rational.” AP, p. 299.

³ AP, p. 192. My emphasis.

A₄₁ If, for agent *S*, animal principle *A* is opposed to a rational principle, then *S* is morally obliged to resist *A*.

And so:

A₄₂ If, for agent *S*, animal principle *A* is opposed to a rational principle, then *S* is morally praiseworthy if she resists *A*, and morally blameworthy if she fails to resist *A*.

A second consequence is that there are *degrees* of praise and blameworthiness; and these are evaluated by reference to the strength of the inclination that an agent is required to resist.¹ Now, just as we were able to distinguish between culpable and non-culpable irresistibility, so we may also distinguish between culpable and non-culpable *degrees* of irresistibility; and this distinction applies to both state- and circumstance-irresistibility, *mutatis mutandis*. Thus, if the inclination of an animal principle *A* upon *S* is excessively violent, that is, if *A* has a high degree of non-culpable irresistibility for *S*, then we should ascribe a proportionately lesser degree of blame to *S* if she fails to resist *A*. However, if *A* has a high degree of culpable irresistibility for *S*, then *S* must be blamed in proportion to the degree that she was responsible for bringing about that degree of irresistibility. For example, if *S* freely places herself in a circumstance in which *A* will have a high degree of irresistibility for her, then, to that extent, *S* is blameworthy for failing to resist *A*, even though *A* had a high degree of irresistibility. Again, if, over a period of time, *S* has continued to yield to *A*, with the result that *A* now has a high degree of irresistibility for her, then we should *not* ascribe a lesser degree of blame to *S* if she fails to resist *A*, that is, proportionate to degree of irresistibility *A* has for her.

Finally, the degree of praiseworthiness ascribable to an agent is also tied to the degree of irresistibility. If *A* has a high degree of non-culpable irresistibility, then we should ascribe a proportionately *higher* degree of praise to *S* if she manages to resist *A*.² And to the extent that *S* freely refrains from placing herself in a circumstance in which *A* will have a high degree of irresistibility for her, then, to that extent, *S* is praiseworthy for resisting *A*.³

¹ "If he had power to resist [the passion], and ought to have resisted, we blame him for not doing his duty; but, in proportion to the violence of the passion, the fault is alleviated." AP, p. 74.

² "Passion or appetite may urge to what we know to be wrong. In every instance of this kind, the moral principle [i.e. rational] ought to prevail, and the more difficult its conquest is, it is the more glorious." AP, p. 262; "The man who, in opposition to strong temptation, by a noble effort, maintains his integrity, is the happiest man on earth. The more severe his conflict has been, the greater is his triumph." AP, p. 252.

³ "CYRUS, who refused to see the beautiful captive princess . . . acted the part both of a wise and a good man; firm in the love of virtue, and, at the same time, conscious of the weakness of human nature, and unwilling to put it to too severe a trial. In this case, the youth of CYRUS, the incomparable beauty of his captive, and every circumstance which tended to inflame his desire, exalts the merit of his conduct in resisting it." AP, p. 74

Reid, unfortunately, does not tell us what kind of attribution we should make to those who manage to resist inclinations that are culpably state-irresistible. Presumably, we would tend to ascribe a high measure of praise to an agent who, at last, and with great difficulty, resists what he knows to be wrong, even if the degree of such difficulty is a consequence of his persistent failure to resist in the past. We might also tend to think that the appropriate degree of praise, in such a case, may be measured by the degree to which the principle is irresistible for that agent. In sum:

- A₄₃ If, for agent *S*, animal principle *A* is opposed to a rational principle, then *S* is morally praiseworthy for resisting *A* and *S* is morally blameworthy for failing to resist *A* to the degree that *A* is either resistible or culpably state- or circumstance-irresistible for *S*.

3.4 EXPLAINING THE RESISTANCE OF ANIMAL PRINCIPLES

We have seen that, if, for agent *S*, a rational principle *A* is opposed to an animal principle *B*, then *A* will prevail if and only if *S* resists the inclination of *B*. In other words, it is 'up to' *S* as to whether or not she resists *B*. Moreover, *S* will be, to a certain degree, morally blameworthy if she fails to do so, that is, to the degree that *B* is either resistible or culpably state- or circumstance-irresistible. Suppose, then, that *S* resists *B*: that is, suppose *S* exerts her power of liberty, so as to bring about that determination of the will toward which she was inclined by *A*. The question is, *why* did she yield to *A* rather than *B*? We cannot appeal to the comparative strength of *A*'s impulsive force, since, as we have seen, *A*, being a rational principle, *has* no impulsive force. Perhaps we could say that *S* had some reason or motive for resisting *B*. But this option would require a set of second-order principles of action, that serve to incline the agent toward being inclined by one first-order principle rather than another, which, of course, would generate an infinite regress of principles.¹ We cannot appeal to any prior exertion of power, since, as we have argued, the exertion of the power of liberty is a basic act. It seems, then, that all we have by way of an explanation is the brute fact that *S* exerted her power of liberty.

William Rowe suggests that one possible solution comes by way of an appeal to the agent's character:

"In addition to the particular motives confronting the agent, there is the agent's character: some more or less well-developed set of dispositions to act from a regard to duty and one's good upon the whole or from one's animal appetites, desires and affections. When the motives and the circumstances are roughly the same, it is to the *characters* of the agents that

¹ Rowe makes a similar point in his *Thomas Reid*, p. 183.

we turn to explain why the motive of duty prevailed in the one and why the motive of immediate gratification prevailed in the other. As Reid remarks, 'When there is a competition between these motives, the *foolish* will prefer present gratification; the *wise* the greater and more distant good.' (612, emphasis mine) Of course the steady person of good character may act out of a character. But the *influence* that particular motives have in our free actions is shaped in part by the character of the person who is subject to those motives."¹

Rowe, then, is suggesting that, in Reid's view, every agent has a 'character', which is made up of a set of dispositions to yield to either rational or animal principles under certain circumstances. Thus, we may explain why, in any instance, a rational principle prevails, by reference to the agent's possession of a disposition to resist any animal principle that opposes that rational principle.

Now Rowe does not attempt to develop this solution; nor does he show, in any detail, how it might be available to Reid. However, Reid does suggest something that performs a very similar function to Rowe's "set of dispositions": that is, what Reid called "general fixed purposes", which Reid, in effect, defines as follows:

D₂₈ Particular fixed purpose = *df* a determination of the agent's will to perform some individual action at some future time and place, so as to bring about some particular end.

D₂₉ General fixed purpose = *df* a determination of the agent's will to regulate her future actions by some general rule, such that if, at any future time or place in which certain circumstances occur, she will perform a certain action so as to bring about some general end.²

We can use this notion of general fixed purposes to explain why, for some individual action, a rational principle prevails over an animal principle: for we can now say that, the animal principle was resisted in this instance, just because the agent had a general fixed purpose to regulate her actions in such a way as to resist any such animal principle in any such circumstance.

There are two important questions that this 'solution' raises: First, we may have explained why an agent resists an animal principle in some particular instance by reference to a general fixed purpose. But this merely pushes the explanatory problem a step back: for we are now left with the need to explain why an agent might have one general fixed purpose rather than another. Second, Rowe suggests that a "set of

¹ Rowe, *Thomas Reid*, p. 184.

² "A fixed purpose or resolution with regard to our future conduct . . . is truly and properly an act of will. . . . By a *particular* purpose, I mean that which has for its object an individual action, limited to one time and place; by a *general* purpose, that of a course or train of action, intended for some general end, or regulated by some general rule. . . . A general purpose may continue for life; and, after many particular actions have been done in consequence of it, may remain and regulate future actions." AP, pp. 86-87.

dispositions” constitutes the agent’s character; and it seems that Reid’s general fixed purposes correspond nicely to Rowe’s ‘dispositions’. The question is, do general fixed purposes, in Reid’s view, constitute an agent’s character?

We begin with the first question: Why might an agent have one general fixed purpose rather than another? First, Reid states that the rational principles of action “are the only principles [he is] able to conceive, which can reasonably induce a man to regulate all his actions according to a certain general rule [of conduct] or law.”¹ Second, as we have just seen, Reid held that, to regulate future actions by some general rule, an agent must have a general fixed purpose to do so. Third, as D_{28} and D_{29} state, a fixed purpose is just a determination of the will: the distinction between a particular and a general fixed purpose being merely a distinction between two kinds of determinations of the will to perform a future action. It follows that particular and general fixed purposes, being determinations of the will, must be the indirect object of some principle of action. Hence, Reid’s point is that (i) an agent is “induced” or inclined toward a general fixed purpose by *some* principle of action; and that (ii) only *rational* principles will suffice. More precisely:

A₄₄ S has a determination of the will D to regulate her future actions according to a general rule of conduct if and only if S yields to the inclination of some rational principle toward D .

Or, in Reid’s terminology:

A₄₅ S has general fixed purpose D if and only if S yields to the inclination of some rational principle toward D .

The problem we are faced with is now very clear indeed. Why is it that an agent yields to the inclination of some rational principle toward one general fixed purpose rather than another? We can perhaps best approach this first question by examining the second: is “character”, in Reid’s view, constituted by a set of general fixed purposes?

First, Reid clearly identifies the referents of what we ordinarily take to be character descriptors, such as ‘just’ and ‘benevolent’, with general fixed purposes. This is most evident in the following passage, in which Reid identifies the moral virtues, such as the virtues of justice and benevolence,² with general fixed purposes:

“Suppose a man to have exercised his intellectual and moral faculties, so far as to have

¹ AP, p. 227.

² “The virtue of benevolence is a fixed purpose or resolution to do good when we have opportunity, from a conviction that it is right, and is our duty.” AP, p. 88.

distinct notions of justice and injustice, and of the consequences of both, and, after due deliberation, to have formed a fixed purpose to adhere inflexibly to justice, and never to handle the wages of iniquity. ¶ Is not this the man whom we should call a just man? We consider the moral virtues as inherent in the mind of a good man, even when there is no opportunity of exercising them.”¹

In other words, the “just person”, is not one who merely happens to act justly when the occasion arises: for this action could be due to some unjust motive,² or it may merely be an aberration in an agent who is otherwise unjust. Rather the just person is one who has yielded to the inclination of a rational principle toward a determination of the will to regulate her future actions according to the rules of just conduct.

Second, Reid states that ‘fixed purposes have an effect in forming the character’.³ But this description is ambiguous between the following two readings:

- (i) Fixed general purposes play a role in bringing about the formation of a character, but do not in themselves constitute a character.
- (ii) The kind of fixed general purposes an agent has, constitute, in part, the kind of character he has.

The textual evidence points toward the second reading. First, Reid states that we have three moral obligations with regard to our general fixed purposes:

- A₄₆ (i) *S* is morally obligated to form a general fixed purpose *P* if and only if *S* judges that any action performed in accordance with *P* would be the best and most approvable action; (ii) if *S* forms *P* at *t*, then for any time after *t*, *S* is morally obligated to act according to *P*; (iii) if *S* forms *P* at time *t*, then, if *S* has good evidence that any action performed in accordance with *P* would *not* be the best and most approvable action, then *S* is morally obligated to alter or retract *P*.⁴

Second, Reid argues that an agent’s character depends, in some way, upon the outcome of the conflict between opposing rational and animal principles:

¹ AP, p. 87.

² “a man who has no regard to justice, may pay his just debt, from no other motive, but that he may not be thrown into prison. In this action there is no virtue at all.” AP, p. 262.

³ “a young man proposes to follow the profession of law, of medicine, or of theology. This general purpose . . . [has] a considerable effect in forming his character. ¶ There are other fixed purposes which have a still greater effect in forming the character. I mean such as regard our moral conduct.” AP, p. 87.

⁴ AP, pp. 91-92

“The grand and the important competition of contrary motives is between the animal, on the one hand, and the rational on the other. This is the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, upon the event of which the character of men depends.”¹

In other words, an agent’s character is constituted not only by the particular kind of general fixed purposes he has, but by whether or not his general fixed purposes satisfy the moral obligations that attach to such purposes. For example, take the obligation in *A*₄₆, clause (iii): if, in the face of opposing animal principles, the agent intermittently fails to act according to her general fixed purposes, then her character is said to be “fickle”, “inconstant”, and “facile”. Whereas if an agent is “firm and steady in adhering to [her] resolutions” and resists even the strongest opposing animal principle, then, to that extent, her character is “uniform” and “consistent”.² It is in this sense, then, that an agent’s character depends upon the outcome of the conflict between animal and rational principles.

Finally, Reid makes a distinction between an agent who intermittently fails to act according to his general fixed purposes, and one who has no such purposes whatsoever. Only the former is said to ‘have character’:

“A man who has no general fixed purposes, may be said . . . to have no character at all. He will be honest or dishonest, benevolent or malicious, compassionate or cruel, as the tide of his passions and affections drives him. This, however, I believe, is the case of but a few in advanced life, and these, with regard to conduct, the weakest and most contemptible of the species.”³

It seems, then, that Reid regarded the agent’s character as being constituted by (i) her set of general fixed purposes, and (ii) whether or not, or to what degree she satisfies the obligations in *A*₄₆. The question now, is whether Reid, as Rowe suggests, can legitimately appeal to “the *characters* of the agents . . . to explain why the motive of duty prevailed in the one and why the motive of immediate gratification prevailed in the other”. Now, on the one hand, this is precisely the kind of appeal that Reid makes: our knowledge of an agent’s character, that is, of *what the agent is*, Reid argues, will enable us to predict or explain, with some probability, the actions he will perform in various circumstances:

¹ AP, p. 299. Cf. “Thus it appears, that our passions, our dispositions, and our opinions, have great influence upon our animal principles, to strengthen or weaken, to excite or restrain them; and, by that means, have great influence upon human actions and characters.” AP, p. 199.

² “Every man who maintains an uniform and consistent character, must sweat and toil, and often struggle with his present inclination.” AP, p. 204.

³ AP, p. 91; cf. AP, p. 203.

"The science of politics borrows its principles from what we know by experience of the character and conduct of man. We consider not what he ought to be, but what he is, and thence conclude what part he will act in different situations and circumstances."¹

On the other hand, we have, as yet, no explanation for why it is that an agent has one set of general fixed purposes rather than another. We have seen that we cannot *merely* appeal to the rational or animal principles by which the agent might have been inclined toward a general fixed purpose. For this leaves unexplained why it is that she yielded to a certain rational principle rather than some opposing animal principle. Nor can we appeal to a further set of general fixed purposes without generating an infinite regress. Reid's answer to this puzzle, I suggest, is *not* to appeal to some further motive or inclination, but rather to the agent's power of liberty. To show this, we must first clarify what it is that Reid is saying in the passage that Rowe quotes:

"For let us suppose, for a moment, that men have moral liberty, I would ask, what use may they be expected to make of this liberty? It may surely be expected, that, of the various actions within the sphere of their power, they will chuse what pleases them most for the present, or what appears to be most for their real, though distant good. When there is a competition between these motives, the foolish will prefer present gratification; the wise the greater and more distant good."²

Now Rowe infers from this passage that (i) we may explain why it is that an agent chooses the greater and more distant good rather than immediate gratification by appealing to the fact that he is wise rather than foolish; and (ii) the terms 'wise' and 'foolish' here refer to character traits. Given what we now know, this reading raises three questions:

- (a) Is Reid, in this context, using the terms 'wise' and 'foolish' to denote general fixed purposes?
- (b) In this context, why is it that the agent is wise rather than foolish?
- (c) Why is it that the agent has one general fixed purpose rather than another?

I will show that these three questions are connected in such a way that, the answer to (a), will give us the answers to (b) and (c). First, recall that an agent is not *passive* in yielding to the inclination of a rational principle: rather the principle inclines him toward *exerting his power of liberty* over some determination of the will. Without the rational principles, no agent could form a determination of the will to perform an action that he has judged to be morally obligatory. But without the power of liberty, no

¹ AP, p. 242.

² AP, p. 300.

inclination of the rational principles would be of any consequence. The proper function of the power of liberty is therefore not merely to give the agent freedom, but to give her *moral freedom*:

“The effect of moral liberty is, That it is in the power of the agent to do well or ill. This power, like every other gift of GOD, may be abused. The right use of this gift of GOD is to do well and wisely, as far as his best judgment can direct him, and thereby merit esteem and approbation. The abuse of it is to act contrary to what he knows or suspects to be his duty and his wisdom, and thereby justly merit disapprobation and blame.”¹

In other words, if the agent does not exert his power of liberty to bring about a determination of the will toward which his rational principles incline him, then he thereby *abuses* the freedom that he has been given: for he fails to bring about what he knows to be his good upon the whole or his duty, even though it is within his power to do so. To the degree that he thus abuses his power of liberty, he is foolish, for he acts contrary to his best interest; and he is vicious, for he acts contrary to his duty. Likewise, to the degree that he makes proper use of his freedom, he is wise and good.

It is this sense in which Reid uses the terms ‘wise’ and ‘foolish’. In other words, Reid is *not* using the terms, in this context, to denote general fixed purposes. For it is not by virtue of the agent’s determinations of the will that she is called wise or foolish: rather, it is by virtue of the proper use or abuse of her power of liberty.²

It follows that if we asked Reid why it is that an agent is wise and good, rather than foolish and vicious, his answer would not refer either to some inclination or some determination of the will. Rather, he would say that an agent is wise and good just because she chooses to act in accordance with her best interest or her duty. More precisely, Reid holds that, if the agent finds herself inclined by competing motives (a rational principle and some opposing principle), then, if she exerts her power of liberty over a determination of the will to bring about an action that is in accord with the rational principle, she is, in that case, both wise and good.³

¹ AP, p. 269.

² “All wise and all foolish conduct, all virtue and vice, consist in the right use or in the abuse of that power which GOD hath given us. If man had no power, he could neither be wise nor foolish, virtuous nor vicious.” AP, p. 328. cf. “Rational beings, in proportion as they are wise and good, will act according to the best motives; and every rational being, who does otherwise, abuses his liberty.” AP, p. 292; “liberty may be abused by the foolish and the vicious, . . . its proper use . . . is to act wisely and virtuously” AP, p. 321.

³ “Contrary motives may very properly be compared to advocates pleading the opposite sides of a cause at the bar. It would be very weak reasoning to say, that such an advocate is the most powerful pleader, because sentence was given on his side. *The sentence is in the power of the judge, not of the advocate.* It is equally weak reasoning, in proof of necessity, to say, such a motive prevailed, therefore it is the strongest; since the defenders of liberty maintain that *the determination was made by the man, and not by the motive.*” AP, pp. 296-97. (My italics).

Finally, if we asked Reid to explain why it is that the character of some agent *S* is just, he would, I suggest, reply with the following: When faced with competing motives as to what kind of general fixed purpose she should form with respect to the rules of justice, *S* exerted her liberty over that determination of the will which would regulate her future actions according to the rules of justice. There is, Reid would argue, no more we can or need to say. It does not follow that we therefore have no explanation for why an agent is, in any instance, motivated by duty rather than immediate gratification: we may still appeal to the general fixed purposes of the agent. But when it comes to explaining why it is that the agent has general fixed purposes that she has, we can point only to the agent's exertion of moral liberty.

4 THE PROPER FUNCTION OF ANIMAL PRINCIPLES

One might suspect, from the foregoing, that animal principles were supplied for the sole purpose of putting us to trial and temptation. Reid tells a quite different story.

First, we are not morally obliged to resist *every* inclination of an animal principle. There are three possible relations an animal principle may bear to a rational principle. The first is *opposition*, which we have defined; the second and third may be called *indifference* and *concurrence*. If the inclination of some animal principle *A* has the same end as that of some rational principle *B*, then *A* may thus "aid" or give "additional force" to *B*.¹ In such a case, we shall say that *A* concurs with *B*. If *A* neither opposes nor concurs with *B*, then we shall say that *A* is indifferent with respect to *B*.² More precisely, where *A* is an animal principle and *B* is a rational principle:

- A₄₇ *A* concurs with *B* if and only if both *A* and *B* incline *S* toward a determination of the will to perform action ϕ at the same time.
- A₄₈ *A* is indifferent with respect to *B* if and only if (i) *A* inclines *S* toward a determination of the will to perform action ϕ at *t*, and (ii) *B* does not incline *S* toward a determination of the will to perform action γ at *t*, where *S* could not perform both ϕ and γ at *t*.

Thus, in cases in which an animal principle concurs with, or is indifferent with respect to a rational principle, there is clearly no moral obligation to resist the animal principle. For in neither of these cases is an animal principle opposed to a rational principle.

¹ "When there is no impropriety in [passion], much more when it is our duty, passion aids reason, and gives additional force to its dictates." AP, p. 189.

² "our natural appetites have in themselves neither virtue nor vice, . . . the acting merely from appetite, when there is no principle of greater authority to oppose it, be a matter indifferent" AP, p. 130.

It is not even clear that there is any moral obligation to yield to an animal principle that concurs with a rational principle. For it is surely possible that an agent should resist the inclination of an animal principle *A*, but yield to the inclination of a rational principle *B*, even though *A* concurs with *B*. For example, a judge might think that she should be influenced in her decisions only by a cool and considered regard to justice. Suppose, however, that she finds herself feeling a certain sympathy toward the plight of a defendant. Suppose also that her considered judgment is in his favour. She might, in such a case, seek to resist the inclination of the animal principle, so as to be satisfied that her decision is based solely on the operative rational principle. It is hard to see how, in such a case, she would be guilty of any impropriety. Hence, we are not morally obliged to yield to an animal principle even if it concurs with a rational principle.¹

Second, Reid holds that the animal principles are “good and necessary parts of our constitution”.² In their natural state, they provide a finely tuned inclination, of just the appropriate degree of strength, in favour of that action which is required for the agent’s preservation or well-being, whether or not the agent judges that such an action is so required. However, for various reasons, the strength of an animal principle may increase or decrease to the degree that it loses its “natural tone”, and, as such, inclines the agent toward willing an action that is inconsistent with prudence or duty. In this sense, *no* animal principle is indifferent with respect to what is *in fact* prudent or dutiful; for its sole function is to incline the agent toward willing an action that is prudent or dutiful. Hence, every animal principle will incline the agent either toward or against willing some prudent or dutiful action. To the degree that it fails in the former (and thus succeeds in the latter) it is defective: that is to say, it is not functioning as it was designed to function.³

However, if an animal principle *A* inclines an agent *S* against willing what is prudent or dutiful, *S* is not necessarily morally blameworthy if he fails to resist the inclination of *A*. For, as we have seen, an agent is blameworthy for failing to resist an animal principle only if it is opposed to *some rational principle within that agent*. Put another way, an animal principle can only be indifferent with respect to what we *judge* to be prudent or dutiful. And if we judge that we ought not to perform an action, and discover within ourselves an animal principle *A* that opposes that judgment, we

¹ Cf. “In some cases, a regard to what is right may be the sole motive, without the concurrence or opposition of any other principle of action; as when a judge or an arbiter determines a plea between two indifferent persons, solely from a regard to justice.” AP, pp. 262-63.

² AP, p. 189.

³ “nature has given to our appetites that degree of strength which is most proper for us; and that whatever alters their natural tone, either in excess or in defect, does not mend the work of nature, but may mar and pervert it.” AP, p. 125; “it is best to preserve our natural appetites, in that tone and degree of strength which nature gives them” AP, p. 128.

thereby have evidence that *A* is not functioning as it was designed to function, and therefore ought to be resisted:¹

Third, Reid argues that the proper function of animal principles is to incline us toward willing acts that are conducive to our preservation and well-being. However, Reid also holds that nature gives no power in vain. Yet if the proper function of the rational principles is also to incline us toward willing acts that are conducive to our preservation and well-being, then surely one or the other is redundant. Reid's response is to argue that there are at least two instances in which no superfluity exists: that is, (i) cases in which one kind of principle is absent or dysfunctional, and so the other must operate independently; (ii) cases in which one cannot perform its function successfully or optimally without the modification or concurrence of the other.

First, Reid argues that powers and principles of the mind may be distinguished into those that function at birth, and those which "come to maturity by slow degrees". In the former category, Reid places the power of the will, and in the latter the rational principles. It follows that, in the early stages of her intellectual development, the agent could not be inclined toward any determination of the will by a rational principle: that is, by her practical judgment regarding what she ought and ought not to do.² Hence, if the agent is to will acts that ensure her preservation and well-being, she must be supplied with principles of action that function independently of her ability to form and act on practical judgments. This, Reid argues, is one of the primary functions of the animal principles.³

Second, even in maturity, rational principles alone, Reid argues, are insufficient to incline the agent toward willing acts that ensure her preservation and well-being. There are several reasons for this. First, suppose an agent *S* forms a judgment that she is morally obligated to perform (or refrain from performing) action ϕ . This judgment may incline *S* toward a determination of the will to perform (or refrain from performing) ϕ , and she may even have no animal principle opposing ϕ . Yet, she may fail to yield to the authority of her judgment, simply because, as a mere rational principle, it has no

¹ "there is no active principle which GOD hath planted in our nature that is vicious in itself, or that ought to be eradicated, even if it were in our power. ¶ They are all useful and necessary in our present state. The perfection of human nature consists, not in extinguishing, but in restraining them within their proper bounds, and keeping them in due subordination to the governing principles". AP, p. 264; "What is done according to the animal part of our nature . . . is in itself neither virtuous nor vicious, but perfectly indifferent. Then only it becomes vicious, when it is done in opposition to some principle of superior importance and authority. And it may be virtuous, if done for some important or worthy end." AP, pp. 125-26.

² "Brutes, I think, cannot be influenced by [rational] motives. They have not the conception of *ought* and *ought not*. Children acquire these conceptions as their rational powers advance; and they are found in all of ripe age, who have the human faculties." AP, p. 299.

³ "the wise Author of our being hath implanted in human nature many inferior principles of action, which, with little or no aid of reason or virtue, preserve the species, and produce the various exertions, and the various changes and revolutions which we observe upon the theatre of life." AP, p. 141.

impulsive force for her. In such a case, various concurrent animal principles, such as sympathy, fear or hope, may provide the impulsion required to bring the agent to so yield.¹

Finally, Reid argues that animal principles are necessary for the formation of sound judgments. An agent *S* can form a “true and stable judgment” regarding some object *x* only if *S* gives his attention to *x*. But *S* cannot so attend to *x* unless he has sufficient interest in *x*; and he will have sufficient interest only if he is so inclined by “a strong degree of curiosity, or some more important passion”.² Hence, without yielding to the inclination of such animal principles, *S* can form no true and stable judgment of *x*. Moreover, excellence and advancement in the arts and sciences depend upon the activities of discovery and improvement; and these activities, in turn, are dependent not merely upon intellectual ability or sound judgment, but also upon certain animal principles. Unless the agent has, with regard to his subject, “a love and admiration of it bordering upon enthusiasm, or a passionate desire of the same . . . he would not undergo the labour and fatigue of his faculties, which it requires”.³

5 MECHANICAL PRINCIPLES

In this section, I will set out, in detail, Reid’s account of the mechanical principles. Reid argues that there are only two kinds of mechanical principles: instincts and habits. We begin with Reid’s account of instincts.

5.1 INSTINCTS

First, recalling our earlier definitions of the mechanical principles and actions, we may give the following general definition of an instinct:

D₃₀ Instinct = *df* a principle of action which (i) inclines an agent toward the performance of an action in certain circumstances, without the exertion of the agent’s will or judgment, and which (ii) is present in the agent at birth.⁴

¹ “Sympathy with the distressed may bring them a charitable relief, when a calm sense of duty would be too weak to produce the effect. . . . ¶ There is no bad action which some passion may not prevent; nor is there any external good action, of which some passion may not be the main spring”. AP, pp. 189-90.

² AP, p. 190.

³ AP, p. 191. A further instance of the interdependence of the rational and animal principles lies, as we have seen, in the character-forming function of the rational principles: “the animal principles alone, without self-government, would never produce any regular and consistent train of conduct. . .” AP, p. 203.

⁴ “By instinct, I mean a natural blind impulse to certain actions, without having any end in view, without deliberation, and very often without any conception of what we do” AP, p. 103.

Second, Reid makes a distinction between instincts that occur only during infancy, and those that continue throughout adulthood. In the following exposition, I shall use the phrase “infant-instincts” to denote those instincts that occur only in infancy, and the term “instincts” for those that function in adulthood.

A₄₉ S has the infant-instinct *I* to perform action ϕ in circumstance *C* if and only if (i) *S* is inclined by *I* toward the performance of ϕ in *C*, (ii) ϕ is not an object of *S*'s will or judgment, (iii) performing ϕ in *C* is necessary for *S*'s preservation or health, (iv) *S*'s intellectual development is such that (a) *S* could not yet have discovered that performing ϕ in *C* is necessary for her preservation or health,¹ (b) *S* could not yet have learned or otherwise acquired the habit of performing ϕ in *C*.²

A₅₀ S has the instinct *I* to perform action ϕ in circumstance *C* if and only if (i) *S* is inclined by *I* toward the performance of ϕ in *C*, (ii) ϕ is not an object of *S*'s will or judgment (iii) performing ϕ in *C* is necessary for *S*'s preservation or health, (iv) *S*'s intellectual capacity is such that (a) *S* can discover that performing ϕ in *C* is necessary for her preservation or health, (b) *S* cannot, at any time, learn or otherwise acquire the habit of performing ϕ in *C*.

Three comments on the following analyses are in order: First, Reid argues that “There is no reason to think, that an infant new-born . . . knows how [breathing] must be performed”.³ However, an agent may have *procedural* knowledge with respect to the performance of ϕ , without having *propositional* knowledge regarding the mechanisms or exertions of power involved in the performance of ϕ . In this sense, it would be false to say that ‘an infant performed ϕ but did not know how to perform ϕ ’. I take it that Reid would agree on this point. His intention is merely to claim that an infant does not have propositional knowledge regarding the mechanisms involved in the performance of an instinctive action.

Second, Reid suggests that an agent's having no conception of an action is sufficient, but not necessary for its being an instinctive action.⁴ We can will to perform an action only if it is an object of our conception; hence the exertions of power involved in

¹ “To return to instincts in man; those are most remarkable which appear in infancy, when we are ignorant of every thing necessary to our preservation, and therefore must perish, if we had not an invisible Guide, who leads us blind-fold in the way we should take, if we had eyes to see it.” AP, p. 108; “In infancy we are ignorant of every thing; yet many things must be done by us for our preservation: These are done by instinct.” AP, p. 111.

² “he breaths as soon as he is born with perfect regularity, as if he had been taught, and got the habit by long practice.” AP, p. 103.

³ AP, p. 103.

⁴ “We have no reason to think, that, before [an infant] ever sucked, it has any conception of that complex operation, or how it is performed. It cannot, therefore, with propriety, be said, that it wills to suck.” AP, p. 61.

breathing must, for an infant, be instinctive. But an action may be the object of conception without being the object of will. Even if an infant knew of the acts involved in breathing, it would not follow that she could will these acts.

Third, A_{50} (iv) (a) should not be taken to imply that *most* or even *many* agents discover the necessity of performing ϕ . Nor does it imply that an agent can, in every instance, obtain this knowledge *before* the performance of ϕ , since this would rule out the instinct to perform immediate actions, as described in § 5.2.

Finally, the qualification “learn or otherwise” in clause (iv) (b) is intended to rule out the acquisition of a habit *apart from* the operation of the instinct in question: it does not rule out the possibility of an agent performing ϕ in C upon the inclination of an instinct to a frequency sufficient for the formation of a habit, an example of which is imitative-habits. In other words, the need for clause (iv) (b) arises just because habits that arise merely by *willing* the performance of an action to a certain frequency could satisfy clauses (i) to (iv) (a). Clause (iv) (b) rules out such cases.

5.2 INSTINCTIVE ACTIONS

Reid suggests that there are three kinds of instinctive actions, each of which has a particular function or end for which it was designed.

The first kind is designed to enable the agent to perform actions that she *can* will to perform, and which are required for her preservation, but which she cannot in fact perform without first performing an action that is of such complexity, that no human agent could make it an object of her will.¹ The second is designed to enable the agent to perform actions with a frequency that is required for her preservation or health, but which, if she had to take the time and effort required to will such actions, then she would not be able to perform any other action.² And the third is designed to enable the agent to perform an action ϕ with a speed or immediacy that is required for her preservation or health, but which, if she were to take the time necessary both to determine that she must perform ϕ , and to will to perform ϕ , she would not be able to perform ϕ with the immediacy required.³

5.3 HABITS

Reid distinguishes between three kinds of habit, the third of which is the mechanical principle in which we are interested. Henceforth, I shall use the term “habit” to refer only to that defined in D_{33} .

¹ AP, p. 108.

² AP, p. 110.

³ AP, pp. 110-11.

- D₃₁ Habit (*mere facility*¹) = *df* a facility to perform some action ϕ in circumstances C, without the exertion of will or judgment; and which (ii) is acquired by the frequent performance of ϕ in C.²
- D₃₂ Habit (acquired appetite) = *df* an acquired animal principle of action which (i) consists of the agent's desire for a certain object O, accompanied by an uneasy sensation; which (ii) inclines the agent toward the use of O without the exertion of judgment; and which (ii) is acquired by the frequent use of O (e.g. the use of tobacco).³
- D₃₃ Habit (principle of action) = *df* a principle of action which (i) inclines an agent toward the performance of some action ϕ in certain circumstances C, without the exertion of the agent's will or judgment, and which (ii) is acquired by the frequent performance of ϕ in C.

Although all habits are acquired by the frequent performance of an action, Reid appears to distinguish between two kinds of habits, based on *which* principle of action inclines the agent toward this frequent performance. On the one hand, he claims, agents may be inclined toward a frequent performance of some action by 'instinctive imitation' (which I shall call 'imitative-habits'); on the other hand, they may be inclined by any principle of action whatsoever (which I shall call 'general-habits'). We may present Reid's definition of 'instinctive imitation' as follows:

- D₃₄ Instinctive imitation = *df* the performance of an action ϕ in circumstance C toward which an agent is inclined by her observation of the frequent performance of ϕ in C by some person or group of persons, and which is not an object of will or judgment.⁴

Now if an agent were to be inclined by instinct toward imitating the performance of an action merely once or twice in his lifetime, then, of course, he would not acquire an imitative-habit of performing that action. However, if his instinctive imitation of an

¹ It is a *mere facility* just because, unlike a mechanical principle, it does not also incline the agent toward the performance of ϕ in C.

² "Habit is commonly defined, *A facility of doing a thing, acquired by having done it frequently*. This definition is sufficient for habits of art" AP, p. 117; "Some habits produce only a facility of doing a thing, without any inclination to do it. All arts are habits of this kind, but they cannot be called principles of action." AP, p. 128; "Every manufacturing art among men was invented by some man, improved by others, and brought to perfection by time and experience. Men learn to work in it by long practice, which produces a habit." AP, p. 105.

³ "There are other habits which produce a desire of a certain object, and an uneasy sensation, till it is obtained." AP, p. 128; "we may create appetites which nature never gave. The frequent use of things which stimulate the nervous system, produces a languor when their effect is gone off, and a desire to repeat them. By this means a desire of a certain object is created, accompanied by an uneasy sensation." AP, p. 128.

⁴ "human nature disposes us to the imitation of those among whom we live, when we neither desire nor will it." AP, p. 112; cf. IP, p. 418.

action is a frequent occurrence, then, eventually, he would acquire an imitative-habit. Henceforth, his performance of this action would, presumably, be inclined by the imitative-habit, rather than his previous instinct to imitate. Thus, we may capture Reid's claims regarding imitative- and general-habits in the following analyses:

A₅₁ S has the imitative-habit *H* of performing action ϕ in circumstance *C* if and only if (i) *H* inclines *S* toward the performance of ϕ in *C* without the exertion of will or judgment, and (ii) *S* was inclined by instinct toward imitating the performance of ϕ in *C* to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of *H*.¹

A₅₂ S has the general-habit *H* of performing action ϕ in circumstance *C* if and only if (i) *H* inclines *S* toward the performance of ϕ in *C* without the exertion of will or judgment, and (ii) *S* was inclined by some principle of action (other than the instinct to imitate) toward the performance of ϕ in *C* to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of *H*.²

6 RESISTING MECHANICAL PRINCIPLES

Since the action brought about by the inclination of instincts and habits is not brought about by the agent's exertion of will, it must, in Reid's view, be attributed to some other cause, namely God (or some intermediate agent) acting according to some law of nature to bring about a general end.³ However, Reid would reject the notion that the relation between an instinct or habit and the action to which it gives rise, is identical to the invariable relation expressed by the laws that apply to physical phenomena⁴

¹ "How many aukward habits, by frequenting improper company, are children apt to learn, in their address, motion, looks, gesture and pronunciation. They acquire such habits *commonly from an undersigned and instinctive imitation*, before they can judge of what is proper and becoming." AP, p. 117; "It is owing to the force of habits, *early acquired by imitation*, that a man who has grown up to manhood in the lowest rank of life, if fortune raise him to a higher rank, very rarely acquires the air and manners of a gentleman." AP, p. 118; see also AP, p. 119.

² "what we have been accustomed to do, we acquire, not only a facility, but a proneness to do on like occasions" AP, p. 118.

³ "Philosophers who agree in the Existence of Instincts may yet differ with regard to their immediate Cause. Some with Dr Hartley may ascribe them to the Original Frame of the Animal Body others with Malebranche may ascribe them to impulses given immediately by the Deity as there is occasion for them. And others may modestly acknowledge their ignorance of the Cause although they perceive such manifest marks of Contrivance and Design in the Effect as lead them to believe that it must, either mediately or immediately, proceed from a wise & intelligent Cause." MS 3061/9, 11; in AC, p. 142.

⁴ "is it not self-evident, that the relation between a law of nature and the event which is produced according to it, is very different from the relation between a motive and the action to which it is a motive? . . . There is, indeed, a supposition upon which the two relations would be very similar. The supposition is, that, by a law of nature, the influence of motives upon actions is as invariable as is the effect of impulse upon matter; but to suppose this is to suppose fatality and not to prove it. It is a question of fact, whether the influence of motives be fixed by laws of nature, so that they shall always have the same effect in the same circumstances. Upon this, indeed, the question about liberty and necessity hangs." Letter to Gregory, WH, p. 66b.

Reid does not, however, suggest that principles of action are not subject to *any* laws: rather, as the following text indicates, he advocates a distinction between the laws of physical phenomena, and the laws according to which the principles of action operate:

“motives may be subject to other laws of nature, no less invariable than the laws of motion, though not the same. Different parts of nature have different laws, it may be said; and to apply the laws of one part to another part, particularly to apply the laws of inert matter to the phenomena of mind, may lead into great fallacies. . . . between the influence of motives upon a mind and the influence upon a body, there is but a very slight analogy, which fails in many instances.”¹

The laws that Reid suggests might apply to the phenomena of mind appear to bear one essential caveat. The laws to which material phenomena are subject are rules, the application of which is brought about by the free action of God; the one qualification being that God may, in any instance, ‘suspend’ or ‘counteract’ a law of nature to bring about some end. Now the laws to which the phenomena of mind are subject are, in this respect, identical to the laws of material phenomena. However, they are unique, inasmuch as the agent herself, by an act of will, may ‘suspend’ some such law.²

We have seen how this kind of ‘suspension’ might take place in our discussion of the resistance of the animal and rational principles. But it might seem that the mechanical principles would fall under the class of material phenomena, since the actions inclined thereby are involuntary. However, Reid argues that, even here, there are several ways in which the agent may exercise the power of self-government.

First, the inclinations of an instinct or habit may operate without the exertion of will: but they may nevertheless be *resisted* by the exertion of will. Resistance on any single occasion may occur by virtue of a single exertion of the will.³ However, a single triumph is scarcely sufficient to *eliminate* an undesirable instinct or habit. But neither is a *series* of exertions of the will, in itself, sufficient: even a general fixed purpose to exert one’s will so as to resist the inclination of an instinct or habit is not sufficient, in itself, to *eliminate* that instinct or habit. It is only when, by her constant resistance, the agent finally acquires an ‘opposing-habit’, that the principle in question will be “undone”.

¹ Letter to Gregory, WH, p. 66b-67a. See also,

² Given that voluntary action, in Reid’s view, is merely the exertion of some power of the mind to bring about an effect, I take this ‘suspendable’ view of the laws of human nature, to be only plausible way of rendering consistent the following claims: (i) “Being, therefore, the work of Nature, [the human mind’s] powers and faculties, their extent and limits, their growth and decline, and their connection wit the state of the body, may, not improperly, be called phaenomena of Nature. And as far as these phaenomena can, by just induction, be reduced to geneal laws, such laws may properly be called laws of Nature” (p. 15); (ii) “the voluntary actions of men can in no case be called natural phaenomena, or be considered as regulated by the physical laws of Nature.” (p. 16) MS 3061/1/4; in AC, p. 185.

³ “it requires a particular will and effort to forbear [a habit], but to do it, requires very often no will at all. We are carried by habit as by a stream in swimming, if we make no resistance.” AP, p. 118-19.

More precisely, where:

- A₅₃ A is an opposing-habit with respect to some instinct or habit B for agent S if and only if (i) A inclines S toward performing action ϕ in circumstance C, (ii) B inclines S toward performing action γ in C (iii) S cannot perform both ϕ and γ in C at the same time;

and where:

- A₅₅ S may acquire an opposing-habit A with respect to some instinct or habit B if and only if S exerts her will to resist the inclination of B to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of A;

Reid would hold that:

- A₅₆ S can eliminate some instinct or habit B if and only if S acquires an opposing-habit with respect to B.¹

Second, we have seen that the inclination of a general-habit bypasses the will and judgment. However, the *formation* of a general-habit requires a frequently repeated action, and the performance of such actions may well be the consequence of either rational or animal principles. In that case, the agent may be held *directly* accountable for the acquisition of a general-habit, and *indirectly* accountable for the performance of actions toward which the agent is inclined by that general-habit.² This kind of habit, whereby a general fixed purpose produces a general-habit, Reid calls a “habit of the will”.³ In this sense, an agent may be morally blameworthy or praiseworthy for the kind of general-habits that she has acquired. More precisely:

- A₅₇ S will acquire a virtuous habit A if and only if (i) S has a determination of the will D to regulate her future actions according to the rules of duty or prudence (i.e. a general fixed purpose), and (ii) S adheres to D in her actions to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of A.⁴

¹ “when the habit is formed, such a general resolution [to forbear it] is not of itself sufficient; for the habit will operate without intention; and particular attention is necessary, on every occasion, to resist its impulse, until it be undone by the habit of opposing it.” AP, pp. 117-18; “it is not easy to resist the impulse of instinct, even by a strong resolution not to yield to it.” AP, pp. 110-11.

² “we may think [a man] highly blameable in acquiring [inveterate habits], yet, when they are confirmed to a certain degree, we consider him as no longer master of himself, and hardly reclaimable without a miracle.” AP, p. 321.

³ “A fixed resolution retains its influence upon the conduct, even when the motives to it are not in view, . . . [and] may be called a habit of the will. By such habits chiefly, men are governed . . . in their practice.” AP, p. 91; “There are therefore acts of the will which are not transient and momentary, which may continue long, and grow into a habit.” AP, p. 93

⁴ “There are good habits, in a moral sense, as well as bad; and it is certain, that the stated and regular performance of what we approve, not only makes it easy, but makes us uneasy in the omission of it.” AP, p. 118; “all virtuous habits, when we distinguish them from virtuous actions, consist in fixed purposes of acting according to the rules of virtue, as often as we have opportunity.” AP, p. 95.

An agent may also acquire a vicious (or morally blameworthy) habit by the consistent failure to resist an animal principle when it is opposed by a rational principle. It is precisely this kind of failure that will produce a circumstance- or state-irresistible animal principle, which in turn will tend to incline an agent to perform actions to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of a vicious habit:¹

A₅₈ S will acquire a vicious habit A if and only if S fails to yield to the inclinations of some rational principle to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of A.

One interesting consequence of the acquisition of virtuous or vicious habits, Reid argues, is the increase or decrease of an agent's power of liberty:

"the power of self-government . . . may be diminished, or perhaps lost, by bad habits; it may be greatly increased by good habits."²

Now we might, initially, take this to mean the following: first, the agent has the power of liberty only over those actions that are subject to his will; second, if the agent therefore acquires a habit that is opposed to some rational principle, then he has, to that extent, lost his power over the actions that he performs in accordance with this habit. But of course, the same must surely be true of virtuous habits: the agent will lose his liberty, in this sense, whenever an action is performed out of habit rather than from the exertion of his power of liberty.

The only sense we can make of Reid's claim, it seems, is that the nature of an agent's habits will determine the degree or extent to which she must exert her power of liberty in order to bring about a determination of the will to perform (or refrain from performing) those actions she thinks she ought to perform (or refrain from performing). Thus, suppose an agent forms a determination of the will to regulate her future actions in such a way that she resists some kind of opposing animal principle; and suppose that she adheres to this determination in her actions to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of a general-habit. In such a case, she will, by definition, have thereby acquired the capacity and the inclination to resist that opposing animal principle on any occasion that it arises, *without* any exertion of her power of liberty. This, of course, will 'free up' the agent to exert her power of liberty in other domains. On the other

¹ Even though a circumstance- or state-irresistible animal principle and a general-habit will both have very similar effects on the agent, they must be thought of as two distinct kinds of inclination, given that a habit is, by definition, a mechanical principle. There is, of course, *one* important difference: a circumstance- or state-irresistible animal principle inclines the agent toward *voluntary* actions; whereas a habit inclines the agent toward *involuntary* actions. Hence, the agent may be held *directly* morally accountable for the former, but only *indirectly* for the latter.

² AP, pp. 321-22; cf. "Supposing it therefore to be true, That man is a free agent, it may be true, at the same time, that his liberty . . . may be impaired or lost by vicious habits". AP, pp. 270-71.

hand, if the agent must consistently¹ struggle against yielding to the inclinations of vicious habits, then her power of liberty will be to that extent restricted. It is in this sense, that the agent's power of liberty increases in proportion to her acquisition of virtuous habits, and decreases in proportion to her acquisition of vicious habits.²

¹ Of course, if the struggle is consistently successful, then she will eventually lose the habit.

² "he who has accustomed himself to restrain his passions, enlarges by habit his power over them, and consequently over himself." AP, p. 320.

4

Judgment

INTRODUCTION

In the preceding three chapters, we have examined, respectively, Reid's notion of the mind and its operations, the nature of voluntary action and the principles that incline the agent to act. One final step remains before we can begin to consider Reid's theory of knowledge directly: The operation of judgment, in Reid's view, is that by which we may enter into an epistemic relation with the operations of our minds and the external world. To understand his account of the nature of this relation and the conditions under which it arises, we must first examine his account of the *relata*: namely, the operation of judgment and its objects.

1 PROPOSITIONS

Reid argues that we may gain some understanding of the various operations of mind, if we attend to the linguistic forms by which they are expressed.¹ The operation of judgment, Reid states, "is expressed in speech by a proposition".² Hence, we begin with his account of propositions. First, Reid held that all propositions are sentences, but not all sentences are propositions. Questions, commands, petitions, promises, and suppositions each have a grammatical structure that enables them to express a unique kind of mental operation.³ The grammatical structure of a proposition is, of course, that of a declarative sentence:

D₃₅ Proposition = *df* an "affirmative or negative [sentence], with a verb in what is called the indicative mood."⁴

Third, no proposition can express an operation of judgment unless it is also the expression of the operation of conception: for we must have some conception of that

¹ "Language is the express image and picture of human thoughts; and, from the picture, we may often draw very certain conclusions with regard to the original." IP, p. 573.

² IP, p. 69. Cf. IP, p. 500; "Judgment can only be expressed by a proposition, affirmative or negative, which is a compleat Sentence." MS 8/II/5, 2.

³ "there are many Sentences in Language which neither affirm nor deny, Such as a Question a Command, or Petition, or Promise a Supposition. These Operations of Mind are expressed in Language by Sentences, but not by propositions." MS 2/III/12, 28. This view is evidently Aristotelian: "not all [sentences] can be called propositions. We call propositions those only that have truth or falsity in them. A prayer is, for instance, a sentence but neither has truth nor has falsity." *De Interpretatione* 17a. Trans. H.P. Cooke, H. Tredennick. Reid mentions Aristotle's view in BA, p. 346. See B. Smith and K. Schuhmann, "Elements of Speech Act Theory in the Work of Thomas Reid", *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 7 (1990): pp. 47-66.

⁴ IP, p. 498.

about which we judge.¹ Fourth, being an expression of judgment is not essential to a proposition. A proposition may be used to express mere conception, that is, conception without belief, for example, where we knowingly utter contradictory propositions.² However, unless there are contextual indications to the contrary, the utterance of some proposition may be taken to both (i) indicate the occurrence of “a mental affirmation or negation”,³ and (ii) describe what it is that the agent affirms or denies. Finally, the utterance of a proposition often includes linguistic or pragmatic signs indicating the degree of strength with which the agent affirms or denies, such as ‘probably’. In sum, Reid, I suggest, would consent to the following:

A₅₉ For any proposition *p*, *S* judges that *p* if and only if (i) *S* conceives of *p* and (ii) *S* mentally affirms that *p* with a certain degree of strength.

2 TRUTH-VALUE

To what does Reid ascribe truth-value? The textual evidence is unclear. On the one hand, Reid describes truth and falsehood as qualities that may be ascribed only to propositions.⁴ Again, he describes judgment as a determination of the mind regarding the truth or falsehood of a proposition.⁵ On the other hand, there are passages in which Reid ascribes truth-value to both (i) the operation of judgment and (ii) the propositions by which judgment is expressed, such as the following:

“Every judgment, and every proposition by which judgment is expressed, must be true or false; and the qualities of true and false, in their proper sense, can belong to nothing but to judgments, or to propositions which express judgment.”⁶

¹ “there can be no judgment without a conception of the things about which we judge” IP, p. 499; “a proposition must be conceived before we can judge of it” IP, p. 509. This condition is true of every sentence that expresses an operation of mind: for “conception enters as an ingredient in every operation of the mind” IP, p. 358.

² “it is impossible for a man to have two judgments at the same time, which he perceives to be contradictory. But contradictory propositions may be conceived at the same time without any difficulty.” IP, p. 500.

³ IP, p. 501. “If it should be said that the Definition is to be understood of Mental Affirmation or Denial, not of that which is made by words, I believe it is so; but Mental Affirmation or Denial is only a Periphrasis for Judgment and not more easy to be understood.” MS 8/II/5, 1

⁴ “Mr Locke very justly observes . . . That Truth and falsehood belong not properly to Ideas but to propositions.” MS 4/II/2, 25 m.; cf. “every proposition is either true or false” IP, p. 533.

⁵ forming any judgment of [a proposition’s] truth or falsehood” IP, p. 19; “we may have no concern whether [a proposition] be true or false. In these cases we commonly form no judgment about it” IP, p. 395.

⁶ IP, p. 359; cf. “Truth and falsehood are qualities which belong to judgment only; or to propositions by which judgment is expressed. Every judgment, every opinion, and every proposition, is either true or false. But words which neither affirm nor deny any thing, can have neither of those qualities” IP, p. 69; “Every proposition is either true or false; so is every judgment.” IP, p. 533; “the Act of the Mind in supposing is neither true nor false being no judgment.” MS 6/III/7, 1-2.

We may perhaps discover Reid's view on this issue, by first determining what it is that he took to be the *object* of a judgment.¹ There are several passages in which Reid states that 'the object of judgment is a proposition'.² However, he also appears to regard this as a periphrasis for his more complete view, namely, that the object of judgment is that which is "expressible by a Proposition".³ But what is Reid referring to by this phrase? There appear to be several options.

First, Reid, as we have seen, states that judgments are 'expressible by propositions'. Perhaps, then, Reid is referring to judgments. This interpretation is unlikely. For it would entail that Reid thought the object of judgment was judgment itself.

Second, Reid held that we cannot "pursue a train of thought or reasoning without the use of language"; again, language, he writes, "is an instrument of thought as well as of the communication of our thoughts."⁴ Could Reid therefore be referring to an 'inwardly spoken' proposition that functions as the vehicle of thought, and which is therefore expressible by an 'outwardly spoken' proposition? Unfortunately, Reid also held that judgment is involved in every act of perception, memory, and consciousness;⁵ and he would surely have denied that we formulate 'inwardly spoken' propositions for every perceptual judgment.

Third, Reid seems to allow that there is something that is distinct from and 'conveyed' or 'signified' by a proposition, and which may be the object of our judgment. For he gives examples where (i) two token propositions of the same type are taken to signify different things: "certain articulate sounds convey to my mind the knowledge of the battle of Pharsalia, and others, the knowledge of the battle of Poltowa"; and where (ii) two token propositions of different types are taken to signify the same thing: "when a Frenchman and an Englishman receive the same information by different articulate sounds".⁶ Again, Reid states that a proposition has a "meaning", which we may understand.⁷ In short, the terms 'knowledge', 'information' and

¹ "Belief must have an object. For he that believes, must believe something; and that which he believes is called the object of his belief." IP, p. 270.

² "propositions . . . are the object of belief". IP, p. 580; cf. "Every proposition that may be the object of belief, has a contrary proposition that may be the object of a contrary belief.", The belief of a proposition is an operation of mind" IP, p. 353; "assent we give to a proposition" IP, p. 671.

³ "The Object of a Belief must be a Proposition or expressible by a Proposition" MS 3/II/3, 10.

⁴ IP, p. 666. Reid seems to have been aware of the difficulty in separating a thought from the sign of that thought: "Words are the signs of our thoughts; and the sign is so associated with the thing signified, that the last can hardly present itself to the imagination, without drawing the other along with it." IP, p. 666.

⁵ "the senses, memory and consciousness, are considered as judging faculties." IP, p. 502; "In the feeling of Pain there is a Mental Affirmation that I feel it. It can only be expressed by a Proposition which must be true or false." MS 8/II/5, 3.

⁶ HM, p. 186; cf. Reid use of 'proposition' to refer to a mere token: "Aristeppus who happened to be foremost came upon the diagram of a Mathematical Proposition drawn in the Sand" MS 2/III/11, 7

⁷ "I know nothing that can be meant by having the idea of a proposition, but either the understanding its meaning, or the judging of its truth." IP, p. 403.

'meaning', as used in these texts, seem to be good candidates for whatever is extensionally equivalent to the phrase 'expressible by a proposition'. Our task, then, is to determine what precisely this 'meaning' is to which Reid refers.

3 THE ACT OF CONCEPTION

We begin by examining that operation of mind by which Reid takes it that we understand or apprehend the meaning of a proposition, namely, the operation of "simple apprehension" or "bare conception".¹

First, what precisely is the referent of the term 'conception'. Reid argues that, in our attempts to fix such a reference, philosophers have standardly failed to discern the process/product ambiguity in the term. For example, we would normally take:

(a) *S* is painting a centaur;

to mean:

(a*) *S* is performing the activity of painting so as to bring about a pictorial representation of a centaur.

Unfortunately, philosophers have, by analogy, taken:

(b) *S* conceives of a centaur;

to mean:

(b*) *S* is performing the activity of conceiving so as to bring about a mental representation of a centaur.

In doing so, Reid argues, they have made two mistakes. First, to say that we have a conception of a centaur in our minds is *merely* to say that we are conceiving a centaur: we are not producing a conception in the sense that, by painting, we are producing a picture. Conceiving, Reid argues, does not bring about any effect: it is merely the exertion of a power of the mind directed toward an object.² The second mistake is to think that, just as the act of painting is directed toward a picture of a centaur, rather than the centaur itself, so also the act of conception is directed toward a mental representation of a centaur, and not the centaur itself.

¹ "it is one thing to understand what is said, to conceive or apprehend its meaning, whether it be a word, a sentence, or a discourse; it is another thing to judge of it" IP, p. 358.

² "Conceiving as well as projecting or resolving, are what the schoolmen called *immanent* acts of the mind, which produce nothing beyond themselves. But painting is a transitive act, which produces an effect distinct from the operation, and this effect is the picture. Let this therefore be always remembered, that what is commonly called the image of a thing in the mind, is no more than the act or operation of the mind in conceiving it." IP, p. 364.

Now these mistakes, Reid thinks, are generated, in part, by an adherence to the principle that the interaction between the mind and its objects is, in certain respects, analogous to the interaction between physical objects: that is, just as two bodies produce an immediate effect upon or change in each another if and only if they are spatio-temporally contiguous, so it is with the mind and its objects. Call this principle the Contiguity Maxim:

CM₁ x is an immediate object of S 's mind if and only if x is spatio-temporally contiguous to S 's mind.¹

Thus, we might suppose that, since a centaur does not exist in any time or place, it cannot itself be an immediate object of our conception. Again we might think that, since the objects of our memory no longer exist, and the objects of our perception could not *literally* enter our minds, it follows that they cannot be immediate objects of mind. Now it is clear, Reid argues, that the hidden premise, in both cases, is CM₁. Reid's solution, then, is to reject the claim that the objects of mere conception, memory, and perception cannot be the immediate objects of thought, by rejecting CM₁. Philosophers, however, have responded quite differently. They have instead postulated the existence of mental images or representations: that is, things that are (i) spatio-temporally contiguous to the mind; (ii) distinct from the objects of mere conception, memory, and perception; and (iii) somehow able to represent these objects to the mind.²

This solution is, of course, Reid's interpretation of the Ideal System; and his attempt to refute it constitutes a major focus of his philosophical energy.³ We shall examine here two of his key objections. First, Reid takes it to be a general maxim that something is an object of thought if and only if it is an immediate object of thought. His argument is this: For any object of thought O :

- (1) Either S thinks of O at time t or S does not think of O at t .
- (2) If S thinks of O at t , then O is an immediate object of S 's thought at t .
- (3) If S does not think of O at t , then O is not an object of S 's thought at t .

Therefore,

¹ Cf. "the Mind being onely able to act where it is" MS 1/1/3, 12; "Neither the mind nor any other being can act but when & where it is." MS 3107/1/3, 65.

² "Philosophers very unanimously maintain, that in conception there is a real image in the mind, which is the immediate object of conception, and distinct from the act of conceiving it." IP, pp. 364-65.

³ It is well-known that Reid considered his objections to the Ideal System to be his chief contribution to philosophical thought: "It would be want of candour not to own that I think there is some merit in what you are pleased to call *my Philosophy*; but I think it lies chiefly in having called in question the common theory of *Ideas, or Images of things in the mind* being the only objects of thought. . . . I think there is hardly anything that can be called *mine* in the philosophy of the mind, which does not follow with ease from the detection of this prejudice." Letter to Dr. Gregory (20th Aug 1790), WH, p. 22a. See HM, Manuscripts § 2.2.

- (4) Either *O* is an immediate object of *S*'s thought at *t*, or *O* is not an object of *S*'s thought at *t*.¹ [by 1-3]

Now the Idealist holds that *S* cannot conceive a centaur unless the immediate object of *S*'s conception is a mental representation of a centaur. But if (4) is true, then *S* would not then be conceiving a centaur, but rather a representation of a centaur. That is:

- (5) Either a centaur is an immediate object of *S*'s conception at *t*, or a centaur is not an object of *S*'s conception at *t*.

The Idealist might respond by arguing that, while it may seem to us that the object of our conception is a centaur, it is, in fact, a mental representation of a centaur. The problem here, Reid argues, is that the object of our conception, when we take ourselves to be conceiving a centaur, has the attributes of figure, colour, life, and motion. But no mental representation of a centaur has such attributes. More precisely, Reid's second principle objection to the Ideal System is the following *reductio*:

- (1) All mental representations are attributes of mind. [by definition]
 (2) No attribute of mind is coloured, shaped or extended. [by definition]

Therefore,

- (3) No mental representation is coloured, shaped or extended. [1, 2]
 (4) If mental representations are identical to the immediate objects of mind, then, for any attribute *F*, the immediate objects of mind have *F* if and only if mental representations have *F*. [by the indiscernibility of identicals]
 (5) Mental representations are identical to the immediate objects of mind. [by hypothesis of the Ideal System]

Therefore,

- (6) For any attribute *F*, the immediate objects of mind have *F* if and only if mental representations have *F*. [4, 5]
 (7) Some immediate objects of mind are coloured, shaped and extended.²

Therefore,

- (8) Some mental representations are coloured, shaped and extended. [6, 7]

Therefore,

- (9) No mental representation is coloured, shaped and extended and some mental representations are coloured, shaped and extended. [3, 8]

¹ "whatever the object be, the man either thinks of it, or he does not. There is no medium between these. If he thinks of it, it is an immediate object of thought while he thinks of it. If he does not think of it, it is no object of thought at all. Every object of thought, therefore, is an immediate object of thought." IP, p. 536

² The restriction is given in view of objects of mind such as time, existence, non-existence, and so on.

And so, Reid concludes from this that, unless we are prepared to accept that we are utterly mistaken about what it is that we are conceiving, it seems we must be conceiving the centaur itself, rather than some mental representation of a centaur.¹ But we need more detail here. What, precisely, does Reid take to be the objects of conception?

4 THREE TYPES OF CONCEPTION

Reid presents three kinds of conceptions, distinguished by their objects: namely, the non-existent things, individuals and universals. We examine each in turn.

4.1 IMAGINATION

That kind of conception Reid calls imagination is given the following analysis:

A₆₀ *S* imagines some object *x* if and only if (i) *S* conceives of *x*, (ii) *x* does not exist nor is it a copy of anything that exists, (iii) *S* does not believe that *x* exists, (iv) *x* may be conceived by some person other than *S*.²

It follows immediately that, if there is such an operation as imagination, then CM₁ is false. For if *S* can imagine that *p*, then something can be the immediate object of thought even though it is not spatio-temporally contiguous to the mind.

4.2 CONCEPTION OF INDIVIDUALS

The second kind of conception is that which we have of things that exist.³ Now Reid claims that his description of the relation between this kind of conception and its object is analogous, in certain respects, to that relation which holds between a picture and that of which it purports to be a representation. But, given Reid's rejection of mental representations, it is not at all clear how this analogy is to be made out. For example, Reid suggests that our conceptions are true just in case they "agree with" the individual thing that is the object of that conception.

¹ "This one object which I conceive, is not the image of an animal, it is an animal. I know what it is to conceive an image of an animal, and what it is to conceive an animal; and I can distinguish the one of these from the other without any danger of mistake. The thing I conceive is a body of a certain figure and colour, having life and spontaneous motion. The Philosopher says that the idea is an image of the animal, but that it has neither body, nor colour, nor life, nor spontaneous motion. This I am not able to comprehend." IP, p. 391.

² "There are conceptions which may be called fancy pictures. They are commonly called creatures of fancy, or of imagination. They are not the copies of any original that exists, but are originals themselves. . . . They were conceived by their creators, and may be conceived by others, but they never existed. We do not ascribe the qualities of true or false to them, because they are not accompanied with any belief, nor do they imply any affirmation or negation." IP, p. 365.

³ Reid, as we have seen, is emphatic in holding that only judgments are (in some sense) truth-valuable. Yet, in his description of this kind of conception, he states that these conceptions "are called true when they agree with the thing conceived". (IP, p. 366) I take it that Reid intends us to understand this kind of conception as that which accompanies belief.

“our conceptions are called true when they agree with the thing conceived. Thus, my conception of the city of London is true when I conceive it to be what it really is”.¹

But if conceptions are just operations of the mind, in what possible sense could they be said to “agree” or “disagree” with the city of London? This claim appears to run headlong into Reid’s own objection to the Ideal System. Again, how should we understand Reid’s claim that a conception of an individual thing is true just in case “I conceive it to be what it really is”? Suppose that I conceive the city of London to be the capital of England. Are we to say that my conception will be true just in case London is indeed the capital of England? If so, it is very difficult to see how my conception of London could be false. For the object of my conception is not some mental representation of London, nor is it some proposition describing London. It is, Reid would say, *London itself*. But then a conception is true, on Reid’s account, just in case its object is “what it really is”. But it could hardly be anything else! In short, Reid’s account must either suffer the very same objections he advanced against mental representations, or it cannot account for falsehood.

We may gain considerable ground here by taking Reid to be an adverbial theorist with respect to the operations of mind. Sensation is the simplest operation to analyse in this respect. The grammatical predicate of any proposition describing an act of sensation does not pick out an object of that act. Its function is merely to characterise the *kind* or *mode* of sensory act thereby attributed to the subject. In other words, the predicate is being used to modify the verb, and so, from a semantic perspective, functions as an adverb.² Now, a feeling or sensation is merely “a certain manner in which [the subject] is affected”.³ Thus, to say that “I feel pain”, is not to say that the object of sensation is “pain”, but rather that the manner in which I am affected is that of *being pained*.⁴

Now the grammatical predicates in propositions describing any of the other operations of mind are distinct from those describing sensations, in that they have a *dual* function. They not only function, semantically, as an adverb; they also pick out the object of that operation. Thus, take the following proposition:

- (a) S conceives a centaur,

¹ IP, p. 366.

² Cf. R.Chisholm, *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1957): p. 115ff.

³ IP, p. 176; cf. an “affection or feeling of the mind” HM, p. 24.

⁴ Although “the form of the expression, *I feel pain*, might lead one to think that there is here an act of the mind denoted by the Verb *feel* & an object denoted by the word *pain* yet in reality there is no distinction between the one and the other.” MS 4/II/2, 30-31. Cf. HM, p. 163.

On this adverbialist view, the term 'centaur' picks out both (i) a particular manner or mode of conceiving; and (ii) the object of that conception. We may thus re-express (a) as follows:

(a*) *S* conceives-centaurly a centaur; or, *S* conceives a centaur in a centaurly manner.

Now (a*) would appear to capture all that Reid wants to say about the operation of conception. First, it does not entail or require that the operation of conceiving produces anything beyond itself. Second, it does not entail or require that the object of conception is a mental representation: the object is, as (a*) states, the centaur itself.

Again, taking Reid as an adverbial theorist allows us to be more precise about his analysis of the act of judgment or believing. Thus:

A₆₁ *S* believes that *x* is *F* if and only if (i) *S* conceives of *x* in an *Fx*-ly way; and (ii) this act of conceiving is accompanied by a mental affirmation that is expressible by the proposition: '*x* is *F*'.¹

Now this analysis should by no means be taken to imply that Reid understood belief and conception as merely distinct secondary attributes of the same operation. The act of affirming is a distinct *kind* of operation to the act of conceiving, even though both are modes of thinking about the same object. To reinforce this point, we may look briefly at Reid's *reductio* of Hume's account of the difference between belief and conception.

Reid takes Hume to have argued that to have a firm belief is to have a strong and lively idea; merely to conceive, that is, to conceive without believing or disbelieving, is to have a weak and faint idea. Thus:

D₃₆ *S* firmly believes that *p* =_{df} *S*'s idea of *p* is strong and lively.

D₃₇ *S* merely conceives of *p* =_{df} *S*'s idea of *p* is weak and faint.

However, suppose *S* firmly believes that not-*p*. What should we say? Either *S*'s idea of *p* is weak and faint, or it is strong and lively. If it is weak and faint, then, contrary to D₃₆, *S* can firmly believe something and her idea of it be weak and faint; and, given D₃₇,

¹ The analysis given here is, in effect, quite similar to Keith Lehrer's, that is, where the act of "attributing" is equivalent to the act of "affirming": "S believes that *o* is *F* if and only if some object of conception *x* and some attribute of being *A* are such that *S* conceives of *x* under the mode of conception *o**, *S* conceives of being *A* under the mode of conception *F** and *S* attributes being *A* under the mode of conception *F** to *x* under the mode of conception *O**. The terms that replace *o* and *F* refer to an object of conception and an attribute respectively, but they also refer to a mode of conceiving the object and a mode of conceiving the attribute respectively." Keith Lehrer, "Metamind: Belief, Consciousness, and Intentionality", in *Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986): p. 43.

we could not distinguish between S 's believing that $\text{not-}p$, and S 's merely conceiving that p . Suppose, then, that S 's idea of p is strong and lively. Given D_{36} , we could not distinguish between S 's believing that p and S 's believing that $\text{not-}p$. Both of these results are absurd. Hence, believing and conceiving are not merely secondary attributes of the same kind of operation.¹

Given the analysis in A_{61} , we may perhaps understand Reid's analysis of the truth-conditions for a belief as follows: Suppose that S believes that London is the capital of France. On the Idealist account, S 's belief would be false just because S has formed a mental representation of London as being the capital of France, and this representation does not correspond to or agree with what London "really is". On Reid's account, however, S 's belief is false just because (i) S has conceived of London in a London-is-the-capital-of-France way; and (ii) this act of conceiving is accompanied by a mental affirmation or assent expressible by the proposition: 'London is the capital of France'. This, again, appears to capture all that Reid would want to say about truth and falsehood: First, it does not entail or require a mental representation as the immediate object of thought; the object of the conception and belief is 'London's being the capital of France' itself (remembering that the immediate objects of thought, for Reid, need not exist). Second, the source of the falsehood is not that the operation of conception has produced a mental image of London that mis-represents London itself. Rather S 's belief is false just because her manner or mode of conception fails to agree with London itself.

There is a serious problem with this adverbial approach. Reid's attempt to eliminate mental representations was intended, in part, to provide a solution to the scepticism which he took it to entail. More precisely, the Contiguity Maxim, CM_1 , states that the mind can interact with an object only if they are spatio-temporally contiguous. However, there is a corollary to CM_1 :

CM_2 If S 's mind is at a spatio-temporal distance D from object x , then x can be an object of S 's mind only if there is some mediating object y , such that (i) y is spatio-temporally contiguous with x , (ii) y traverses D , and (iii) y becomes spatio-temporally contiguous with S 's mind.²

Now both the Peripatetics and the modern Idealists, Reid argues, accept CM_1 and CM_2 . The Peripatetics postulated that the requisite mediating object, which they called "intelligible species", was constantly emitted by the original object in all directions and

¹ HM, p. 28.

² It "is evident, that if a medium is at all necessary, it must lay hold on both the mind & object & pass all the way between them without any chasm or interruption, otherwise it remains as impossible for the mind & object to affect each other, as if there was no medium at all." MS 3107/1/3, 69

so was able to traverse the distance between the object and the mind and “make an impression on the passive intellect”.¹ The mind, being spatio-temporally contiguous with the impressions, was thereby able to make them its object.² The Idealists, however, rejected the notion of intelligible species; yet they did not replace it with some other object that might play the mediating role described in CM₂.³ But then it follows that the Idealists do not have the explanatory resources to explain how it is that anything that is not spatio-temporally contiguous with the mind can be an object of the mind: in other words, the System of Ideas fails to explain how it is that the objects of perception, mere conception and memory can be objects of the mind. It also follows straightforwardly that the System of Ideas coupled with the Contiguity Maxim leads directly to absolute scepticism as regards the external world.⁴ There are two arguments here. The first assumes that CM₂ is true:

- (1) For any object of *S*'s perception *x*, *x* is such that (i) it is at a spatial distance *D* from *S*'s mind, and (ii) there is no mediating object *y*, such that (a) *y* is spatially contiguous with *x*, (b) *y* traverses *D*, and (c) *y* becomes spatio-temporally contiguous with *S*'s mind.
- (2) No objects of perception are objects of *S*'s thought. [by 1, CM₂]
- (3) If *x* is not an object of *S*'s thought, then *x* is not an object of *S*'s knowledge.
- (4) No objects of perception are objects of *S*'s knowledge. [2, 3]⁵

¹ MS 3107/1/3, 68

² “the active Intellect which may be supposed at no great Distance observes them.” MS 1/1/3, 13.

³ Cf. “The intelligible forms of the Peripatetics and ideas imprinted on minds are parts of this same hypothesis, which rest on the same foundation and are joined to themselves by a binding compact. With what right, therefore, and with what injury Descartes and his modern followers have dismissed and rejected one part of this hypothesis and retained the other, let themselves observe.” *Orations*, III., p. 967.

⁴ Michaud argues that Reid's argument in the *Inquiry* to the effect that the theory of ideas leads to scepticism, is “not safe from” the following criticism: “Berkeley did not think he was a sceptic: on the contrary, he wanted to prevent the sceptical consequences of Locke's representative theory of perception. As to Hume, his scepticism is at least protean and multifarious, and the outcomes of his analyses of the causal relation and of our belief in the uniformity of nature are decisive. His scepticism concerning reason is at least as important as his scepticism concerning the senses.” Y. Michaud, “Reid's Attack on the Theory of Ideas”, in M. Dalgarno and E. Matthews, eds. *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, PSS 42, 1989): p. 15. This criticism displays an astonishing lack of acquaintance with Reid's work. First, Reid was not ignorant of Berkeley's attempt to avoid scepticism, and indeed provided an explanation of what he took to be Berkeley's inconsistency in this respect, both in the *Inquiry* (Chap. 1, § 5.) and well before the *Inquiry* was published. Second, Reid presented forceful objections against Hume's scepticism with respect to the nature of causation, the uniformity of nature (see Chapter 2 of this thesis), and reason (IP, Essay VII., Chap. 1).

⁵ “with these intelligible forms rejected, the doctrine of ideas plunge everything into the abyss of scepticism. For according to this hypothesis the ideas present in the mind are not merely the immediate but the only object of the intellect. For, when the chain that links ideas and things has been broken, all objects that have passed away, all external objects, vanish just like the dreams of a sick man. The ideas of the instant moment are everything; about other things of whatever kind nothing will be known nor will knowledge nor even probable opinion be left in the human mind.” *Orations*, III, p. 973.

The second argument proceeds from Reid's contention that the only objects of thought are immediate objects, coupled with the implication of CM₁, that no objects of perception are immediate objects of thought. Given (3) above, it follows, once again, that no objects of perception are objects of knowledge.¹

Now Reid seems to have thought that, by replacing the Idealist's representationalist account with adverbialism, these sceptical arguments would be effectively blocked. The problem is, why should we think that an adverbialist account is any less likely to engender scepticism? On the adverbialist account, whether or not the immediate objects of perception exist and are as they are perceived to be, is surely a matter of whether we are conceiving them in the right manner. But on what grounds can we assume this is so? Why should we take it that our 'manner of conceiving' objects is reliable?²

Reid's response, I suggest, would be this: first, he would readily admit that the adverbialist theory will not avoid scepticism *unless* it is accompanied by his externalist theory of knowledge; second, he would argue that, even if his theory of knowledge were true, the Idealist account of the phenomena in question would still *entail* scepticism; whereas the adverbialist account does not. The details of this response, however, must be delayed. For we have yet to examine Reid's important third kind of conception, that is, our conceptions of universals.

4.3 UNIVERSALS

Reid defines individual substances, attributes and relations as things that exist in time and place. Universals, on the other hand, do not exist in time or place and "belong or may belong to many individuals".³ There is one clarification that it will be helpful to make before we set out formal analyses of these statements. Reid distinguishes between the relation that individual attributes bear to individual substances, and the relation that universals bear to individuals. Thus, rather than say that universals 'belong to' or are 'attributes of' individual substances, attributes and relations, we shall say that individual substances, attributes and relations are *instantiations* or *instances* of universals. For example, we shall not say that the universal *man* is an attribute of John: but rather that John is an 'instance' of the universal *man*.

¹ "What cannot be the object of thought, or the object of the mind in thinking, cannot be the object of knowledge or of opinion."; "all knowledge, and all judgment and opinion, must be about things which are or may be immediate objects of our thought." IP, p. 548; "There can be no knowledge, no judgment, or opinion about things which are not immediate objects of thought." IP, p. 552.

² Audi, for one, makes a similar objection: "Using the adverbial theory of sensory experience, one might also formulate an *adverbial phenomenalism*, which constructs physical objects out of sensory experience alone and says that to see a tree (for instance) is to experience 'treely' in a certain vivid and stable way. On this view, perception does not require even sense-data, only perceivers and their properties." Robert Audi, *Belief, Justification and Knowledge* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1988): p. 25.

³ IP, p. 366.

Thus we can set Reid's analyses in the following way:

- A₆₂ x is an individual (substance, attribute or relation) if and only if x exists in some time or place.
- A₆₃ X is a universal if and only if it is possible that there should be two or more individuals x_1, \dots, x_n , such that x_1, \dots, x_n are instances of X .

Reid ascribes to universals the same characteristics as Plato's forms or 'ideas', with one exception: universals, in Reid's view, do not exist.¹ Thus, Reid held the following:

- A₆₄ X is a universal = *df.* (i) X may be distinctly conceived by any intelligent being even if there is no instance of X ; (ii) X is the exemplar or model, according to which God created every instance of X ; (iii) X is entire in every instance of X without being multiplied or divided; (iv) X is eternal, immutable,² and uncreated; (v) X is the object of God's conception.

Now one implication of this definition is that any universal that is not (also) conceived by human agents, is nothing but the object of God's conceptual activity. For to say that universals are "eternal", as Reid does, is just to say that they have been conceived from eternity; and the only candidate for this role is 'the Divine intellect'. However, Reid makes it quite clear that this account should not be taken to imply that universals exist in the mind of God as models or exemplars which resemble their created instances. Reid, being a divine exemplarist,³ agrees with the following principle:

- A₆₅ S produces a work of art or design x at t , only if S conceived of x at a time prior to t .⁴

¹ "The nature of . . . every thing which the ancients called an universal, answers to the description of a Platonic idea, if in that description you leave out the attribute of existence." IP, p. 387. In his manuscripts, Reid anticipates the objection that Plato did not consider universals to exist: "Many have thought that the Ideas of the Pythagoreans and of Plato meant nothing more than the Conception which the Deity must have had of all his works before he made them; as every work of Design must be conceived before it is executed. And indeed there are many passages in those Philosophers, in which the word Idea is used so as to lead us to this Sense. But there are other passages, which as plainly require something more to be meant by it. If their Ideas meant nothing but the Conceptions of the Deity, they would never have made Ideas & Matter to be two first Principles of things distinct from the Deity, whom they made a third. I do not find this Language in the later Platonists." MS 8/II/13, 10/12

² Reid's MS version included the attribute of omnipresence: "It is omnipresent; because always ready to present itself to the contemplation of every being capable of contemplating it" MS 8/II/13, 13/19. Reid may have noticed that his characterisation is identical to clause (i).

³ For a contemporary critique of divine exemplarism, see J. F. Ross, "God, Creator of Kinds and Possibilities: *Requiescant universalia ante res*, in *Rationality, Religious Belief, & Moral Commitment*, edited by R. Audi and W. J. Wainwright (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986): pp. 315-34. A reply to Ross is given in L. Zagzebski's "Individual Essence and Creation", in *Divine & Human Action: Essays in the Metaphysics of Theism*, ed. T.V. Morris, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988): pp. 119-44.

⁴ "this is a maxim universally admitted, that every work of art must first be conceived in the mind of the operator." IP, p. 363.

On the Idealist account, to have a conception of x is to have an existing mental representation of x : and this will be true even for the divine intellect. But then, by A_{65} , God could have produced his creation only if there existed some prior mental representation of the creation, that is, a set of exemplars, in God's mind. But if this is so, then how is the origin of this set of exemplars to be explained. If it was created by God, then A_{65} conjoined with the Ideal System would require the postulation of a second-order set of exemplars, and so on *ad infinitum*:¹

On Reid's adverbialist account, however, no such regress arises. God's conception of what it is that he creates is identical to the operation of 'imagination': that is, when God conceived of what he was to create, the object of his conception did not exist, even as a mere mental representation.

4.4 POSSIBLE WORLDS

This account of universals has some useful spin-offs in terms of understanding Reid's view of modality, non-existent objects, and, more germane to our task, the nature of meaning.² We begin with the following passage:

"It is possible, you say, that God might have made an universe of sensible and rational creatures, into which neither natural nor moral evil should ever enter. It may be so, for what I know: But how do you know that it is possible? That you can conceive it, I grant; but this is no proof. I cannot admit, as an argument, or even as a pressing difficulty, what is grounded on the supposition that such a thing is possible, when there is no good evidence that it is possible, and, for any thing we know, it may in the nature of things be impossible."³

Reid suggests here that we can conceive of God's having created a world W^* that is very different from the actual world W , that is, where W^* is such that at least the following two propositions are true:

¹ "In every work of design, the work must be conceived before it is executed, that is, before it exists. If a model, consisting of ideas, must exist in the mind, as the object of this conception, that model is a work of design no less than the other, of which it is the model; and therefore, as a work of design, it must have been conceived before it existed. In every work of design, therefore, the conception must go before the existence. This argument we applied before to the Platonic system of eternal and immutable ideas, and it may be applied with equal force to all the systems of ideas." IP, p. 393.

² My exposition here, I acknowledge, is problematic in two respects: first, although I claim no more than is consistent with Reid's own statements, the exposition is anachronistic inasmuch as it makes use of the notion of 'possible-worlds' as drawn from contemporary metaphysics (albeit inherited from Leibniz); second, since this is not the place for it, I do not attempt to defend or clarify (my formulation of) this notion in a manner that would otherwise be required.

³ IP, p. 405. See AP, p. 355 ff.

P All humans in W^* have the power of moral liberty.¹

Q No natural or moral evil exists in W^* .

Reid also suggests that W^* may or may not be a *possible* world: and by this, he seems to mean that *P* and *Q*, perhaps together with certain necessary truths, are inconsistent; which is just to say that the state of affairs they describe are not compossible. We have here, of course, the germs of a free will defense.² What we are especially interested in, however, is Reid's talk of possible and impossible "universes".

First, let us call the actual world '*W*'. Now Reid has stated that, prior to the creation of *W*, God must have conceived of *W*. More precisely, God must have conceived the set of universals, of which the individual substances, attributes and relations in *W* are instances. Second, this set of universals would have been describable by a set of propositions depicting various relations between the universals. Call this set of propositions ' Φ '. Third, since the individuals in *W* are instantiations of the relations described in Φ , we can also say that Φ is a *consistent* set of propositions: there could have been no instantiation otherwise. In sum, *W* was, prior to creation, a *mere* possible world: that is, a world that is (i) non-existent, (ii) the object of God's imagination, and (iii) describable by a set of consistent propositions.

Now on the basis of the passage above, I suggest that Reid would also accept, in principle, that *W* is not the only mere possible world: there are other ways in which the world might have been. But precision is crucial here. Reid rejected the maxim that *p* is possible if and only if *p* is conceivable.³ For we can easily conceive of (in the sense of 'understand') impossible propositions. Hence, we cannot *define* 'possibility' in terms of 'being conceived by God'. For God also conceives of impossible propositions. Indeed, Reid would argue that, for any necessary truth God conceives, God must also conceive of its contradictory.⁴ And since God conceives of every necessary truth, he must conceive of *every* impossible proposition.⁵

¹ As we have seen, Reid holds that no rational creature is without moral liberty.

² For a contemporary version of a possible worlds approach to the free will defense, see A. Plantinga: *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

³ "our power of conceiving a proposition is no criterion of its possibility or impossibility" IP, p. 297. For a good discussion of Reid's views on this maxim, see M. Hooker, "A Mistake Concerning Conception" *Philosophical Monographs* 3 (1976): pp. 86-94.

⁴ "Every proposition, that is necessarily true, stands opposed to a contradictory proposition that it is impossible; and he that conceives one, conceives both: Thus a man who believes that two and three necessarily make five, must believe it to be impossible that two and three should not make five." IP, p. 403.

⁵ Put another way, whilst it may be true that if *p* is possible, God conceives of *p*, we cannot say that if God conceives of *p* then *p* is possible.

This is not to say that God, in Reid's view, has nothing to do with modality. First, Reid's distinction between universals and individuals may be understood in terms of the distinction between what God has imagined from eternity and what God actualises, or chooses to bring into existence as an instance of what he has imagined.¹ Second, Reid, as we have seen, ties in the impossibility of a proposition's being false, with the determinant of its truth-value being independent of any exertion of active power. Likewise, he holds that a proposition is possibly false just in case its truth-value is dependent upon the exertion of active power. We can then say that, for Reid, p is a necessary truth if and only if its truth-value is independent of whether or not any mere possible world is actualised by God. Whereas p is a contingent truth if and only if its truth-value is dependent on *which* mere possible world it is that God actualises. This, I take it, nicely explains the sense in which Reid *defines* necessary and contingent truths in terms of the exertion of will.

4.5 CONCEPTION OF UNIVERSALS

We come now to Reid's explanation of how it is that we form our conceptions of universals, or 'general conceptions'.² Reid argues that our first conceptions of an individual are probably obtained prior to the exertion of judgment. At this stage, our conceptions are "gross and indistinct".³ The formation of general conceptions, then, requires the performance of some clarificatory operation, namely, that of "analysis and composition".⁴ This operation is equivalent, in Reid, to what he calls "abstraction"⁵ or "distinguishing": that is, where some individual x has the attributes F and G :

A₆₆ S distinguishes F and G if and only if S forms the judgments: (i) F and G are non-identical (analysis), and (ii) F and G are attributes of x (composition).

¹ Adams criticises Leibniz's attempt to *define* the actual world in terms of being that possible world which God freely chooses. Robert M. Adams, "Theories of Actuality", in *The Possible and the Actual*, edited by Michael J. Loux (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979): p. 192. Unfortunately, Reid's view, on this point at least, does seem very similar to that of Leibniz. However, it may be possible to understand Reid's view of actualization as being similar to that advanced by A. Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, p. 169.

² It should be noted that Reid does not claim to have *explained* how it is that we conceive universals: but he does at least claim to know what must be involved, namely, the operations of distinguishing and generalising. "As to the manner how we conceive universals, I confess my ignorance. . . . I think we may be certain that universals are not conceived by means of images of them in our minds, because there can be no image of an universal." IP, p. 482.

³ "There are therefore notions of the objects of sense which are gross and indistinct; and there are others that are distinct and scientific." IP, p. 514; the first notions we have of sensible objects are . . . neither simple, nor are they accurate and distinct: They are gross and indistinct, and like the *chaos, a rudis indigestaque moles*." IP, p. 511.

⁴ "the notion which we have from the senses alone, even of the simplest objects of sense, is indistinct and incapable of being either described or reasoned upon, until it is analysed into its simple elements, and considered as compounded of those elements." IP, p. 513; cf. HM, p. 27.

⁵ IP, p. 445.

Distinguishing alone will only give us an abstract conception. The formation of a general conception requires, in addition, the operation of “generalising”,¹ that is:

A₆₇ *S* generalises an individual attribute *F* if and only if *S* judges that *F* is an instance of the universal *F-ness*.

Thus:

A₆₈ *S* forms a simple general conception of *F* if and only if *S* can form the judgments: (i) *F* and *G* are non-identical; (ii) *F* and *G* are attributes of *x*; and (iii) *F* is an instance of the universal *F-ness*.²

Universals, then, in Reid’s view, are not “an object of any external sense”.³ We do not see *whiteness*; we form a general conception of it. However, we do have perceptual access to that of which we have an *abstract* conception, namely, individual attributes: for example, we can perceive the whiteness of a sheet.⁴

Now Reid, as an adverbialist, holds that general words perform a dual function: they express both (i) a general conception, that is, the act of conceiving a universal, and (ii) the universal conceived:

“Universals are always expressed by general words; and all the words of language, excepting proper names, are general words; they are the signs of general conceptions, or of some circumstance relating to them.”⁵

My reading of this passage requires some comment. Reid seems to be saying that universals are *nothing but* general conceptions. That is, if (1) “Universals are always

¹ In his manuscripts, Reid gives an example of distinguishing which appears to indicate that he considered generalising (i.e. “capable of being applied to other notes”) to be one aspect of the operation of distinguishing: “Thus when a Musician distinguishes in a single Note of Musick, the Tone, the Time, the fork or Piano the tender or the bold; he must necessarily judge these things to be different attributes belonging to that note, & at the same time capable of being applied to other notes.” MS 2/III/8, 3. In the IP, however, distinguishing (or ‘abstraction’) and generalising are clearly regarded as distinct operations: “we cannot generalise without some degree of abstraction; but I apprehend we may abstract without generalising: For what hinders me from attending to the whiteness of the paper before me, without applying that colour to any other object: The whiteness of this individual object is an abstract conception, but not a general one, while applied to one individual only.” IP, p. 446.

² This argument is based on the following text: “It is impossible to distinguish the different attributes belonging to the same subject, without judging that they are really different and distinguishable, and that they have that relation to the subject which Logicians express, by saying that they may be predicated of it. We cannot generalise, without judging that the same attribute does or may belong to many individuals. It has been shewn, that our simplest general notions are formed by these two operations of distinguishing and generalising; judgment therefore is exercised in forming the simplest general notions.” IP, p. 507.

³ IP, p. 482.

⁴ “the whiteness of this sheet is one thing, whiteness is another, the conceptions signified by these two forms of speech are as different as the expressions: The first signifies an individual quality really existing, and is not a general conception, though it be an abstract one: The second signifies a general conception, which implies no existence, but may be predicated of every thing that is white, and in the same sense.” IP, p. 448.

⁵ IP, p. 368.

expressed by general words”, and (2) “[general words] are the signs of general conceptions”, then, since ‘*x* is the sign of *y*’ is equivalent to ‘*y* is expressed by *x*’, it follows that, (3) universals are general conceptions. But this cannot be right. For a general conception is a real individual, that is, an individual act of conceiving; hence, universals cannot be identical to general conceptions:¹

“if there were really such images in the mind, or in the brain, they could not be general, because every thing that really exists is an individual. Universals are neither acts of the mind, nor images in the mind.”²

I take it, therefore, that Reid intends to say that a general word functions as the sign of both a universal and the act of conceiving a universal.

5 REFERENTIAL THEORY OF MEANING

We return now to our original task, namely, determining Reid’s account of ‘meaning’. Reid tells us that the “meaning of the word is the thing conceived”,³ and again, that general conceptions “are conceptions of the meaning of general words”.⁴ There are several important implications we can draw from these statements.

First, Reid appears to hold to a referential theory of meaning, that is, according to which the meaning of a word is to be identified with its extension. Now one of the attractive features of a referential theory is that it captures what we might want to say about one important function of language: namely, that it enables others to pick out that object to which we refer, or to be able to discern what the world would have to be like for some proposition we utter to be true.⁵ Reid, it seems, would agree with this view. For example, in the following passage he suggests that one aim, in speaking of individual things, is to fix their reference: that is, when we use a proper name, an ostensive definition or whatever, one central aim is to ensure that those to whom we are attempting to communicate are able to determine what it is to which we are referring:

¹ The need for clarity on this matter is not always recognised by Reid’s commentators. For example: “Reid distinguishes between the whiteness of this sheet of paper, an individual quality that really exists in the world, but is the quality of one individual only, and whiteness, a general conception or universal which does not exist at all, but is a quality of all white individuals...” Keith Lehrer, “Reid on Evidence and Conception”, in M. Dalgarno and E. Matthews, eds. *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid* (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, PSS 42, 1989): p. 135.

² IP, p. 480.

³ IP, p. 367.

⁴ IP, p. 369.

⁵ Michael J. Loux, “Introduction: Modality and Metaphysics”, in *The Possible and the Actual*, edited by Michael J. Loux (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979): p. 35

“An individual is expressed in language either by a proper name, or by a general word joined to such circumstances as distinguish that individual from all others; if it is unknown, it may, when an object of sense and within reach, be pointed out to the senses; when beyond the reach of the senses, it may be ascertained by a description, which, though very imperfect, may be true and sufficient to distinguish it from every other individual. Hence it is, that, in speaking of individuals, we are very little in danger of mistaking the object, or taking one individual for another.”¹

Now one well-known problem with referential theories is fixing the reference of coextensive general words. Suppose we take it that general words function just like proper names, except that the meanings of general terms are to be identified with that set of individual substances, attributes and relations which they satisfy. Thus, for example, the meaning of ‘white’ will be the set of white individuals. The problem with this approach, is that coextensive predicates and propositions with the same truth-value would then be synonymous:² for example, both the predicate terms ‘white’ and ‘the colour of the walls’, would, under this account, mean the same thing; as would the two sentences ‘This sheet is white’ and ‘This sheet matches the colour of the walls’, that is, where they have the same truth-value.

One contemporary solution to the problem of coextensionality is to use the notion of possible worlds: that is, as Loux puts it, “the referential force of an expression extends beyond objects in the actual world to objects in other possible worlds.”³ This kind of solution will work for us very well indeed. For Reid’s view is that the meanings of general words are universals. Hence, we can say that, for Reid, the meaning of the general terms ‘white’ and ‘the colour of the walls’ are the corresponding universals (or sets of universals). Now these universals may or may not be actualised; and if they are, the world may or may not be such that their instances coincide; and if they do, we would not say that these terms are synonymous, because their meanings are to be identified with two quite different universals (or sets of universals).

We might, however, want to make the following objection: when we say ‘this sheet is white’, we are not referring to whiteness in general, but some individual whiteness. Reid would reply thus: to say that ‘this sheet is white’ is to say that ‘whiteness is instantiated in the sheet’, or ‘the colour of the sheet is an instance of whiteness’. In these propositions, we are referring both to the instance (the individual attribute of whiteness), and that of which it is an instance (the universal whiteness). The reason why this *must* be so, is that we cannot affirm that the sheet is white unless we have formed a general conception of that attribute we are predicating of the sheet; but the

¹ IP, p. 272.

² Loux, “Introduction”, p. 34.

³ Loux, “Introduction”, p. 35.

process involved in forming a general conception involves the operations of distinguishing and generalising; and the process of generalising produces a conception of a universal. Hence, we cannot affirm that the sheet is white unless we have a conception of the universal whiteness.

How, in Reid's view, is the reference of a general word to be fixed? Here Reid's view is that 'use is the arbiter of meaning'. More precisely:

- A₆₉ The correct meaning of a general word 'F' uttered in circumstance C is that universal (or set of universals) to which those members of a particular language-community who best understand the language would refer whenever they utter 'F' in C.

This analysis carries with it several implications: first, whenever a member of a language-community uses a general word, the universal (or set of universals) to which she thereby refers may or may not be identical to that of any other member of that community. This would, in part, account for mis-communication. Second, the members of a language-community, even those who are thought to understand best the language, may or may not have an adequate or distinct conception of the universals (or set of universals) to which they refer whenever they utter 'F' in C. This would account for ambiguity, vagueness, and the like.¹ Third, the phrase "those who best understand the language",² may perhaps be best understood as an idealisation that attempts to capture the conclusions of an exhaustive induction based upon evidence of how words are actually used by most people: that is, the kind of induction we use, according to Reid, in learning the meaning of general words.³

6 VOLUNTARY INTELLECTUAL OPERATIONS

One crucial feature of the operation of judgment we have not yet examined is its relation to the will. Reid, as we have seen, argues that all the intellectual powers are active: first, ordinary language analysis reveals that expressions referring to the mental, are, mostly, action-verbs; any such universal linguistic phenomenon, Reid held, constitutes *prima facie* evidence of a corresponding reality; hence, we have good reason to accept that the mind is active.⁴

¹ "it is impossible that a man should distinctly express what he has not distinctly conceived." IP, p. 371.

² "The meaning of the word . . . is the conception affixed to it by those who best understand the language." IP, p. 367.

³ "The meaning of most general words is not learned like that of mathematical terms, by an accurate definition, but by the experience we happen to have, by hearing them used in conversation. From such experience we collect their meaning by a kind of induction" IP, p. 369.

⁴ "It seems therefore to be the natural judgment of mankind, that the mind is active in its various ways of thinking; and for this reason they are called its operations, and are expressed by active verbs." IP, p. 14.

Second, the cause of this universal ascription of activity to the mind, is, Reid argues, a product of the perception that the intellectual powers are, to some degree, under the direction of the will.¹ It is crucial, however, that we pin down the precise ‘degree of activity’ Reid has in mind. First, he distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary intellectual operations:

A₇₀ An intellectual power *P* is voluntary if and only if the exertion of *P* is brought about and continued by the agent’s will; and involuntary if and only if the exertion of *P* is not brought about by the agent’s will.²

Second, he argues that all involuntary intellectual operations are subject to the will, inasmuch as they may be either *resisted* or *directed* by the exertion of the voluntary operations. More precisely, there are three voluntary intellectual operations: attention, deliberation, and fixed purpose or resolution, which we have already examined. The former two operations may be defined as follows:

D₃₈ Attention = *df* a voluntary exertion of power, by which the mind, for a long or short time, and with greater or less intensity, focuses upon some external or internal object of thought, in order to acquire or retain a distinct notion of its attributes and relations.³

D₃₉ Deliberation = *df* a voluntary exertion of power, by which the mind, for a long or short time, and with greater or less care or seriousness, seeks out and evaluates arguments that might justify a judgment as to whether or not to perform or refrain from performing some present or future action.⁴

Being voluntary, these operations are morally evaluable in the same sense that the active powers we considered in Chapter 2 are morally evaluable.⁵ In other words, the agent may be inclined toward exerting her power of liberty to bring about an exertion of the power of attention by either animal or rational principles. Hence:

¹ “because the understanding is always more or less directed by the will, mankind have ascribed some degree of activity to the mind in its intellectual operations, as well as in those which belong to the will, and have expressed them by active verbs, such as seeing, hearing, judging, reasoning, and the like.” IP, pp. 67-68.

² For example, “Attention is a voluntary act; it requires an active exertion to begin and to continue it; and it may be continued as long as we will; but consciousness is involuntary and of no continuance, changing with every thought.” IP, p. 60.

³ AP, pp. 78-82.

⁴ AP, pp. 82-86.

⁵ “That a great part of wisdom and virtue consists in giving a proper direction to our attention; and that however reasonable this appears to the judgment of every man, yet, in some cases, it requires an effort of self-command no less than the most heroic virtues.” AP, p. 82.

- A₇₁ *S* is morally praiseworthy for attending to some object of thought *O*, for duration *d* with degree of intensity *i*, if and only if *S* judges that *O* is deserving of attention for *d* with *i*, in view of prudence or duty.

Again, an agent may be inclined by some animal principle toward attending to some object of thought for a duration and intensity that is inconsistent with what she has judged to be deserving; and she may find this inclination, to a certain degree, irresistible for reasons we have examined. Thus, our earlier analysis of moral praise- and blameworthiness applies here.

With respect to deliberation, Reid again suggests that we may be inclined by animal principles that oppose our rational principles. Thus, suppose the agent is inclined by an animal principle *A* toward exerting his power to bring about some action ϕ , and *A* is opposed to some rational principle. Then, in his deliberation about whether or not to perform ϕ , *S* may yield to the inclination of *A* by failing to adhere to one or more of the Rules of Deliberation: for example, seeking just those arguments that would justify his judgment that it is permissible or obligatory to perform ϕ . On the other hand, he may resist *A* by exerting his power of liberty so to bring it about that he obeys the Rules of Deliberation¹: that is, where the Rules of Deliberation are as follows:

- A₇₂ (i) if it is perfectly clear to *S* that she ought to perform action ϕ , then *S* ought not to deliberate about whether or not to perform ϕ ; (ii) if (a) it is not perfectly clear to *S* that she ought to perform ϕ , (b) ϕ is of sufficient importance, and (c) there is sufficient time for deliberation, then *S* ought to deliberate with that degree of care and seriousness that is proportionate to the importance of ϕ ; (iii) *S* ought to form a judgment as to whether or not she ought to perform ϕ only if she has (a) done what is within her power to identify the arguments for and against,² (b) given equal consideration to each, and (c) allowed each argument the weight she thinks it ought to have in determining her judgment; (iv) if *S* is deliberating about whether or not she ought to perform ϕ at *t*, then she ought to form a judgment, one way or the other, prior to *t*.³

¹ "And when he has reason to suspect that his affection may bias his judgment, he may either honestly use the best means in his power to form an impartial judgment, or he may yield to his bias, and only seek arguments to justify what inclination leads him to do. In all these points, he determines, he wills, the right or the wrong." AP, p. 83.

² "What we call a fault of ignorance, is always owing to the want of due deliberation. When we do not take due pains to be rightly informed, there is a fault, not indeed in acting according to the light we have, but in not using the proper means to get light. For if we judge wrong, after using the proper means of information, there is no fault in acting according to that wrong judgment; the error is invincible." AP, p. 84.

³ AP, p. 83.

It follows from this account that every other intellectual operation, including judgment, is involuntary. As we shall see, Reid argues that, upon its seeming to us that we have evidence for p , it is not within our power to refrain from forming or sustaining a belief that p . On the other hand, Reid does argue that the operation of judgment is, if only indirectly, subject to each of the three voluntary intellectual operations described above. To reach this conclusion, however, we need to examine in some detail Reid's psychology of belief-formation. In particular, we need to look at the class of beliefs of utmost importance in Reid's epistemology, namely, those he identifies as 'self-evident beliefs' or 'first principles'.

7 FIRST PRINCIPLES

First principles are expressed by both general and particular propositions. For instance, Reid takes the following general proposition to express a first principle:

CP₃ "those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be"¹

But he would also hold that, for any instance in which we have a distinct perception of some object O by our senses, the proposition:

(a) O really exists, and is what I perceive it to be

likewise expresses a first principle.² Now this distinction between the general and particular forms of expressing the first principles is crucial, if we are to gain a proper grasp of Reid's epistemology.³ In this section, I shall argue that the general propositions Reid presents as first principles are not intended to denote the objects of those beliefs that Reid classifies as 'self-evident'. Rather they serve two functions: first, they refer to innate principles or laws of the intellectual constitution according to which self-evident believings are governed or regulated; second, they pick out the various kinds of propositions, of which the objects of our self-evident beliefs are instances.

¹ IP, p. 587.

² "The truths immediately testified by the external senses are the first principles from which we reason, with regard to the material world, and from which all our knowledge of it is deduced." AP, p. 238-39; cf. "Now, every judgment of this kind we form, is only a particular application of the general principle, that intelligence, wisdom, and other mental qualities in the cause, may be inferred from their marks or signs in the effect." IP, p. 622

³ For example, it enables us to avoid the charge that Reid seems to have considered general and particular principles alike to be self-evident. See William P. Alston, "Thomas Reid on Epistemic Principles", *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 2 (1985): p. 440.

7.1 FIRST PRINCIPLES AS GENERAL PROPOSITIONS

Reid sets out his list of putative first principles in general propositions for two reasons. First, to enumerate all the particular propositions that are self-evident for us, such as (a) above, would “be impossible & if possible would be meer trifling”. Second, for any proper science, the class of its epistemologically foundational propositions must be “easily marked and easily referred to when any conclusion drawn from it is disputed”;¹ and this condition is unlikely to be satisfied by an enumeration of all the particular self-evident propositions. In other words, the propositions listed must refer to the various *kinds* of propositions we take to be self-evident:²

“Some perhaps may be apt to imagine that the self-evident truths we have occasion to use in reasoning are so many that it would be in vain to Attempt to enumerate them, & that it would be too troublesome even to mark them when we have occasion for them. But . . . innumerable particular propositions may be contained under one general One. Now if the general Proposition is laid down as a first Principle, it would be trifling to enumerate the particular propositions it contains. Now if we confine ourselves to those first principles that are really usefull and make them as general as the Nature of the thing will admit I see no reason to apprehend that in any branch of Science their Number will be any just objection to their Being particularly Pointed out. That First principle in Natural Philosophy that Effects which are similar in their Nature ought to be ascribed to the same or to similar Causes, comprehends in its womb thousands nay Millions of particular Propositions which must be admitted if the general Proposition is admitted. To enumerate all the particular selfevident Propositions which this general one contains would indeed be impossible & if possible would be meer trifling. But the general Proposition is easily marked and easily referred to when any conclusion drawn from it is disputed.”³

In short, the general propositions that Reid identifies as first principles are *not* taken to be self-evident themselves; rather they are intended merely to express various kinds of propositions, the instances of which we take to be self-evident. Now in making this distinction, Reid identifies an objection to most forms of scepticism: that is, sceptics tend to direct their doubt against only the general propositions; and for good reason, Reid argues. For this is the only psychologically possible form of scepticism available to them: that is, we are so constituted that we cannot help but form a belief in the particular instances of these general propositions:

¹ MS 2/III/8, 17

² cf. “I come now to that which I conceive to be the most important branch of this Subject, To attempt some Enumeration of those Principles of Common Sense which I conceive to be the chief Foundations of Science. In this Enumeration we must confine ourselves to the most general Principles, that we may not run out into too great a Number, but we ought to make them as comprehensive as possible, that no species of Selfevident truth be wholly omitted.” MS 2/III/10, 1.

³ MS 2/III/8, 17.

"It is another property of this and of many first principles, that they force assent in particular instances, more powerfully than when they are turned into a general proposition. . . . Many have in general maintained that the senses are fallacious, yet there never was found a man so sceptical as not to trust his senses in particular instances when his safety required it; and it may be observed of those who have professed scepticism, that their scepticism lies in generals, while in particulars they are no less dogmatical than others."¹

Put another way, the only reason why it seems possible to hold that our external senses are fallacious, is that we are so constituted that the general proposition against which this scepticism is directed, namely, that our external senses are trustworthy, is not self-evident for us. If we feel inclined to believe this proposition at all, it is, or ought to be, by virtue of having constructed an inductive argument, the premises of which contain a list of particular occasions in which we have taken it to be self-evident that our external senses are trustworthy. And even here our belief in the general proposition should be held with a degree of strength that is proportionate to the inductive evidence, and so, can be no more than highly probable.

Reid's point, then, is this: if some general proposition *P* expresses a certain kind of belief, and all (or most) of the instances of *P* have been self-evident for *S*, then it would be irrational or unjustified for *S* to hold that *P* is false, or even that *P* is more likely than not to be false. The only proper object of scepticism, as regards the first principles, is the question of whether or not a putative first principle is genuine: that is, whether the kinds of beliefs that would constitute instances of a first principle are self-evident.

Reid addresses this question by suggesting a list of "marks" by which we may determine whether a general proposition expresses a genuine first principle.² Where *P* is a general proposition expressing a putative first principle:

- M₁ There is some proposition *q*, such that *q* entails the denial of either *P* or some instance of *P* and *q* is absurd³
- M₂ It would be inconsistent to reject any instance of *P* merely on account of its being self-evident, if it is accepted that another proposition *q* is self-evident, and there is no relevant difference between *q* and any instance of *P*.⁴

¹ IP, p. 594.

² "there are ways of reasoning, with regard to first principles, by which those that are truly such may be distinguished from vulgar errors or prejudices." IP, p. 575.

³ "opinions which contradict first principles are distinguished from other errors by this; that they are not only false, but absurd" IP, p. 567.

⁴ "Thus the faculties of consciousness, of memory, of external sense, and of reason, are all equally the gifts of Nature. No good reason can be assigned for receiving the testimony of one of them, which is not of equal force with regard to the others. The greatest Sceptics admit the testimony of consciousness, and allow, that what it testifies is to be held as a first principle. If therefore they reject the immediate testimony of sense, or of memory, they are guilty of an inconsistency." IP, p. 569.

- M₃ There is some proposition *q*, such that *q* is entailed by the denial of either *P* or some instance of *P*, and *q* is absurd.¹
- M₄ There is strong evidence that most instances of *P* have seemed to most people to be self-evident;² and if each of these instances of *P* were false, there would no good explanation for why so many false propositions had seemed to most people to be self-evident.³
- M₅ Beliefs in the instances of *P* arise in a person too early to be explained as the effect of education or unsound reasoning.⁴
- M₆ Beliefs in the instances of *P* are necessary for a person's preservation and well-being, and she has no reason for believing those instances.⁵

It should be noted that the satisfaction of these marks is not taken by Reid to provide evidence for the *truth* of a first principle. For, as we shall see, this would contradict Reid's rejection of any form of epistemic circularity.⁶ For example, we could only know that M₄ is true if we have used our faculty of perception. Hence, suppose that (i) the putative first principle we are investigating, call it *P*, states that *our faculty of perception is reliable*; and that (ii) *P* satisfies M₄. We cannot infer from (ii) alone that *P*. For we cannot know (ii) unless we know *P*. All that follows, is that, if *P* also satisfies the remaining 'marks', then it expresses a genuine first principle.

7.2 REGULATORY FIRST PRINCIPLES

This account of first principles cannot be the whole story. For Reid also describes them as "a part of that furniture which nature hath given to the human understanding", they are "a part of our constitution".⁷ Again, he states that "when I got such first principles . .

¹ "In this kind of proof, . . . we suppose the contradictory proposition to be true. We trace the consequences of that supposition in a train of reasoning; and if we find any of its necessary consequences to be manifestly absurd, we conclude the supposition from which it followed to be false; and therefore its contradictory to be true." IP, p. 570.

² Reid suggests that this evidence might be collected from (i) the structure of language ("what is common in the structure of languages, indicates an uniformity of opinion in those things upon which that structure is grounded" IP, pp. 573-74), (ii) our own observation of human conduct, and (iii) the record of history ("the whole tenor of human conduct, as far as our acquaintance reaches, and from the history of all ages and nations of which we have any records" IP, p. 573).

³ "to suppose a general deviation from truth among mankind in things self-evident, of which no cause can be assigned, is highly unreasonable." IP, p. 573.

⁴ "Thus the belief we have, that the persons about us are living and intelligent beings, is a belief for which perhaps we can give some reason, when we are able to reason; but we had this belief before we could reason, and before we could learn it by instruction. It seems therefore to be an immediate effect of our constitution." IP, p. 574.

⁵ "when an opinion is so necessary in the conduct of life, that without the belief of it, a man must be led into a thousand absurdities in practice, such an opinion, when we can give no other reason for it, may safely be taken for a first principle" IP, pp. 574-75.

⁶ See Chapter 6. See Alston, "Thomas Reid on Epistemic Principles", pp. 443-44, and pp. 450-51, n. 41.

⁷ HM, p. 210.

. I know not; for I had them before I can remember: but I am sure they are parts of my constitution, and that I cannot throw them off".¹ If first principles are to be understood *merely* as general propositions, how could they possibly be "a part of our constitution"? I suggest the following.

First, take the way our behaviour is guided by nonpropositional procedural knowledge: a person performing an action under certain circumstances can generally be said to know how to do so, even if, either prior to or during the action, she does not think, declare or believe any description of how to perform that action under those circumstances. But we would also say that there is nevertheless some such description or rule which she had either acquired and subsequently internalized, or which is a part of her constitution and already internalized. Thus, we might say the following:

A₇₃ S has a constitutional rule *R* indicating how to perform some action ϕ in circumstances *C* if and only if (i) *S* has not at any stage learned or otherwise acquired *R* (ii) *R* is internalized in *S* in such a way that, without the exertion of her will, it regulates her ϕ -ing in *C*, whether or not *S* thinks, declares or believes, before or during her action, that her ϕ -ing in *C* should be regulated according to *R*.²

Now, believing, as we have seen, is also an action of sorts. Let us then try to apply this analysis to the act of believing:

A₇₄ *S* has a constitutional rule *R* indicating how to believe in circumstances *C* if and only if (i) *S* has not at any stage learned or otherwise acquired *R* (ii) *R* is internalized in *S* in such a way that, without the exertion of his will, it regulates the formation and sustenance of his believing, with a certain degree of strength, in *C*, whether or not *S* thinks, declares or believes, before or during the formation of his belief, that his believing in *C* should be regulated according to *R*.

My suggestion, then, with regard to Reid's talk of first principles as being a "part of our constitution" is this: a person believes some particular instance of a first principle in some circumstance, just in case she has a constitutional rule of how to believe in circumstances of that kind: noting, of course, that these rules will be expressed in the imperative, rather than the indicative form which Reid gives his general propositions.

Of course, we need a great deal more textual support before attributing something like this to Reid. But this, I think we have: First, Reid often writes of our self-evident

¹ HM, p. 68.

² Cf. John Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (London: Hutchinson, 1986): p. 129f.

beliefs as being the ‘immediate effect’, the ‘natural issue’, or the ‘necessary result’ of our ‘constitution’.¹ We can plausibly take ‘constitution’ here to refer to the agent’s original faculties of mind. Then, with A_{74} in mind, we can take it that these faculties are designed so as to operate in accordance with the first principles, understood as constitutional rules of how to believe in certain kinds of circumstances; that is, where the beliefs are read as the “effect” or “issue” of the the mind’s operating in accordance with the constitutional rules. By way of an example, take the following first principle:

CP₃ “those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be”²

On this interpretation, Reid’s claim would be that CP₃ regulates our beliefs in the sense that the relevant faculties of mind would operate according to the following constitutional rule:

(a) Upon x ’s being distinctly perceived by the senses, believe, with a certain degree of strength, that x really exists and that x is what it is perceived to be.

Second, Reid held that we find ourselves automatically forming beliefs in accordance with first principles, whether or not we think, declare or believe them:

“We may here take notice of a property of the principle under consideration [i.e. That our faculties are trustworthy], that seems to be common to it with many other first principles, and which can hardly be found in any principle that is built solely upon reasoning; and that is, that in most men it produces its effect without ever being attended to, or made an object of thought. No man ever thinks of this principle, unless when he considers the grounds of scepticism; yet it invariably governs his opinions.”³

Third, Reid draws an analogy between instinctive actions and our self-evident beliefs (an analogy we will later explore in more detail).

“the power of judging in self-evident propositions, which are clearly understood, may be compared to the power of swallowing our food. It is purely natural, and therefore common to the learned, and the unlearned; to the trained, and the untrained: It requires ripeness of understanding, and freedom from prejudice, but nothing else.”⁴

¹ Such beliefs are “the voice of Nature” IP, p. 613; they “came from the mint of Nature . . . [bearing] her image and superscription” HM, p. 163; they are “the inspiration of the Almighty” HM, p. 210; “the immediate effect of our constitution, which is the work of the Almighty.” IP, p. 275; “the natural issue of those faculties which God hath given” IP, p. 572; “the natural effect of our constitution” IP, p. 591; “immediately inspired by our constitution” HM, p. 35.; they “necessarily result from the constitution of our faculties.” IP, p. 613.

² IP, p. 587.

³ IP, p. 594.

⁴ IP, p. 556

Again, Reid states that, for purposes of our preservation, there are principles of our constitution, analogous to our instincts, that somehow regulate our self-evident beliefs, in particular, during the early stages of our intellectual development:

“We come into the world without the exercise of reason; we are merely animal before we are rational creatures; and it is necessary for our preservation, that we should believe many things before we can reason. How then is our belief to be regulated before we have reason to regulate it? has Nature left it to be regulated by chance? By no means. It is regulated by certain principles, which are parts of our constitution; whether they ought to be called animal principles, or instinctive principles, or what name we give to them, is of small moment.”¹

Fourth, Reid suggests that, although disbelieving the instances of a first principle is possible, just as it is possible to resist the inclination of mechanical principles, doing so is abnormal or unnatural: it is to believe against the doxastic constraints set by our natural constitution:

“We are born under a necessity of trusting to our reasoning and judging powers; and a real belief of their being fallacious cannot be maintained for a considerable time by the greatest Sceptic, because it is doing violence to our constitution. It is like a man’s walking upon his hands, a feat which some men upon occasion can exhibit; but no man ever made a long journey in this manner. Cease to admire his dexterity, and he will, like other men betake himself to his legs.”²

Again, Reid considered that such disbelief would be so abnormal as to warrant ascribing a kind of madness:

“A remarkable deviation from [original and natural judgments], arising from a disorder in the constitution, is what we call *lunacy*; as when a man believes that he is made of glass. When a man suffers himself to be reasoned out of the principles of common sense, by metaphysical arguments, we may call this *metaphysical lunacy*; which differs from the other species of the distemper in this, that it is not continued, but intermittent: it is apt to seize the patient in solitary and speculative moments”³

Finally, Reid, as we have seen, held that our faculties operate according to laws of nature; and it would seem, from the following text, that he identified these laws with what we have called constitutional rules:

¹ IP, pp. 284-85.

² IP, p. 593.

³ HM, p. 210.

“It is a Law of our Nature that the Operations of our Minds are attended with Consciousness, so that every man who thinks, knows by his Consciousness that he does think; and this Consciousness gives him infallible assurance of the Fact. The Laws of Nature are General Rules by which God Governs the World, & by which he acts either immediately by his own Power, or by second Causes appointed by him.”¹

In sum, then, Reid appears to hold that first principles are the laws of our intellectual constitution: they are the rules according to which our self-evident beliefs are produced. And, while these beliefs may be self-evident to us, the first principles themselves, when turned into general propositions, are not: they must be discovered in the same way that we discover the laws of nature, namely, by observation and experiment.

Two points of clarification are required. First, it might be thought that this account conflicts with Reid’s view that (i) some general principles, when converted to general propositions, are necessary truths, and that (ii) no laws of nature are necessary truths. However, as we have seen, the general propositions in which Reid presents the first principles must be understood as serving two functions: first, they serve as expressions of certain kinds of self-evident beliefs; second, they express, in an indicative form, the constitutional rules according to which these beliefs are formed. For example, Reid presents the following first principle as a necessary truth:

NP_{M2} “whatever begins to exist, must have a cause which produced it”.

Now Reid’s intention, I suggest, is that we read this in two ways: first, for some agent *S*, if *S* distinctly conceives some particular event *E*, then the following proposition would be self-evident for *S*:

(a) *E* must have a cause which produced it.

Second, there is some constitutional rule according to which *S* forms the belief in (a), that is, where this rule would be expressed by Reid as the following first principle:

(b) If *S* distinctly conceives *E*, then *S* will immediately form a belief, with a certain degree of strength, that *E* must have a cause which produced it.

Reid would claim that (a), but not (b), is a necessary truth. Reid’s holding that some first principles are necessary truths does not therefore imply that the first principle by which the corresponding self-evident beliefs are produced, is likewise a necessary truth.

¹ MS 4/II/1, 48.

The second point of clarification is this: Reid would appear to hold that propositions such as (b) would suffice as a *scientific* explanation for the phenomenon of believing in a certain first principle. However, as we know, he would not consider them to be *causal* explanations. For this, he would, I suggest, provide the following kind of statement:

- (c) *S* believes, with a certain degree of strength, that some event *E* must have a cause which produced it if and only if God's judgment regarding what is best upon the whole inclines him toward the exertion of his power of liberty so as to bring about a determination of will to act according to the rule: if, at any future time or place, *S* distinctly conceives some event *E*, then bring it about that *S* immediately believes, with a certain degree of strength, that *E* must have a cause which produced it.

5

Epistemology

INTRODUCTION

We should now have sufficient background to determine, with some accuracy, the nature of Reid's epistemology. We begin with Reid's notion of evidence. I shall argue that Reid's characterization of evidence is both psychological and epistemological. That is to say, evidence performs two functions: it is both (i) that which inclines the agent toward the formation of a judgment or belief to a certain degree of strength, and (ii) that which may render the belief epistemologically justified.¹

1 EVIDENCE

First, Reid states that 'evidence' is the ground of judgment or belief.² The term 'ground' is relational: that is, evidence *e* is said to be a 'ground' of a belief *b* just in case *b* stands in the relation of 'being grounded upon' to *e*. Second, Reid states that it is "not in a man's power to believe any thing longer than he thinks he has evidence";³ that, "when we see evidence, it is impossible not to judge";⁴ and again, "It is not in our power to judge as we will. The judgment is carried along necessarily by the evidence, real or seeming, which appears to us at the time";⁵ finally, evidence, he states, "is more easily felt than described. Those who never reflected upon its nature, feel its influence in governing their belief".⁶

There are several points we can extract from these descriptions. First, evidence must be accessible to consciousness; a person's belief cannot be grounded upon something unless she is aware of it. Second, the relation of 'being grounded upon' is very similar to that which holds between a mechanical principle and an action: that is, just as mechanical principles incline or "influence" the agent to perform an action without the exertion of her will, so also, evidence inclines the agent to form a belief without any

¹ Cf. "Is a ground anything that gives rise to a belief; or must it give the belief some support, render it justified or rational in some degree? I think the answer must be: both." William Alston, "Reid on Perception and Conception", in M. Dalgarno and E. Matthews, eds. *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid* (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, PSS 42, 1989): p. 41

² "We give the name of evidence to whatever is a ground of belief." IP, p. 271; "Evidence is the ground of judgment" IP, p. 502.

³ IP, p. 271.

⁴ IP, p. 502.

⁵ IP, p. 555.

⁶ IP, p. 271; cf. "it operates upon our belief whether we reflect upon its nature or not." 8/II/16, 3

exertion of will. Now Reid clearly states that it is “impossible” for the agent to refrain from believing, upon seeing the evidence.¹ However, the inclination of some particular evidence is, I will argue, resistible if the agent exerts some voluntary intellectual operation, or if the agent’s faculties are not functioning properly.

Third, the agent must not only be aware of the existence of evidence; it must appear to her to *be* evidence. A distinction is sometimes made between ‘acceptance’ and ‘belief’. To *accept* something, it is said, is to believe it for the dual epistemic aim of believing what is true and of not believing what is false; whereas one might believe something merely because it is, say, prudent or convenient to do so. Keith Lehrer gives an example of the latter kind of belief:

“We may believe that a loved one is safe because of the pleasure of so believing, though there is no evidence to justify accepting this out of regard for truth, indeed, even where there is evidence against it.”²

Some might argue that this distinction confuses kinds of believing with kinds of justification: we can be hedonistically justified in believing that a loved one is safe, but not epistemically justified. For the purposes of obtaining pleasure, we would be believing the right thing; for epistemic purposes, we would not.³ Reid would argue along similar lines, namely, that the distinction confuses kinds of believing with the kinds of ends for which believing might be the necessary means:

“A man may discourse or plead, or write, for other ends than to find the truth. . . . When it is not truth, but some other end he pursues, judgment would be an impediment, unless for discovering the means of attaining his end; and therefore it is laid aside, or employed solely for that purpose.”⁴

In other words, whatever nonepistemic ends a person might achieve by believing that *p*, the function of believing is such that, if she believes at all, she must believe that *p* is true. This, Reid would say, is due to the psychological conditions for belief-formation and sustenance. It is not within a person’s power to form and sustain a belief when it does not seem to him that there is evidence for its being true. Believing, for Reid, is always believing-true.⁵

¹ “Judgments be not immediately in our Power” MS 6/III/6, 1; “A parent or a master might command them to believe; but in vain; for belief is not in our power” AP, p. 115.

² Keith Lehrer, *Theory of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1990): p. 11.

³ Cf. William Alston, “The Deontological Conception of Justification”, in *Epistemic Justification* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989): p. 116.

⁴ IP, pp. 395-96. cf. “The love of truth is natural to man, and strong in every well-disposed mind. But it may be overborn by party-zeal, by vanity, by the desire of victory, or even by laziness.” IP, p. 654.

⁵ “to believe a proposition means the same thing as to judge it to be true.” IP, p. 513. Cf. “One has evidence that one’s belief that *P* is *really true* when one has evidence that *P*”. William Lycan, *Judgment and*

For example, suppose it seems to *S* at *t* that *e* is evidence for *p* and so *S* forms the belief that *p* at *t*, but then at *t*₊₁, it seems to *S* that *e* is false or improbable, and that she has no other evidence for *p*. In such a case, it is not within *S*'s power to continue to hold or sustain the belief that *p* at *t*₊₁. Again, if, at any time, it seems to *S* that *e* is evidence for *p*, then it is not in her power to refrain from holding the belief that *p*. In short:

A₇₅ *S* forms or sustains a belief that *p* at *t* if and only if it seems to *S* that there is evidence for *p* at *t*.¹

Finally, Reid states that evidence is "fitted by Nature to produce belief in the human mind", either "in the highest degree, which we call certainty", or "in various degrees according to circumstances".² Now, the degree of belief produced is determined by the 'degree' that the evidence seems to the agent to have: as Reid puts it: "Every degree of evidence perceived by the mind, produces a proportioned degree of assent or belief."³ For example, suppose an agent *S* attends to propositions *p* and not-*p*. On Reid's account, if it seems to *S* either that (i) there is no evidence for either *p* or not-*p*, or that (ii) *p* and not-*p* have equal degrees of evidence, then it is not within her power to judge either way: her judgment must remain in "perfect suspense". On the other hand, if it seems to *S* that one or the other proposition has the slightest degree of evidence in its favour, then this "inclines the judgment in proportion".⁴ Thus, we may add the following to our analysis:

A₇₆ *S* forms or sustains a certain degree of belief that *p* at *t* if and only if it seems to *S* that there is a certain degree of evidence for *p* at *t*, and this degree of evidence is proportionate to her degree of belief.

2 EPISTEMIC JUSTIFICATION

Reid distinguishes between (i) *mere* evidence or a *mere* ground of belief, as being that which gives rise to a belief, and (ii) "good evidence" or a "just ground" of belief, as being that which produces judgments that are "just and true";⁵ which functions as "the voucher for all truth";⁶ or which "ought to govern our belief as reasonable creatures".⁷

Justification (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988): p. 137.

¹ This general formulation applies regardless of the precise nature of 'evidence', for instance, whether it be propositional, experiential, or whatever.

² IP, p. 272.

³ IP, p. 691.

⁴ IP, p. 691.

⁵ IP, p. 517.

⁶ IP, p. 593.

⁷ IP, p. 273.

In short, if a belief is grounded upon 'good evidence', then it is formed in such a way that it is more likely to be true than not. Put another way, a belief that is grounded upon good evidence obtains a positive evaluation from an epistemic point of view: for it has fulfilled the epistemic aim of believing that *p* if and only if there is good evidence for *p*.¹ For this reason, such a belief is said to be "just and true", or, as I shall say, 'epistemologically justified'.²

Reid, it must be said, uses the term "justify" to refer to the epistemic status obtained by virtue of something the agent *does*, such as showing that a belief is justified by producing an argument. For example:

"When I believe the truth of a mathematical Axiom, or of a proposition that necessarily follows from it; I see that the thing cannot possibly be otherwise. There is nothing I can desiderate to *justify this belief*. I see that the thing is so and why it is so."³

The term as I use it in the following exposition, however, will refer only to the *state* or *condition* of being justified, and may thus be applied to *any* belief that is grounded upon good evidence, whether the evidence of reasoning or the evidence of a first principle, as in the quotation above.⁴

There are, in Reid's view, two basic kinds of evidence, probable and demonstrative. Reid distinguishes between the term 'probable' as it is used in common language, and as it is used by philosophers. In the former case, it refers merely to a certain degree of belief. Thus, if, in ordinary language, *S* states that '*p* is probable', the implication is that, while *S* might believe *p*, he does so with a certain degree of doubt or uncertainty. But 'probable evidence', in the philosophical sense, is a species of evidence opposed to another species of evidence, namely, that which we earlier called 'E-demonstration'. That is to say, the function of 'probable evidence' is to provide a range of degrees of epistemic justification, "from the very least, to the greatest which we call certainty". It differs from 'demonstrative evidence' inasmuch as it can never afford that kind of

¹ "It is every mans concern & every mans wish to believe onely what he has just ground to believe & not to believe, where he has no just ground for belief." MS, 8/II/16; "To believe without evidence is a weakness which every man is concerned to avoid, and which every man wishes to avoid." IP, p. 271.

² Cf. William P. Alston, "Concepts of Epistemic Justification", in *Epistemic Justification* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989): p. 83.

³ MS 8/II/10, 3 (My italics). cf. "Dr HARTLEY is brought at last to *justify* this deviation in theory, and to bring arguments in defence of a method diametrically opposite to it." IP, p. 88; "The child, . . . acts agreeably to the constitution and intention of Nature, even when he does and believes what reason would not *justify*." IP, p. 297; "Though this belief cannot be *justified* upon his system, it ought to be accounted for as a phaenomenon of human nature." IP, pp. 351-52; "This instinctive induction is not *justified* by the rules of logic" IP, p. 457; "Some objects strike us at once, and appear beautiful at first sight, without any reflection, without our being able to say why we call them beautiful, or being able to specify any perfection which *justifies our judgment*." IP, p. 743. (My italics)

⁴ This distinction is made by Alston, for example, in his "Concepts of Epistemic Justification", pp. 82-83.

justification which Reid calls 'absolute certainty': for this kind of justification attaches only to necessary truths, and the beliefs grounded upon probable evidence must always be contingent. However, probable evidence may still afford a very high degree of justification. Indeed, Reid seems to suggest that the highest degree of probable evidence ought to produce a degree of belief that is equal to that afforded by E-demonstration:

"That there is such a city as Rome, I am as certain as of any proposition in EUCLID; but the evidence is not demonstrative, but of that kind which Philosophers call probable."¹

Reid, it must be said, is often ambiguous as to whether he is referring to degrees of belief or degrees of evidence, his use of the term "certainty" being a prime example. There is perhaps a good explanation for this. Reid holds that, for the most part, we can only measure a degree of evidence, that is, the degree of justification afforded by evidence, by the degree of belief it produces in us:

"I think, in most cases, we measure the degrees of evidence by the effect they have upon a sound understanding, when comprehended clearly and without prejudice."²

More precisely:

A₇₇ S's belief that *p* has a greater degree of justification than her belief that *q* if and only if *S* believes that *p* to a stronger degree than she believes that *q*.³

Now Reid claims that a belief held with a sufficiently high degree of strength, namely, that of 'certainty' constitutes 'knowledge':

"In knowledge, we judge without doubting; in opinion, with some mixture of doubt."⁴

"there can be no knowledge without judgment, though there may be judgment without that certainty which we commonly call knowledge."⁵

¹ IP, p. 691.

² IP, p. 691; cf. "such is the constitution of the human mind, that evidence discerned by us, forces a corresponding degree of assent. And a man who perfectly understood a just syllogism, without believing that the conclusion follows from the premises, would be a greater monster than a man born without hands or feet." IP, p. 593.

³ Cf. Plantinga's principle: "Belief *B* has more warrant than *B** for *S* iff *S* believes *B* more firmly than *B**." Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, p. 9.

⁴ IP, p. 533

⁵ IP, p. 504. cf. "judgment extends to every kind of evidence, probable or certain, and to every degree of assent or dissent. It extends to all knowledge as well as to all opinion; with this difference only, that in knowledge it is more firm and steady, like a house founded upon a rock. In opinion it stands upon a weaker foundation, and is more liable to be shaken and overturned." IP, p. 534.

As we have seen, the degree of justification afforded by evidence is measured by the degree of belief thereby produced. But then it follows that mere belief or opinion may be distinguished from knowledge, according to Reid, by virtue of the fact that the latter has a sufficiently higher degree of justification, namely, that degree which corresponds to the degree of belief we call 'certainty'.¹

3 EXTERNALISM

In the forgoing section, we have used the term 'justification' as a way of conveying Reid's notion of epistemic appraisal. Unfortunately, this term carries its own conceptual baggage. For example, the term has been said to imply or suggest "epistemic deontology", that is, the view that there are epistemic duties, obligations, requirements, and so forth; and that this view, in turn, suggests or motivates internalism.² Hence, our use of this term must be carefully qualified. First, let us define internalism and externalism as follows. Where a *justifying factor* is whatever brings it about that a belief is justified:

- D₄₀ Internalism = *df* S's belief is justified only if all of the justifying factors for that belief are (or could be) cognitively accessible to S; she must be (or be capable of being) aware of them.
- D₄₁ Externalism = *df* S's belief is justified even if some or all of the justifying factors for that belief are not (or could not be) cognitively accessible to S; he need not be (or be capable of being) aware of them.³

Our question, then, is whether Reid is an internalist or an externalist. Reid certainly makes claims that would place him in the former category. For example, as we have seen, he states that a person must be aware of the evidence for her belief, and that it must seem to her to *be* evidence. Again, he suggests that we have some voluntary control, if only indirectly, over our beliefs:

"In every case the assent ought to be proportioned to the evidence; for to believe firmly, what has but a small degree of probability, is a manifest abuse of our understanding."⁴

¹ Cf. "warrant is a normative, possibly complex quantity that comes in degrees, enough of which is what distinguishes knowledge from mere true belief." A. Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993): p. 4.

² Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, p. 11ff.

³ Cf. Laurence Bonjour, "Externalism/Internalism", in J. Dancy and E. Sosa: *A Companion to Epistemology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992): p. 132.

⁴ IP, p. 48.

It is important to note that Reid is only saying here that our degree of belief ought to be proportioned to the degree of probability that evidence *actually* has. This does not imply that it is within our power to believe more firmly than is proportionate to that degree of probability which the evidence *seems* to us to have. Such a phenomenon would not be the result of an “abuse of our understanding”, but rather due to some cognitive malfunction:

“such is the constitution of the human mind, that evidence discerned by us, forces a corresponding degree of assent. And a man who perfectly understood a just syllogism, without believing that the conclusion follows from the premises, would be a greater monster than a man born without hands or feet.”¹

Hence, we have no obligation to proportion the strength of our belief to what *seems to us* to be a certain degree of evidence. However, it is possible, in Reid’s view, to exert our voluntary intellectual powers so as to bring it about that we fail to gain an accurate perception of the degree of probability that some evidence actually has. As a consequence, we may be mistaken in thinking that some evidence has a high degree of probability, and thus form a belief with a stronger degree of strength than is warranted. Nevertheless, even with this qualification, Reid would still appear to be an internalist: a belief held to a certain degree is justified to a corresponding degree only if it appears to the agent that the evidence has the degree of probability it has in fact.

However, this is by no means the whole story. Our analysis in A₇₇ omitted the three conditions Reid placed at the end of his statement, namely, that the agent must (i) have a “sound understanding”, (ii) form a distinct conception of what she believes, and (iii) do so “without prejudice”. These three conditions are repeated in the context of Reid’s discussion of what it is for a first principle to be ‘self-evident’:

“Self-evident propositions are those which appear evident to every man of sound understanding who apprehends the meaning of them distinctly, and attends to them without prejudice.”²

This is no coincidence. Indeed, I shall argue that these three conditions constitute Reid’s analysis of knowledge. Now conditions (ii) and (iii), taken separately, might appear to constitute internalist elements in Reid’s account. However, our exposition of condition (i) will quickly dispose of this perception. First, as we shall see, condition (i) is an entirely external justifying factor. We shall also see that if (i) failed to be satisfied, then, even if conditions (ii) and (iii) were satisfied, this would amount to nothing from

¹ IP, p. 593.

² IP, p. 161.

an epistemic point of view. In other words, the agent may form a distinct conception without prejudice, and yet, if his understanding is unsound in some relevant respect, then the belief thereby produced will, to that extent, fail to be justified. Again, even if, for some belief that *S* forms, all three conditions were satisfied, and yet, being only a small child, *S* was unaware of this, it would not follow that her belief was thereby unjustified. A child, in Reid's view, may form a sufficiently distinct conception without prejudice, and yet be unaware that she had done so, or that doing so was required for the justification of her belief. Finally, conditions (ii) and (iii) may be absorbed into (i), given Reid's naturalized account of obligations. That is, if the agent's understanding is sound, then she will form her belief in the way that she ought to; and this, in part, will involve forming a distinct conception of the proposition believed without prejudice.

On the other hand, Reid's externalism does not entail that we can ignore conditions (ii) and (iii). Reid argued that it is within our power to "abuse our understanding", that is, to render it 'unsound'. And it is precisely conditions (ii) and (iii) over which we have such power.¹ Part of the epistemologist's task, then, is to enable us to understand better this power that we have, and the processes by which we might better direct its exertions so as to ensure that (ii) and (iii) are fulfilled.²

4 SOUND UNDERSTANDING

Earlier, we argued that one condition required for the formation of a belief in first principles, would be the proper functioning of the relevant faculties. However, we did not connect this condition with Reid's epistemology. There is, however, considerable evidence that Reid took this to be a necessary condition for knowledge.³

First, Reid argues, as we have seen, that our intellectual powers were designed to achieve several purposes: the preservation and well-being of our species, the ability to form correct judgments regarding what is good upon the whole, or what is our duty, and so on. When we achieve these ends, it may therefore be said that our faculties are functioning properly: that is, they are functioning the way they were designed to function by the Author of our nature. However, one can easily imagine an Humean

¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff presents a similar externalist interpretation of Reid's epistemology in "Hume and Reid" *Monist* 70 (1988): pp. 398-417. However, given the prominent role that Reid gives to the voluntary intellectual powers in satisfying the conditions for epistemic justification, along with Reid's lengthy consideration of 'prejudices to avoid' (IP, Essay VI, Ch.8), I must disagree with Wolterstorff's view that "Reid offers no rules for the direction of the mind, lays down no intellectual obligations - other than the bland injunction to avoid drawing conclusions hastily", p. 410.

² My exposition here, it must be said, is quite similar to the basic outline of Alvin Plantinga's recent account of epistemic warrant in *Warrant and Proper Function*. However, I have endeavoured to ensure that these conditions are stated in a manner that is faithful to Reid.

³ Plantinga presents a similar interpretation of Reid's use of the term "sound understanding" in *Warrant and Proper Function*, pp. 164-65.

world in which these ends are achieved with mostly false beliefs.¹ Hence, the mere fact that our faculties are functioning properly is not sufficient for knowledge. It must also be the case that our intellectual powers were designed for the purpose of producing *true* beliefs. In other words, by the condition of “sound understanding”, Reid means, in part, that the powers by which the belief is produced must be functioning in such a way as to bring about at least one particular end for which they were designed, namely, the production of true beliefs:

“OUR intellectual powers are wisely fitted by the Author of our nature for the discovery of truth, as far as suits our present state. Error is not their natural issue, any more than disease is of the natural structure of the body.”²

“We must judge of the Intention of our faculties / from their sound and natural State . . . our Senses are given us by nature not to deceive but to give us true information of things within their Reach”³

The phrases “as far as suits our present state” and “things within their Reach” give us the second condition. As we saw earlier, Reid argues that our faculties were designed to operate in quite specific environments. Thus, even if our faculties are functioning as they were designed to function, there may be occasions when there is a mismatch between the environment and the faculties, such that the beliefs therein produced are mostly false.

Now Reid argues that, as it happens, our faculties *are* presently in that environment for which they were designed; and that any errors produced by a properly functioning power of the mind, such as perception, may be explained by reference to the fallacious application of certain voluntary powers of the mind.⁴ There is, however, one feature that may be described as ‘environmental’, of which Reid admits the possibility of a mismatch. First, Reid allows that the mind may continue to function following the death of the body:

“Tho Death puts an End to the power of the Mind over that System of Matter we call the Body & it can no more produce either Vital or Voluntary Motions in it (or have Sensations by Impressions made upon it) it no wise follows that the other Powers of the Mind should thereby cease”⁵

¹ E.g. where “the whole universe about me, bodies and spirits, sun, moon, stars, and earth, friends and relations, all things without exception, which I imagined to have a permanent existence, whether I thought of them or not, vanish at once” HM, p. 3 ; cf. Plantinga’s “Is Naturalism Irrational?” in *Warrant and Proper Function*, Chapter 12.

² IP, p. 652; cf. “The understanding, in its natural and best state, pays its homage to truth only.” IP, p. 652; “the senses . . . are formed by the wise and beneficent Author of Nature, to give us true information of things necessary to our preservation and happiness.” IP, p. 288.

³ MS 8/II/22, 2-3

⁴ See IP, Chap 22, “Of the Fallacy of the Senses”.

⁵ MS 4/II/4, 1. “We grant that the Soul is presently so connected with the body as to be greatly affected

In the present earthly environment, however, the intellectual powers depend upon certain internal and external physical organs: the internal organs being “nerves and the brain”, and the external, being various body parts, such as the eye. Thus, while there may be no dysfunction in some intellectual power, a disorder in the physical organ to which it is regularly conjoined, will tend to produce false beliefs:¹

“our Senses ought not to be accounted fallacious because we are sometimes deceived by them when the Organs are disordered and in some unnatural State. We must judge of the Intention of our faculties / from their sound and natural State and not from any disorder of them which is accidental. And thus we actually Judge in other cases. Thus every man judges that a Mans feet & legs are fitted by nature for (h)is walking upon them; Nor is it any Objection to this that some Men are lame & unable to walk upon their legs. In like Manner our Senses are given us by nature not to deceive but to give us true information of things within their Reach, and it is no objection to this that when there is any disorder that is accidental & preternatural in our organs of perception we may from that cause be led to judge wrong.”²

The third condition is this: even if our faculties are functioning properly in an appropriate cognitive environment, it may yet be that our beliefs turn out to be mostly false. For the design itself, and the actions of the designer in bringing about the relevant effects, may be defective. In short, the Author of our nature may be unreliable.³

Reid’s response to this problem is to argue that, within the framework of a theistic metaphysics, there are no beliefs that might entail or render it more probable than not that this condition fails to be satisfied:

“we have no reason to think that God has given fallacious powers to any of his creatures: This would be to think dishonourably of our Maker, and would lay a foundation for universal scepticism”.⁴

by the good or bad state of it. But it follows not from this that it may not continue to exist when that connexion is totally broke. We may with better reason conclude on the contrary, that as the operations of the Mind are limited and confined by its connexion with the body, those operations will be more free & unconfined when that connexion is dissolved.” MS 4/II/19, 2.

¹ Ben-Zeev argues to the effect that any direct realist account of perception, such as Reid’s, requires, for the epistemic justification of perceptual beliefs, the satisfaction of the first two externalist conditions we have mentioned above: “it would make no (religious, evolutionary, pragmatic, *etc.*) sense to assume that the perceptual system is false when it is properly functioning”. A. Ben-Zeev, “Reid’s direct approach to perception”, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 17 (1986): p. 110.

² MS 8/II/22, 2-3; cf. “The imagination, the memory, the judging and reasoning powers, are all liable to be hurt, or even destroyed, by disorders of the body, as well as our powers of perception; but we do not on this account call them fallacious.” IP, p. 291; We must acknowledge it to be the lot of human nature, that all the human faculties are liable, by accidental causes, to be hurt and unfitted for their natural functions, either wholly or in part: But as this imperfection is common to them all, it gives no just ground for accounting any of them fallacious.” IP, p. 301.

³ Cf. Plantinga, “the design governing the production of the belief in question [must] be a good one; still more exactly . . . the module of the design plan governing its production must be such that it is objectively highly probable that a belief produced by cognitive faculties functioning properly according to that module (in a congenial environment) will be true or verisimilitudinous.” *Warrant and Proper Function*, p. 17.

⁴ IP, p. 291. cf. “it seems to be a very unfavourable account of the workmanship of the Supreme Being, to think that he has given us one faculty to deceive us, to wit, our senses, and another faculty, to wit, our reason,

This response should not be taken to mean that theism plays a Cartesian role in Reid's epistemology.¹ For this, Reid argues, would be tantamount to epistemic circularity:² that is, where one may commit epistemic circularity in one of two ways:

- (a) in attempting to show that *one* faculty is reliable, one assumes in the process, that that faculty is reliable; or
- (b) in attempting to show that *every* faculty is reliable, one assumes that *at least one* faculty is reliable.

Reid does not therefore pretend to show that our faculties are reliable by inference from the existence of a benevolent Creator; for this would assume that at least one faculty is reliable: whether the faculty of reasoning, or, as Reid holds, some faculty that gives rise to a self-evident belief.³

Of course, this problem will be true for *any* position. For example, we might decide that, in view of our inability to provide any good reason for trusting our faculties, scepticism is the only rational option. But we cannot arrive at this position without exerting at least one of our faculties. Again, we might take an agnostic view, withholding any belief until such time as there is sufficient evidence to justify a belief in the reliability of our faculties. However, as Reid states, such agnosticism would, of necessity, be a permanent predicament. For how could we ever be persuaded out of our agnosticism, when it entails that we refuse to believe that our faculties are reliable until we exert our faculty of reasoning so as to conclude that they are reliable?

"If a Sceptic should build his scepticism upon this foundation, that all our reasoning and judging powers are fallacious in their nature, or should resolve at least to withhold assent until it be proved that they are not; it would be impossible by argument to beat him out of this strong hold, and he must even be left to enjoy his scepticism."⁴

to detect the fallacy." IP, p. 290; "if we should take for granted all that [philosophers] have said on this subject, the natural conclusion from it might seem to be, that the senses are given to us by some malignant Dæmon on purpose to delude us, rather than that they are formed by the wise and beneficent Author of Nature, to give us true information of things necessary to our preservation and happiness." IP, p. 288.

¹ As Daniels seems to think: "Reid's only defense against the sceptical outcome of his own nativism - namely, that our constitutions might lead us to systematically false beliefs - is his belief that God would not deceive us (p. 117) . . . Reid justifies natively given 'common sense' beliefs through a dogmatic appeal to God as a nondeceiver" (pp. 119-20) Norman Daniels, *Thomas Reid's Inquiry* (New York, N.Y.: B. Franklin, 1974).

² This term derives from William P. Alston, "Epistemic Circularity", in *Epistemic Justification* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989): Essay 12. See also, Alston, "Thomas Reid on Epistemic Principles", pp. 444-45.

³ "every argument offered to prove the truth and fidelity of our faculties, takes for granted the thing in question, and is therefore that kind of sophism which Logicians call *petitio principii*." IP, p. 710; "Every kind of reasoning for the veracity of our faculties, amounts to no more than taking their own testimony for their veracity; and this we must do implicitly, until God give us new faculties to sit in judgment upon the old." IP, p. 593. This last phrase is puzzling, given that any *new* faculties would fall under the same problem.

⁴ IP, p. 592.

Finally, except in cases of 'metaphysical lunacy' and cognitive dysfunction, it is not within our power to refrain from believing that the deliverances of our faculties are, for the most part, reliable. Indeed, we give expression to this belief whenever we act:¹

"Although some writers on this subject have disputed the authority of the senses, of memory, and of every human faculty; yet we find, that such persons, in the conduct of life, in pursuing their ends, or in avoiding dangers, pay the same regard to the authority of their senses, and other faculties, as the rest of mankind. By this they give us just ground to doubt of their candour in their professions of scepticism."²

Reid's position, then, is this: all of us cannot help but place some degree of trust in the reliability of our cognitive faculties:

"The judgments grounded upon the evidence of sense, of memory, and of consciousness, put all men upon a level. The Philosopher, with regard to these, has no prerogative above the illiterate, or even above the savage. ¶ Their reliance upon the testimony of these faculties is as firm and as well grounded as his."³

Given this state of affairs, the primary task for epistemologists is to provide a metaphysics that is superior to any other by virtue of its capacity to preserve better the *rationality* of the trust we cannot help but place in our faculties. Reid's contribution, in this respect, is to argue that, within the context of a theistic metaphysics, there is no good reason to believe that scepticism is a live possibility. For a theistic metaphysics consists of a set of beliefs, no member of which either affirms or leads to the denial of the reliability of our faculties, a feature that could not be claimed of a system such as that advanced by David Hume.⁴

In short, Reid's view is that, within a theistic universe, it is more probable than not that a person with a 'sound understanding' will form mostly true beliefs. More precisely, where F = the faculty (or set of faculties) by which S 's belief that p is produced at t :

A_{78} S is justified in believing that p at t , only if (i) F is designed to produce true beliefs; (ii) F is functioning properly at t , (iii) F is functioning in an environment for which it was designed to function at t , and (iv) if (i)-(iii) are true, then it is more probable than not that p is true.

¹ "The Sceptic may perhaps persuade himself in general, that he has no ground to believe his senses or his memory: But, in particular cases that are interesting, his disbelief vanishes, and he finds himself under a necessity of believing both." IP, p. 505.

² IP, p. 45.

³ IP, pp. 504-5.

⁴ Cf. "there are no propositions [the theist] already accepts just by way of being a theist, which together with forms of reasoning . . . lead to the rejection of the belief that our cognitive faculties have the apprehension of truth as their purpose and for the most part fulfil that purpose." Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper function*, p. 237.

5 DISTINCT CONCEPTION

Reid's second necessary condition for the epistemic justification of a belief is that it be "the inseparable companion of a clear and steady apprehension".¹ To be more precise, where the adverb 'distinctly', modifies the manner in which the object is conceived:

A₇₉ S's belief that *p* is justified only if *S* distinctly conceives of *p*.

In this section, I shall determine those conditions under which acts of conception are taken by Reid to be thus modified.

First, there are, in Reid, two kinds of distinct conceptions, both of which we have already encountered:

- (i) direct conceptions
- (ii) general conceptions

Corresponding to these, are conceptions that fail to be distinct:

- (iii) mere relative conceptions ("obscure")
- (iv) the "first notions" we obtain by our external senses and consciousness ("gross and indistinct")²

In the following two subsections, I will examine the interpretative problems raised by (iii) and (iv).

5.1 MERE RELATIVE CONCEPTIONS

Reid, as we have seen, allows that we can *know* that about which we have only a mere relative conception: that is, we may obtain knowledge of our own minds, of causes in nature, design and purpose in a cause, and of space. Indeed, he takes our belief in such things to be self-evident: for they are each instances of first principles. But if this is so, how are we to understand the following claim:

"Self-evident propositions are those which appear evident to every man of sound understanding who apprehends the meaning of them distinctly, and attends to them without prejudice."³

¹ "indistinct conceptions of things are, for the most part, the cause not only of obscurity in writing and speaking, but of error in judging. . . a sound judgment seems to be the inseparable companion of a clear and steady apprehension" IP, p. 372.

² "the first notions we have of sensible objects are . . . neither simple, nor are they accurate and distinct: They are gross and indistinct, and like the *chaos, a rudis indigestaque moles.*" IP, p. 511.

³ IP, p. 161.

For instance, Reid, as we have seen, would take the following proposition to be self-evident for a person:

P This operation of which I am conscious must have a subject to which it belongs as an attribute.

Now Reid seems to suggest that we can distinctly conceive of a proposition only if we can form a distinct conception of its terms.¹ But he also states that we can form only a mere relative conception of any substance. It follows that we cannot distinctly conceive of P, in which case A₇₉ is inconsistent with Reid's view that P is self-evident.

Reid's response to this objection would be to distinguish between (a) a conception of a substance as that which may stand in a certain relation to its attributes, namely, 'being a subject of'; and (b) a conception of its other essential attributes. With respect to (a), our conception is sufficiently distinct to distinguish this relation from other relations, such as 'being the cause of'. With respect to (b) no such conception exists. It is for this reason that Reid states that our conception of a substance is "obscure": we have no conception of the essence of any substance, except that it may stand in a relation to certain attributes. But if our conception of one of the essential relations of substance is sufficiently distinct to enable us to distinguish it from other relations, it must be possible to form a general conception of that relation. But general conceptions are distinct conceptions; hence, in Reid's view, if we have a mere relative conception of a substance then we are justified in believing that (i) it exists and that (ii) it is the subject of certain attributes. I take this interpretation to be supported by the following texts:

"though the relation between a Substance and its qualities be in some respects obscure, it is easily distinguished from all other relations"²

"however imperfect or obscure our notion of Substance may be, we must admit their existence, and that qualities cannot subsist without them"³

5.2 FIRST NOTIONS

We begin our analysis of the interpretative problem here by examining the operation of consciousness. We will then approach the same problem as it arises in relation to the operation of sensation.

¹ "In every other proposition, the predicate at least must be a general notion; a predicable and an universal being one and the same. Besides this, every proposition either affirms or denies. And no man can have a distinct conception of a proposition, who does not understand distinctly the meaning of affirming or denying: But these are very general conceptions" IP, p. 509.

² MS3061/1/4, 2; in AC, p. 174.

³ MS3061/1/4, 5; in AC, p. 176.

Reid distinguishes between the operations of consciousness and reflection in the following manner. First, the objects of consciousness are present operations of mind, and there are no present operations of mind of which we are not conscious.¹ Hence:

A₈₀ *S* is conscious of *x* at *t* if and only if *x* is an operation of mind occurring in *S* at *t*.

Second, the objects of reflection are also present operations of mind: however, reflection includes within its range those operations that have occurred in the recent past, and so are “fresh” in our memory. Moreover, unlike consciousness, not all operations of mind are the object of reflection.² Hence:

A₈₁ *S* reflects on *x* at *t* if and only if (i) *x* is an operation of mind occurring at *t*, or an object of *S*'s short-term memory at *t*; (ii) *S* directs her attention toward *x* at *t*.³

Third, consciousness and reflection differ further in respect of the kinds of conception we obtain by their exertions. If *S* is *merely* conscious of some operation *O*, then she will obtain only an indistinct conception of *O*.

“[Consciousness] is insufficient of itself to give us clear and distinct notions of the operations of which we are conscious, and of their mutual relations, and minute distinctions.”⁴

Reflection, on the other hand, is that operation by which we may obtain a distinct conception of the objects presented to us by consciousness.

“it is by reflection upon the operation of our own minds that we can form any distinct and accurate notions of them, and not by consciousness without reflection”⁵

¹ “Consciousness is . . . that immediate knowledge which we have of . . . all the present operations of our minds.” IP, p. 17.

² “All men are conscious of the operations of their own minds, at all times, while they are awake; but there are few who reflect upon them, or make them objects of thought.” IP, p. 60.

³ Bourdillon argues that Reid makes a three-fold distinction between consciousness, attention and reflection: “consciousness is the receptacle in which all mental operations . . . reside; attention, a relatively mundane act, brings these operations to the surface; and reflection, a far more sophisticated act, gives us clear and distinct notions of these operations.” Phillip Bourdillon, “Thomas Reid’s Account of Sensation as a Natural Principle of Belief”, *Philosophical Studies* 27 (1975): p. 25. However, as we have seen, Reid gives a very clear definition of ‘attention’ in the *Active Powers*, according to which reflection just *is* attention directed toward the operations of mind. The following text makes this especially clear: “when we make [the various operations of our minds] the objects of our attention, either while they are present, or when they are recent and fresh in our memory, this act of the mind is called *reflection*.” IP, p. 40.

⁴ IP, p. 581.

⁵ IP, p. 517. This text, in particular, resolves the apparent interpretative difficulty that arises from those passages in the *Inquiry* where Reid speaks of ‘perceiving sensations’, for example: “A sensation, which can have no existence but when it is perceived” HM, p. 40. The term ‘perceived’ here, I suggest, is merely functioning in the same sense that ‘reflection’ functions in the passage above. That is, Reid’s talk of “reflection upon the objects of sense” is extensionally equivalent to the act of perception. Likewise, his talk of sensations being “perceived” in the *Inquiry* is extensionally equivalent to the act of reflecting upon sensations. This interpretation is shared by Phillip D. Cummins, “Pappas on the Role of Sensations in Reid’s Theory of Perception” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 1 (1990) : p. 760. See also D. M. Armstrong, who argues,

The interpretative problem, then, is this: Reid takes it to be a first principle that consciousness is that faculty by which we obtain an immediate knowledge of our operations of mind, namely, CP₁.¹ But, as we have seen, Reid argues that a person's belief can obtain that degree of justification sufficient for knowledge only if she has a distinct conception of the object of her belief. Hence, Reid appears to state both that consciousness does and that it does not provide us with a distinct conception of the operations of mind.

There are two ways we can render Reid's account consistent. First, we can take Reid's statements regarding the knowledge we obtain by consciousness to be a periphrasis for the more precise claim that knowledge of the operations of mind is obtained only by the operation of consciousness conjoined with that of reflection.² However, this would require us to take Reid as holding that we might be conscious of an operation, and yet fail to know that it exists; but there is no textual evidence in the entire Reid corpus that would support this view, and, as we have seen, a great deal against it.

The second option is this: whilst consciousness alone may give us immediate knowledge, it cannot give us the more detailed kind of knowledge obtainable by reflection. This interpretation is strongly supported by the following texts:

"The difference between consciousness and reflection, is like to the difference between a superficial view of an object which presents itself to the eye, while we are engaged about something else, and that attentive examination which we give to an object when we are wholly employed in surveying it."³

as Reid does, that we do not, strictly speaking, perceive sensations; rather we have or feel them. Contrary to Berkeley, "The 'esse' of sensations is not 'percipi' but 'sentri'." Armstrong, *Perception and The Physical World*, p. 5.

¹ Consciousness is "that immediate knowledge which we have of . . . all the present operations of our minds" IP, p. 17; it is "the only evidence which we have or can have of their existence. . . . Every man finds himself under a necessity of believing what consciousness testifies, and every thing that hath this testimony is to be taken as a first principle." IP, p. 39; "The existence therefore of those passions and operations of our minds, of which we are conscious, is a first principle, which Nature requires us to believe upon her authority." IP, p. 421; "We know our own thoughts, and the operations of our minds, by a power which we call consciousness" IP, p. 578; "by consciousness we know certainly the existence of our present thoughts and passions;" IP, p. 39; "every man, while his mind is sound, is determined, by the constitution of his nature, to give implicit belief to [consciousness], and to laugh at, or pity the man who doubts its testimony." HM, p. 15; "As to the existence of our thoughts, we have the evidence of consciousness; a kind of evidence that never was called in question." IP, p. 91.

² This appears to be Bourdillon's solution, with the qualification that he distinguishes (mistakenly) between attention and reflection (see footnote 2 on p. 114 above): "On those occasions when Reid says, for example, that we find it impossible to doubt the existence of those things of which we are conscious . . . he is generally alluding either to pain or to other mental operations of which we are not merely conscious, but to which we also pay attention." Bourdillon, "Reid's Account of Sensation", p. 26.

³ IP, p. 60; cf. "we cannot be unconscious of the . . . sensation of the mind . . . If we can only acquire the habit of attending to our sensations, we may know them perfectly." HM, p. 170.

"The operations of our minds are known . . . by consciousness, the authority of which is as certain and as irresistible as that of sense. In order, however, to our having a distinct notion of any of the operations of our own minds, it is . . . farther necessary that we attend to them while they are exerted, and reflect upon them with care, while they are recent and fresh in our memory."¹

Moreover, this interpretation is consistent with Reid's developmental view of the voluntary intellectual powers. Attentiveness or reflection, like the operations of deliberation and fixed purposes, is rarely present in childhood:

"reflection does not appear in children. Of all the powers of the mind, it seems to be of the latest growth, whereas consciousness is coeval with the earliest".²

Again, the degree of attention required for the most accurate and scientific study of the mind's operations is, Reid argues, practiced by only a minority:

"attentive reflection upon those operations, making them objects of thought, surveying them attentively, and examining them on all sides, is so far from being common to all men, that it is the lot of very few".³

Now to preserve Reid's view that consciousness may yet give us *knowledge*, these texts must be read with great care. Reid is not, I suggest, referring here to reflection taken as a *kind* of operation, but rather as a certain *degree* to which that operation is exerted, namely, that degree which is only found, if at all, in the later stages of a person's intellectual development. Reflection as an operation, however, may be present even to a very weak degree. Indeed, I suggest that Reid's view entails that it *must* be present from the moment we obtain any knowledge of the operation of our minds. As we have seen, Reid holds that (1) it is not within our power to form a belief that has a degree of justification sufficient for knowledge unless we can distinctly conceive of the object of our belief; and that (2) consciousness alone cannot give us any such conception. But then, if, as he states, (3) consciousness "is common to all men at all times", and (4) we have an immediate knowledge of *any* operation of which we are conscious, then Reid must, on pain of inconsistency, also hold that (5) our ability to form distinct conceptions of the objects of consciousness by way of some act of reflection, with however weak a degree, must be coeval with the first exertions of that power. In other words, consciousness and reflection do not operate *successively*. We are not presented with indistinct conceptions, upon which the operation of reflection then

¹ IP, p. 105.

² IP, p. 516.

³ IP, p. 581.

performs its task of analysis. The operations of consciousness and reflection must be taken to operate at the same time, such that every conception we form by way of consciousness is also a conception we form by way of reflection, even though the two operations perform distinct functions.¹

We can perhaps gain more clarity on this point by examining the interpretative problem as it arises for the external senses. First, Reid states that our senses alone give us a "gross and indistinct" conception of their objects:

"There are therefore notions of the objects of sense which are gross and indistinct; and there are others that are distinct and scientific. The former may be got from the senses alone; but the latter cannot be obtained without some degree of judgment."²

Second, Reid draws a parallel between the kind of conception presented by consciousness, and that presented by the external senses:

"Consciousness, being a kind of internal sense, can no more give us distinct and accurate notions of the operations of our minds, than the external senses can give of external objects."³

The second parallel Reid draws is between the operation of reflection and the operations required for distinctly conceiving the objects of the external senses:

Reflection upon the operations of our minds, is the same kind of operation with that by which we form distinct notions of external objects. . . . so it is by reflection upon the objects of sense, and not by the senses without reflection, that we can form distinct notions of them."⁴

Now there would appear to be an interpretative puzzle here of the first importance. On the one hand, Reid appears to think of the conceptions we obtain by our senses as being that which "which Nature immediately presents to us"; that is, they are prior to and distinct from those conceptions that arise by way of the operations of distinguishing and generalising.⁵ Yet, Reid also makes the following counterfactual

¹ This interpretation, of course, implies that we form beliefs about *all* our sensations, and so, as Pappas suggests, leaves open the possibility of an inference from sensation-beliefs to beliefs about the external world. However, as we shall see, Reid holds that sensations themselves, and not any belief about sensations, are the (non-inferential) occasion of perceptual beliefs. Again, Reid held that the evidence for a belief is not merely a necessary condition for its justification, but that which gives rise to it. Hence he must reject the view that our perceptual beliefs are justified only if inferred from sensation-beliefs. But all this may still be true, even if consciousness gives rise to sensation-beliefs. In other words, my interpretation is not inconsistent with Reid's account of the formation and justification of perceptual beliefs. See Pappas, "Sensation and Perception in Reid", p. 160.

² IP, p. 514.

³ IP, p. 516.

⁴ IP, p. 516.

⁵ "our most simple conceptions are not those which Nature immediately presents to us. When we come to years of understanding, we have the power of analysing the objects of Nature, of distinguishing their several attributes and relations, of conceiving them one by one, and of giving a name to each, whose meaning

claim: If we *were* so constituted as to be incapable of distinguishing the attributes and relations of an object, then our consciousness and our senses *would* give us only “one complex and confused notion of all these mingled together”.¹ The implication of this second claim is that, for certain kinds of attributes and relations, it is not the case that there are two temporally distinguishable phases or stages in the process of forming a distinct conception: we are not presented with a confused, complex indistinct conception, upon which we then set to work analysing the elements thereby presented.²

Perhaps Reid might have helped us here by suggesting, as he does in another context, that this two stage view is mistakenly analogous to the process of painting. That is, where we might think that:

- (a) *S* produces a clear and distinct picture of some object *x* by first quickly sketching a blurred and indistinct representation of *x*, followed by a closer study and analysis of *x* so as to produce a more refined and distinct representation;

by analogy, we might also think that:

- (b) *S* forms a clear and distinct conception of some object *x* by first immediately forming an “gross and indistinct” conception of *x*, followed by the acts of distinguishing and generalising, so as to produce a distinct conception of *x*.

But of course the analogy is seriously mistaken. The act of conception does not produce anything: there is no mental representation that we might set out to refine or

extends only to that single attribute or relation: And thus our most simple conceptions are not those of any objects in nature, but of some single attribute or relation of such objects. ¶ Thus Nature presents to our senses, bodies that are extended in three dimensions, and solid. By analysing the notion we have of body from our senses, we form to ourselves the conceptions of extension, solidity, space, a point, a line, a surface; all which are more simple conceptions than that of a body. But they are the elements, as it were, of which our conception of a body is made up, and into which it may be analysed.” IP, p. 375.

¹ “You perceive, for instance, an object white, round, and a foot in diameter: I grant that you perceive all these attributes of the object by sense; but if you had not been able to distinguish the colour from the figure, and both from the magnitude, your senses would only have given you one complex and confused notion of all these mingled together.” IP, p. 511; “Nature presents no object to the senses, or to consciousness, that is not complex. Thus, by our senses we perceive bodies of various kinds; but every body is a complex object; it has length, breadth, and thickness; it has figure, and colour, and various other sensible qualities, which are blended together in the same subject; and I apprehend, that brute animals, who have the same senses that we have, cannot separate the different qualities belonging to the same subject, and have only a complex and confused notion of the whole: Such also would be our notions of the objects of sense, if we had not superior powers of understanding, by which we can analyse the complex object, abstract every particular attribute from the rest, and form a distinct conception of it. ¶ So that it is not by the senses immediately, but rather by the powers of analysing and abstraction, that we get the most simple, and the most distinct notions even of the objects of sense.” IP, p. 398.

² If I understand Alston correctly, he takes Reid to hold this ‘two-stage’ view. See Alston, “Reid on Perception and Conception”, pp. 43–45; for example, “it is clear that [Reid] takes conception to be present where no general conceptions are being deployed”. (p. 43.)

develop. Rather there are two ways of conceiving the objects of our senses: (i) that by which we are made directly aware of an object or by which it is immediately presented to us, and (ii) that by which we distinguish and generalise. However, these different ways of conceiving do not occur in parallel or sequentially, but rather, at the same time. In other words, we may distinguish between two kinds of immediacy:¹

- D₄₂ x has presentational immediacy for $S =_{df}$ the manner in which S conceives of x is such that she is made directly aware of x .
- D₄₃ x has conceptual immediacy for $S =_{df}$ the manner in which S conceives of x is such that she forms a distinct conception of some attribute or relation of x at the same time that she is directly aware of x .

Naturally, we will need a great deal more textual evidence to support and clarify this interpretation of Reid as advocating the notion of conceptual immediacy. To this end, I shall, in the following sub-sections, look at two key issues: Reid's direct realism, and the role of sensations in perception.

5.3 DIRECT REALISM

First, we have seen that the *only* objects of thought, in Reid's view, are immediate. But we have yet to clarify what it is that Reid would take to be an immediate object of perception. One of the best sources, in this regard, is Reid's objection to Hume's diminishing table argument.²

Reid begins his analysis with a distinction between *real* and *apparent* magnitude. Each is distinguished by two properties: the means by which it is measured, and the sense modality by which it is known:

- D₄₄ Real magnitude =_{df} that which is measured by known measures of length, surface or capacity; and known only by the sense of touch.
- D₄₅ Apparent magnitude =_{df} that which is measured by the angle which an object subtends at the eye;³ and known only by sight.

Take the following scenario, for example: suppose (i) the angle which an object x subtends at a spectator's eye changes, for example, the distance between x and the spectator increases; but (ii) the length, surface or capacity of x does not change. In this

¹ D₄₃ is similar to a formulation found in Alston, "Reid on Perception and Conception", p. 36.

² For a strikingly similar argument, see D. M. Armstrong, *Perception and The Physical World* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961): pp. 12-13.

³ "Supposing two right lines drawn from the eye to the extremities of the object making an angle, of which the object is the subtense, the apparent magnitude is measured by this angle." IP, p. 210.

case, the real magnitude of x will remain unchanged, while the apparent magnitude will change relative to the distance of the spectator.¹ Reid then presents Hume's argument as the following syllogism:

- (1) "The table which we see, seems to diminish as we remove farther from it"
 - (2) "the real table which exists independent of us suffers no alteration"
- Therefore,
- (3) "It was . . . nothing but its image which was presented to the mind."² [1, 2]

We can generalise this to yield the following:

- (1*) All immediate objects of perception are such that their magnitude diminishes as we move farther away from them.
- (2*) No external object is such that its magnitude diminishes as we move farther away from it.

Therefore,

- (3*) No external object is an immediate object of perception. [by 1*, 2*]

If the distinction between apparent and real magnitude is correct, then the argument is simply invalid; for it commits the fallacy of equivocation.³ That is to say, the syllogism has two middle terms: premise (1*) is true only of *apparent* magnitude, premise (2*) only of *real* magnitude.

Moreover, the phenomenon Hume describes, once disambiguated, proves precisely the opposite of his conclusion:

- (4) All the immediate objects of perception are such that their apparent magnitude diminishes as we move away from them.
- (5) All objects that are such that their apparent magnitude diminishes as we move farther away from them are external objects.

Therefore,

- (6) All immediate objects of perception are external objects. [by 4, 5]⁴

The argument is made even stronger, Reid suggests, by including the following information in the premises: we can predict, "by the rules of geometry and

¹ "The same individual object, remaining in the same place, and unchanged, must necessarily vary in its apparent magnitude, according as the point from which it is seen is more or less distant; and that its apparent length or breadth will be nearly in a reciprocal proportion to the distance of the spectator." IP, p. 210.

² IP, p. 209.

³ "according to the rules of logic, the conclusion is not justly drawn from the premises." IP, p. 211.

⁴ "Let us suppose, for a moment, that it is the real table we see: Must not this real table seem to diminish as we remove farther from it? It is demonstrable that it must. How then can this apparent diminution be an argument that it is not the real table?" IP, p. 211.

perspective”, the exact apparent magnitude of an object for any distance at which the object is placed from the eye. But this prediction is based on the supposition that “the objects we see are external, and not in the mind itself.” Moreover, these predictions have proved accurate in “innumerable trials”, and have solved “an infinite number of phænomena of nature”, and not one prediction has been falsified. On the other hand, if the System of Ideas were true, then no account could be given of the phenomenon of apparent magnitude: we should have no explanation why an object of sight has one apparent magnitude and not another. But if one account explains a prodigious number of phenomena and has never been disconfirmed in its predictions, whilst another gives no explanation for the same range of phenomena and can make no predictions, it seems abundantly clear, from a scientific point of view, which of the two we should accept.¹

In short, Reid would deny that the object of perception is some mental representation or image of an external object. More importantly, Reid would deny that any operation of mind, such as sensation, might be the object or some aspect of the object of perception.² Reid was therefore a direct realist, as defined by the following:

A₈₂ x is an object of S 's perception at a time t if and only if (i) S perceives x at t , and (ii) there is no object y such that (a) y and x are non-identical or y is a constitutive part of x , and (b) S perceives x at t only if S perceives y at t .³

5.4 IMMERWAHR'S INTERPRETATION

John Immerwahr has argued that Reid was an indirect realist in writing the *Inquiry*: that is, Reid thought that “external objects are only known indirectly by means of sensations which act as natural signs of the external world”.⁴ By the time Reid published the *Intellectual Powers*, however, he had become a direct realist: that is, by 1785 Reid thought that “sensation is seen as something which happens parallel to the process of perception, rather than part of a sequence which produced perception.”⁵

¹ IP, pp. 212-13.

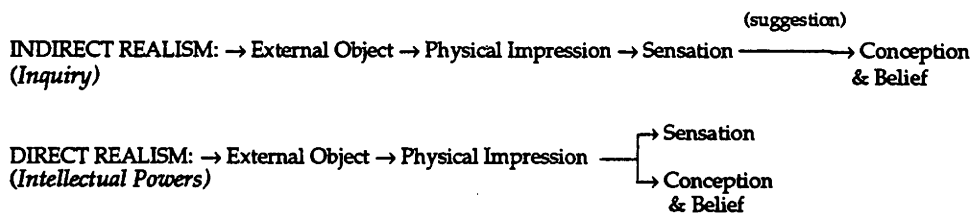
² For a similar view, see A. E. Pitson, “Sensation, Perception and Reid's Realism”, in M. Dalgarno and E. Matthews, eds. *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, PSS 42, 1989): p. 42.

³ George Pappas constructs a similar definition for what he calls ‘direct perception’: “A person S directly perceives an object O at a time $t =$ (1) S perceives O at t ; and, (2) it is false that: S would perceive O at t only if S were to perceive R at t , where $R \neq O$, and where R is not a part of O nor is O of R , and where R is not a constituent or group of constituents of O , nor is O of R .” “Sensation and Perception in Reid”, *Nous* 23 (1989): pp. 156-57.

⁴ John Immerwahr, “The Development of Reid's Realism”, *Monist* 61 (1978): p. 248.

⁵ Immerwahr, “The Development of Reid's Realism”, p. 249. Immerwahr defines direct and indirect realism as follows: “By direct realism I mean the theory that we are directly aware of external objects and that we know them without requiring an awareness of mental entities which act as cognitive links informing us of an external world. Indirect realism holds that we are directly aware only of certain mental entities (call them *sensa*) from which the mind makes some kind of inference or other mental transition to the existence of an external world.” p. 247.

Immerwahr then depicts the difference using the following chart:¹



This view is defective on both historical and philosophical grounds. First, Reid's manuscripts clearly show that the *Intellectual Powers* was based upon lecture notes delivered throughout his career, from as early as 1764. The publication date of 1785 is therefore meaningless.² Second, Immerwahr argues that, although Reid rejected the view that 'sensations' could be natural signs of external objects in his *Orations* (1759), by the time of the *Inquiry*, he had "reversed his view".³ However, most of the material we find in the *Inquiry* was delivered to the Aberdeen Philosophical Society in a series of papers dating from 1758-1763. Reid's 'suggestion' and 'natural sign' terminology is thus found throughout the same period that Reid is supposed, by Immerwahr, to have been a direct realist.⁴

Third, as Reid states in his Abstract of the *Inquiry*, the relation of 'suggestion' or that of 'sign' to thing 'signified' is not intended to carry any theoretical weight, beyond that of indicating that the relata are constantly conjoined:

"for aught we know, Nature might have given us both the conception and belief of external things, without connecting them invariably with certain Sensations. For no man can give a shadow of reason why the later should always precede the former. ¶ This Connexion which Nature hath established betwixt our Sensations and the conception and belief of external Objects, I express two ways: Either by saying that the Sensations suggest the objects by a natural principle of the Mind; or by saying that the Sensations are natural Signs of the Objects. These Expressions signify one and the same thing, and I do not pretend by them to account for this Connexion, but onely to affirm it as a fact that by the constitution of our nature there is such a Connexion."⁵

¹ Immerwahr, "The Development of Reid's Realism", p. 249.

² Immerwahr, it must be said, acknowledges the composite nature of the *Intellectual Powers*. But he seems not to take seriously the implications of this, stating as he does that: "By 1785, . . . the theory [of innate language] has been rejected and direct realism is Reid's final position." p. 252.

³ Immerwahr, "The Development of Reid's Realism", p. 251.

⁴ See Manuscripts § 2. in HM.

⁵ MS 2/III/1, 6.

Fourth, Immerwahr admits that Reid explicitly uses the natural sign terminology more frequently than not in the *Intellectual Powers*,¹ and then explains this anomaly by suggesting that “Reid himself was not completely clear about the difference between these two positions”.² I take it that if an interpretation of Reid entails that he was unwittingly inconsistent with regard to a doctrine that played a central role in his philosophical thought, then so much the worse for that interpretation.

Finally, Reid argues in the *Intellectual Powers* that there is a sense in which a sign may function as that by which what it signifies is known. However, he firmly rejects any sense in which a sign is taken to function as an indirect or mediate object of thought. That is, a sign x can signify something y for some agent S only if both x and y are immediate objects of S 's thought. Most importantly, this, Reid claims, will be true even if the sign in question is a *natural* sign.³

This is precisely the criticism Reid makes as early as 14th March 1759: in a paper he delivered to the Aberdeen Philosophical Society, he rejects any view according to which the only immediate objects of thought are ideas or sensations:

“One object of thought may introduce another by the laws of our constitution, but when the second object is actually thought of, it is as immediate an object as the first was. The sound of a coach may lead me to think of a coach, & to believe that one is passing by; here the sound is the immediate & only object of sense, but the passing of a coach is as immediate an object of thought & belief.”⁴

In short, Immerwahr would have Reid rejecting indirect realism around 1759, adopting it in 1764, only to reject it once again in 1785 using the same arguments he advanced in 1759. Given that (i) these dates are meaningless as regards the development of Reid's thought; (ii) there is scarcely a more central doctrine in Reid's philosophical thought, and (iii) Reid gives us no notice at any stage that he had changed his mind, I take it that Immerwahr's interpretation is most implausible.

¹ E.g., “sensations belonging to secondary qualities are . . . signs of the object perceived” IP, p. 239.

² Immerwahr, “The Development of Reid's Realism”, p. 253.

³ “There is a sense in which a thing may be said to be perceived by a medium. Thus any kind of sign may be said to be the medium by which I perceive or understand the thing signified. The sign, by custom, or compact, or perhaps by nature, introduces the thought of the thing signified. But here the thing signified, when it is introduced to the thought, is an object of thought no less immediate than the sign was before: And there are here two objects of thought, one succeeding another, which we have shown is not the case with respect to an idea, and the object it represents.” IP, p. 152.

⁴ MS 3107/1/3, 63. Cf. *Oration*s, III.: “I certainly do not deny that of the things which are observed by the mind, there are different connections, similarities, and bonds and that the intellect is carried by a certain natural impulse from some one object of reflection to others akin to or connected with it. Thus from the keen-sighted Galileo the mind easily passes to the satellites of Jupiter, first discovered by him. Here in truth as soon as the mind has transferred from the astronomer to reflection about the heavenly bodies, these bodies are no less the immediate object of thought than the astronomer was before. Every object of the mind, therefore, appears to be immediate and, although there is a nexus and order of those things which enter the mind, we think about all immediately in their own order; for what it is to think by means of an intermediate object goes completely over my head.” (p.970)

5.5 THE ROLE OF SENSATIONS

We come now to our examination of Reid's account of the role of sensations in perceptual belief. We begin with Reid's account of the nature of sensations.

First, sensations, as we have seen, are not objects of the mind, and they do not have any objects; they are merely acts or operations. Second, sensations are not caused, in the strict sense of the word, by either the subject of those sensations or some external object.¹ Sensations are involuntary operations, brought about by the Author of our nature (or some intermediary agent), where the antecedent conditions of a sensation, such as a smell, consist of a series of material impressions, originating with some external object.² Third, there is no essential phenomenal characteristic of a sensation, Reid argues, of which we would not be conscious:³ "It is essential to a sensation to be felt, and it can be nothing more than we feel it to be."⁴

Finally, the occurrence of a sensation in an agent *S* is constantly and immediately conjoined to the exertion of her powers of conception and judgment. For example, *S*'s touching a hard object is conjoined to a certain sensation's arising in *S*.⁵ The having of this sensation is conjoined to the formation in *S* of a general conception of hardness (which, as we have seen, includes a conception of that object's being hard). The formation of this conception is conjoined to the formation in *S* of the judgment that the hard object exists and that hardness is that individual attribute which produced her sensation.⁶

¹ "Nor can we perceive any necessary connection between sensation and the conception and belief of an external object." IP, p. 270. Ben-Zeev interprets Reid as rejecting the "causal theory of perception" on the grounds that Reid denies that material impressions are the "efficient causes" of sensations. (Ben-Zeev, "Reid's direct approach to perception", p. 102.) But, of course, Reid cannot plausibly be said to have rejected the causal theory of perception - *unless* that theory is taken to assume the regularity theory of causation. On the other hand, Reid, as I shall argue, would have rejected any causal theory of perception according to which the 'constant conjunction' that holds between sensations and conceptions of and beliefs in external objects entails that sensations are *temporally prior* to those conceptions. They are 'constantly conjoined' merely in the sense that, under normal conditions, they will occur at the same time.

² IP, p. 80.

³ Duggan raises the following problem: "My present sensation might have the characteristic of being the tenth sensation of that sort I have sensed in the past week. But surely it is not sensed as having that characteristic." T. Duggan, "Thomas Reid's Theory of Sensation", *Philosophical Review* 69 (1960): p. 90, n.3. I suggest that Reid limited his claim to the *essential phenomenal* attributes and relations of a sensation. 'Being the tenth sensation I have sensed in the past week' is clearly an accidental non-phenomenal relation.

⁴ HM, p. 170.

⁵ "Every variety we discern, with regard to taste, smell, sound, colour, heat and cold, and in the tangible qualities of bodies, is indicated by a sensation corresponding to it." IP, p. 230; "some sensation attends every object they present to us" IP, p. 230; "The taste of a pine apple signifies both the Sensation we feel and that Quality in the pine Apple which occasions this Sensation. We perceive this Quality, we feel the Sensation which it occasions in us." MS 4/II/2, 30.

⁶ "Thus when I taste a pine apple; I feel an agreeable Relish, at the same time I perceive this to be owing to some quality of the pine Apple." MS 4/II/2, 29; "Observing that the agreeable sensation is raised when the rose is near, and ceases when it is removed, I am led, by my nature, to conclude some quality to be in the

There are four important qualifications we must make to this account. First, Duggan argues that Reid's characterisation of (i) sensations as having all and only those features that we feel them to have and his claim that (ii) we do not attend to or notice all our sensations, are inconsistent.¹ One solution might be to interpret Reid as making the following claim: Sensations have all and only those features that we feel them to have if and only if we attend to or notice them.² However, this option must be immediately ruled out by Reid's explicit statement that we cannot fail to notice *any* essential phenomenal feature of *any* our sensations:

"It is impossible that there can be any fallacy in sensation: For we are conscious of all our sensations, and they can neither be any other in their nature, nor greater or less in their degree than we feel them. It is impossible that a man should be in pain, when he does not feel pain; and when he feels pain, it is impossible that his pain should not be real, and in its degree what it is felt to be; and the same thing may be said of every sensation whatsoever."³

There are two important clarifications that we can make here, both of which will, I suggest, render Reid's position consistent. First, how might Reid have understood cases in which we appear not to be aware of our sensations? For example:

"I find myself scratching one of my legs and come to realize that I am doing so for a reason - the leg is itching".⁴

I suggest Reid would have distinguished between the *phenomenal* characteristics of a sensation and its *functional* characteristics. Now Reid's statement that "it is essential to a sensation to be felt" rules out his holding that a sensation can function in such a way as to incline us toward performing an action, even though it fails to have any phenomenal characteristics. However, he might have held that sensations could incline us toward performing an action, even though its phenomenal features were of such weakness or indistinctness, in comparison with the present object of our attention, that we fail to notice its functional characteristics, that is, we fail to explain our actions by reference to them.

rose, which is the cause of this sensation." IP, p. 227 (Note, Reid's MS version of this text had the word "conceive" in place of "conclude". MS 4/II/16, 16); "when certain impressions are made upon our organs, nerves, and brain, certain corresponding sensations are felt, and certain objects are both conceived and believed to exist." IP, p. 269.

¹ T. Duggan, ed., *An Inquiry into the Human Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970): p. xvi.

² Bourdillon, in response to Duggan, argues, in effect, for this solution. Bourdillon, "Reid's account of Sensation", p. 27-8.

³ IP, p. 290.

⁴ Christopher S. Hill, *Sensations: A Defense of Type Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): p. 119.

The second clarification is this: Reid states in the *Inquiry* that “If we can only acquire the habit of attending to our sensations, we may know them perfectly.”¹ But how could this be so if we know all there is to know just by *having* them? I suggest that Reid’s view is this: when he states that our knowledge of sensations will increase in detail or distinctness in proportion to the degree that we reflect upon them, this is just because he takes it that our sensations themselves will increase in detail or distinctness in proportion to the degree that we reflect upon them.²

Now this interpretation will only make sense, I suggest, if we bring into play the notion of conceptual immediacy. Whilst our consciousness may directly present to us an awareness of a sensation, the kind of conception we form of its attributes and relations will depend on the degree to which we reflect upon it. But if we have conceptual immediacy with respect to our sensations, then our conception of them will be formed *at the same time* as they are directly presented to us; in which case, a sensation will be presented to our awareness as having precisely those essential phenomenal features that we conceive of it as having. But then it follows that the essential phenomenal features of a sensation will be either vague or distinct in proportion to the degree that we attend to it.³ Thus, Reid’s view of the matter, I suggest, is this:

A₈₃ S has a sensation *x* if and only if (i) *S* is conscious of *x*; and (ii) *x* has no essential phenomenal attribute or relation *F*, such that *S* is not conscious of *x* as having *F*.

Second, Cummins argues that Reid is mistaken in taking belief to be an essential ingredient of perception, given that perception may occur without belief:

“When one knows antecedently that perspectival distortion is going to occur or when the circumstances are unusual and one’s perceptual object is peculiar, one does not believe that the perceptual object exists.”⁴

Reid was not unaware of such cases. Indeed, he argued that belief in the object of perception is present only if “we are certain that we perceive it”:

¹ HM, p. 170.

² As Bourdillon notes, Reid held that “the very character of a sensation seems to change in proportion as we pay more or less attention to it.” Bourdillon, “Reid’s account of Sensation”, p. 35, n.28

³ Cf. Blumenfeld: “if we suddenly removed all other things [in our visual experience] which we were not attending to, we would notice that something was missing . . . there are characteristics which are not directly attended to, but we can’t say that to check on these would be to check on unnoticed characteristics, for these are noticed - they are merely vague.” David C. Blumenfeld, “On Not Seeing Double”, *Philosophical Quarterly* 9 (1959): p. 264-65. Hill makes a similar observation (which is not to say that he would agree entirely with Reid): there are “cases in which a qualitative change occurs when one directs one’s attention on a sensation that has previously been at the margin of consciousness.” C. Hill, *Sensations*, p. 126.

⁴ Phillip Cummins, “Reid’s Realism”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 12 (1974): p. 326-27, n. 35.

“There may be a perception so faint and indistinct, as to leave us in doubt whether we perceive the object or not. . . . But when the perception is in any degree clear and steady, there remains no doubt of its reality; and when the reality of the perception is ascertained, the existence of the object perceived can no longer be doubted.”¹

In other words, those cases in which we are uncertain as to whether or not the object of an apparent perception exists are just those cases in which we are uncertain as to whether or not we *really are* perceiving it. Put another way, if we do not believe that the perceptual object exists, we will not believe that we are perceiving that object. Hence, if we knew antecedently that perspectival distortion would create an erroneous conception that some object *x* exists, we would not only refrain from believing that *x* exists, we would also refrain from believing that we had perceived *x*. Reid would therefore reject Cummins’s objection: for perception, as we ordinarily think of it, entails a belief in the object of perception.

Third, Cummins suggests that Reid is inconsistent in holding that (i) it is a first principle that the objects of perception exist, and yet admitting that (ii) there are cases of genuine perceptual error.² However, it is crucial that we are precise in locating the source of error that Reid (rightly) acknowledges. First, there are, in Reid’s view, no cases in which it can be said that some agent *S* perceives *x* at *t*, and *x* does not exist at *t*: He is quite explicit on this: “I acknowledge”, he states, “that a man cannot perceive an object that does not exist”.³ To suppose otherwise, Reid argues, would be to claim that *S*’s power of perception is fallacious, and “we have no reason to think that God has given fallacious powers to any of his creatures”.⁴ However, suppose that *S*’s power of perception is dysfunctional or that his cognitive environment is in some way inappropriate; and suppose that as a consequence, *S* takes himself to be perceiving *x* at *t*, when *x* does not exist at *t*. Now Cummins might analyse this scenario by saying that *S*’s perception of *x* at *t* was fallacious. Reid’s analysis would be that *S* did not have a fallacious perception at *t*. Rather, due to abnormal conditions, *S* formed a fallacious belief that he had a perception of *x* at *t*.

The fourth qualification is especially important: Reid held that the individual operations of sensation, conception, and judgment, though distinguishable by reflection, are essential ingredients or constitutive parts of one kind of operation, namely, perception.⁵

¹ IP, p. 107.

² Cummins, “Reid’s Realism”, p. 338.

³ IP, p. 390.

⁴ IP, p. 291.

⁵ E.g. “sensation, or feeling which is only a more refined kind of sensation, makes one ingredient, . . . in

In other words, the series of conjoined operations listed below is not a temporal or linear series, whereby each operation is succeeded by the next. Rather they will all occur at the same time:

- A₈₄ S has a perception of some object x as being F at t if and only if (i) x is an external object existing at t ; (ii) x is conjoined with S 's having a certain sensation y at t ; (iii) S 's having y is conjoined with the formation of a conception of F at t , and (iv) S 's forming a conception of F is conjoined with the formation of S 's judgments at t that (a) Fx exists, and (b) F is that attribute in x which is conjoined to y .¹

Now the objects of perception are two kinds of individual attributes, primary and secondary qualities. These, Reid argues, are distinguished merely by virtue of the kinds of conceptions we form: the primary qualities are attributes in a body that occasion sensations in us that, in turn, lead to the formation of *direct* conceptions of those attributes; the secondary qualities are attributes in a body that occasion sensations in us that, in turn, are the occasion of *relative* conceptions of those attributes. Now as we have seen, a relative conception of some object x arises immediately upon our obtaining a distinct conception of something y to which x stands in a relation, such as 'being the effect of' or 'being the subject of'. Moreover, a relative conception will not give us any conception of x itself; it merely informs us that there is something, namely x , that stands in a certain relation to y . In this case, our conception of some secondary quality F is relative just because the only conception of F that arises in us, is that F is the occasion of a certain sensation.² In sum:

the perception of external objects" IP, p. 230. I thus agree with Pappas' rejection of any interpretation of Reid's view according to which he takes sensation to be "a mere correlate", rather than "partly constitutive" of perception. See George Pappas, "Sensation and Perception in Reid", p. 155. See also Ben-Zeev's convincing comparison of Reid's view with that of J. J. Gibson: "Both Reid and Gibson agree that . . . while perceptual experience contains various features, these are not ordered in a linear, causal and temporal chain. In typical perceptual experience all these features are present, but, as Reid rightly maintains, in different circumstances our attention may be focused on a different feature. . . . A direct approach cannot assume that the perceptual content is constructed by adding one perceptual feature (or atom) to another until the complete experience is produced." Ben-Zeev, *Reid's Direct Approach to Perception*, p. 111.

¹ This definition, Reid would claim, is true only of the actual world, and only under certain appropriate conditions: "I can conceive a Being that has Sensations of various kinds without any Perception. Perhaps this is actually the State of Children in the Womb and of Oysters & some other Animals. I can conceive also a Being that perceives all that we perceive without any Sensation connected with these Perceptions." (Letter to Kames, 20 Dec. 1778), Ross, p. 40. Robert Sleigh makes a similar point in "Reid and the Ideal Theory of Conception and Perception" *Philosophical Monographs* 3 (1976): p. 80.

² "The only notion therefore my senses give is this, That smell in the rose is an unknown quality or modification, which is the cause or occasion of a sensation which I know well." IP, p. 237; secondary qualities "are conceived only as the unknown causes or occasions of certain sensations with which we are well acquainted." IP, p. 237; "the quality in the body, which is the cause or occasion of this sensation, is likewise real, though the nature of it is not manifest to our senses." IP, p. 243.

- D₄₆ *F* is a primary quality if and only if (i) *F* is an attribute of an external object, (ii) it is possible that, for some agent *S*, *F* is conjoined to a sensation *x* in *S*, and *x* is conjoined to a direct conception of *F* in *S*.
- D₄₇ *F* is a secondary quality if and only if (i) *F* is an attribute of an external object, (ii) it is possible that, for some agent *S*, *F* is conjoined to a sensation *x* in *S*, and *x* is conjoined to a relative conception of *F* in *S*.¹

The question that arises for us is this: when Reid speaks of that “gross and indistinct” conception of external objects which “Nature immediately presents to us”, is he referring here to sensations? Are we to think of sensations as giving us a direct awareness of an object, which is, at the same time, conjoined with a (direct or relative) conception of those objects? I suggest that this is precisely Reid’s view of the matter.

First, Reid held that, in general, (i) the sensations which are the occasion of our conception of external objects and (ii) those conceptions themselves, are not only “produced at the same time”, but “coalesce in our imagination”: more precisely, we “consider them as one thing”, we tend to “confound their different attributes”, and find it “very difficult to separate them in thought, to attend to each by itself”² In short, Reid, as Pappas suggests, seems to take “the phenomenal character of sensation to appear simultaneously, and without apparent distinction, as features of the external object of direct awareness.”³ In sum, Reid holds that we have conceptual immediacy with respect to external objects.⁴

We can be even more precise by examining the distinct ways in which we form concepts of the primary and secondary qualities. Take, for example, Alston’s interpretation of Reid:

¹ Bruce Silver argues, convincingly, that Berkeley had some influence on Reid’s account of primary and secondary qualities, in “A Note on Berkeley’s *New Theory of Vision* and Thomas Reid’s Distinction between Primary and Secondary Qualities” *SJ Phil* 12 (1974): pp. 253–63.

² “Every different perception is conjoined with a sensation that is proper to it. The one is the sign, the other the thing signified. They coalesce in our imagination. They are signified by one name, and are considered as one simple operation. The purposes of life do not require them to be distinguished.” IP, p. 233; “The perception and its corresponding sensation are produced at the same time. In our experience we never find them disjoined. Hence we are led to consider them as one thing, to give them one name, and to confound their different attributes. It becomes very difficult to separate them in thought, to attend to each by itself, and to attribute nothing to it which belongs to the other.” IP, p. 248.

³ Reported in W. P. Alston, “Reid on Perception and Conception”, p. 45. It should be noted that Pappas’ suggestion is intended to be a “modified Reidian view”. I am of course taking his suggestion, or something very like it, to be Reid’s *own* view.

⁴ This interpretation is similar to Ben-Zeev’s: “we do not find in [Reid’s] approach the traditional problematic transition from a sensory raw material which is completely noninformative (meaningless) to an informative (meaningful) perceptual stage. The very first perceptual (or sensory) stage is informative (meaningful). . . . Sensation, in Reid’s mature view, is not a raw material awaiting cognitive processing, but refers to a noncognitive aspect of our perceptual experience.” A. Ben-Zeev, “Reid’s Direct Approach to Perception”, p. 105.

"What it is natural to refer to as an awareness of colours, warmth, and odours (or of objects as coloured, warm, and odourous) Reid construes as *modes* of feeling (awareness), as ways of being aware, directed on to no object beyond themselves. And these sensations are sharply distinguished by Reid from the conception and belief that constitute perception."¹

Now Reid would agree with this interpretation, but only up to a point. For he would argue that it fails to take account of the manner in which our conception of secondary qualities arises. It is true that our sensations, when analysed in abstraction, are to be sharply distinguished from our conception of the secondary qualities of colours, warmth and odours. However, we have only a relative conception of these secondary qualities. To be precise, we have no conception of colour, warmth and odour apart from the fact that they are those qualities in external objects that are the occasion for certain sensations. Indeed, Reid argues that this is precisely why secondary qualities are so often confused with the sensations that are occasioned by them. They are not *merely* antecedent conditions for some immediately succeeding conception of secondary attributes. The phenomenal character of sensations themselves "bear a capital part" in the conception we form of such attributes. In other words, what we are directly presented with in sensation is an awareness of objects as being coloured, warm, odourous, and so on. Hence, we have, by means of our sensations, conceptual immediacy with respect to the secondary qualities.²

What of the primary qualities? Surely objects are also directly presented to our awareness as being textured, shaped, and so on. The problem here, is that Reid did not consider sensations to "bear a capital part" in the conceptions we form of the primary qualities.³ However, he did think that those sensations which function as the occasion of primary qualities are such that, once they have performed their natural function, they "immediately disappear and are forgot".⁴ Now the effect of this phenomenon, as

¹ Alston, "Reid on Perception and Conception", p. 44.

² "We may see why the sensations belonging to secondary qualities are an object of our attention, while those which belong to the primary are not. ¶ The first are not only signs of the object perceived, but they bear a capital part in the notion we form of it. We conceive it only as that which occasions such a sensation, and therefore cannot reflect upon it without thinking of the sensation which it occasions: We have no other mark whereby to distinguish it. The thought of a secondary quality, therefore, always carries us back to the sensation which it produces. We give the same name to both, and are apt to confound them together." IP, p. 239.

³ "It appears as evident, that this connection between our sensations and the conception and belief of external existences cannot be produced by habit, experience, education, or any principle of human nature that hath been admitted by philosophers." HM, p. 58; "no sensation can give us the conception of material things, far less any argument to prove their existence." IP, p. 235.

⁴ "When a primary quality is perceived, the sensation immediately leads our thought to the quality signified by it, and is itself forgot." IP, p. 240; cf. The sensation "carries my thought immediately to the thing signified by it, and is itself forgot, as if it had never been." IP, p. 228; "the sensations belonging to primary qualities . . . carry the thought to the external object, and immediately disappear and are forgot. Nature intended them only as signs; and when they have served that purpose they vanish." IP, p. 240.

Reid describes it, would, once again, be that, in any act of perception, it would appear to us that external objects are directly presented to our awareness as being shaped, extended and so on. I suggest, therefore, that Reid took it that we also have, by our sensations, conceptual immediacy with respect to the primary qualities.

This concludes my attempt to show how Reid's characterisation of certain conceptions as being "obscure" or "indistinct" might be rendered consistent with his view that a distinct conception is a necessary condition for epistemic justification.

6 THE PREJUDICES

We come now to Reid's third necessary condition for knowledge. Following Bacon, Reid argues that there are four classes of prejudices, or causes of error: *idola tribus*, *idola specus*, *idola fori* and *idola theatri*. I shall argue that each kind of prejudice is a belief that has the following three features: (i) it has 'doxastic immediacy' for us; (ii) it does not have 'epistemic immediacy' for us, and so, is not a self-evident belief; and (iii) it arises by virtue of the inclination of a 'vicious doxastic habit', and so, is such that we are accountable, to some extent, for its formation.

6.1 SELF-EVIDENCE

We begin with Reid's notion of self-evidence. First, Reid identifies at least six "distinct and original kinds of evidence",¹ each of which, he states, "may afford just ground of belief".²

"the evidence of sense, the evidence of memory, the evidence of consciousness, the evidence of testimony, the evidence of axioms, the evidence of reasoning"³

Second, Reid holds that the first five kinds of evidence, in contrast to the evidence of reasoning, are such as give rise to what he calls 'self-evident' beliefs. We may define these as follows: Earlier we identified two kinds of immediacy in Reid's thought, namely, presentational and conceptual immediacy. There are, however, two further kinds of immediacy:⁴

D₄₈ *p* has doxastic immediacy for *S* = *df* *S* believes that *p* at the same time that she forms a distinct conception of *p*.

D₄₉ *p* has epistemic immediacy for *S* = *df* *S* is immediately justified in believing that *p*, that is, *S*'s belief is not justified by virtue of being inferred from some other justified belief (or set of beliefs).

¹ HM, p. 32.

² IP, p. 272.

³ IP, p. 272.

⁴ These formulations are similar to those found in Alston, "Reid on Perception and Conception", p. 36.

Reid's analysis of a self-evident belief, then, may be given as follows:

A₈₅ *p* is self-evident for *S* if and only if *p* has both doxastic and epistemic immediacy for *S*.¹

Likewise, a belief having the evidence of reasoning may be defined in terms of doxastic and epistemic *mediacy*, that is, where:

D₅₀ *p* has doxastic mediacy for *S* =_{df} *S* believes that *p* only when she has formed a distinct conception of both *p* and *q*, and logically inferred *p* from *q*.

D₅₁ *p* has epistemic mediacy for *S* =_{df} *S* is mediately justified in believing that *p*, that is, *S*'s belief is justified by virtue of being logically inferred from some other justified belief (or set of beliefs).²

Thus,

A₈₆ *S*'s belief that *p* has the evidence of reasoning if and only if *p* has both doxastic and epistemic mediacy for *S*.³

6.2 MERE DOXASTIC IMMEDIACY

We shall see that prejudices are propositions that have doxastic, but not epistemic immediacy for us: more concisely, they have 'mere doxastic immediacy' for us. By way of clarification, then, we need to examine Reid's view of how such a phenomenon is possible: that is, how a proposition can have mere doxastic immediacy for us.

First, we need to clarify what is meant by epistemic immediacy. All justified beliefs are, for Reid, only *prima facie* justified. What he means by this is that they are justified only in the absence of undercutters and rebutters, that is, where:

¹ "Self-evident propositions are those which appear evident to every man of sound understanding who apprehends the meaning of them distinctly, and attends to them without prejudice." IP, p. 161; "[Self-evident propositions] are no sooner understood than they are believed. The judgment follows the apprehension of them necessarily, and both are equally the work of nature, and the result of our original powers. There is no searching for evidence, no weighing of arguments; the proposition is not deduced or inferred from another; it has the light of truth in itself, and has no occasion to borrow it from another." IP, p. 555.

² "when we speak of the evidence of reasoning as a particular kind of evidence, it means the evidence of propositions that are inferred by reasoning, from propositions already known and believed. Thus the evidence of the fifth proposition of the first book of EUCLID's Elements consists in this, That it is shown to be the necessary consequence of the axioms, and of the preceding propositions. In all reasoning, there must be one or more premises, and a conclusion drawn from them. And the premises are called the reason why we must believe the conclusion which we see to follow from them." IP, p. 273.

³ "By Knowledge, I think, we mean, Belief upon good Evidence. We know what is self evident, & we know what we can give good Evidence for. But we sometimes believe upon bad Authority or from Prejudice; & such Belief is not called Knowledge. ¶ All knowledge therefore implies belief; but belief does not imply Knowledge. I know what I distinctly perceive by my Senses; I know what I distinctly remember; I know when I am pained; I know that two & three make five. In all these cases the knowledge is immediate. There is no *medium* or proof, but there is belief upon good Evidence." (Letter to Kames, 1 Dec. 1778) Ross, pp. 37-38.

- A₈₇ r is an undercutter for S 's belief that p if and only if a justifying factor for S 's belief that p is q , and not- q is the case.
- A₈₈ q is a rebutter for S 's belief that p if and only if q is the case, and if q is the case, then not- p is the case.¹

Now we might think that a self-evident belief could have no undercutter if q is taken to be that proposition from which the agent infers her belief that p . But of course, a justifying factor, for Reid, need not be a belief. The justifying factors for self-evident beliefs would, for Reid, be (i) certain states of affairs, such as the faculty (or set of faculties) by which S 's belief that p is produced at t functioning properly at t , (ii) S 's having a distinct conception of p , and (iii) S 's attending to p without prejudice. Moreover, Reid, being an externalist, would not suggest that a justifying factor for a self-evident belief is that S believes that any of (i)-(iii) either are or should be in place.

This is not to say that we have no cognitive access to whether or not a proposition has mere doxastic immediacy for us; and, as a consequence, it does not follow that we cannot divest ourselves of such beliefs. For if an agent is aware of the *absence* of any of the factors in (i)-(iii), then, under normal conditions, this will effect the sustenance of his belief. Suppose S forms a perceptual belief that p at t , but, as it turns out:

- (i) he was hallucinating at t .

Now, as we have seen:

- (ii) a perceptual belief is justified only if the faculty by which it is formed is functioning properly at the time.

Hence, (i) and (ii) together constitute an undercutter for his belief that p , whether or not S believes (i) and (ii). But if S does come to believe in (i) and (ii), then, under normal conditions, this will bring it about that he no longer believes that p . For his belief that p would no longer *seem* to him to be grounded upon the evidence of his senses; and so, it would not be within his power to continue believing that p .

To be quite clear about Reid's position here, we need to rule out several claims: First, Reid does not hold that any belief that *seems* to us to be self-evident, is *in fact* so. That is, he rejects the following principle:

- (a) p has epistemic immediacy for S only if p has doxastic immediacy for S .

¹ These analyses are based on the following text: "all mankind have a fixed belief of an external material world, a belief which is neither got by reasoning nor education, and a belief which we cannot shake off, even when we seem to have strong arguments against it [i.e. rebutter], and no shadow of argument for it [either because it is self-evident, or because of an undercutter]." HM, p. 72.

For, as we have seen, Reid argues that not all of those beliefs that we take to be self-evident are instances of genuine first principles. In other words, a proposition will have epistemic immediacy for us only if it satisfies the 'marks' of a first principle. It should be emphasized that this does not, as we have seen, entail that the justification of a self-evident belief comes by way of any inference from our having judged that it satisfies these 'marks'. For, in that case, (i) the belief would not be epistemically immediate; and (ii) the inference would be epistemically circular. Second, Reid does not hold that:

- (b) p has epistemic immediacy for S only if it seems to S that there are no undercutters or rebutters for p .

For, given Reid's externalism, it is quite possible that a person be mistaken about there being an undercutter for her belief and yet, she might be justified nevertheless, a good example of which being those philosophers who purport to be sceptical with regard to their senses. Again, a person might be justified in believing that p on the evidence of her senses, and yet she may not have even thought about whether or not there are any undercutters or rebutters for p . She may not have considered the question of whether or not her belief is justified, or what it would take for her belief to be justified. It might be "the perfection of a rational creature" that she countenance such second-order questions; but if this kind of reflection were required for the justification of her beliefs, she should have perished in her infancy for the lack of it.¹

6.3 EPISTEMIC IMMEDIACY

We have seen, then, that it is possible for a proposition to have mere doxastic immediacy for us. But why should we think that there are any propositions that have epistemic immediacy for us? Reid's response to this question comes by way of two arguments, both of which attempt to show that scepticism with regard to at least some propositions having epistemic *immediacy* for us would be inconsistent with the view that some propositions have epistemic *mediacy* for us.

First, Reid has often been read as claiming that self-evident beliefs (or beliefs in the instances of first principles) are irresistible for us, even in the face of undercutters and rebutters. But precision is crucial here. Reid does not hold that, if p is self-evident for S , then it is not within S 's power to continue to refrain from believing that p , even if seems

¹ "we are merely animal before we are rational creatures; and it is necessary for our preservation, that we should believe many things before we can reason. How then is our belief to be regulated before we have reason to regulate it? has Nature left it to be regulated by chance? By no means. It is regulated by certain principles, which are parts of our constitution" IP, pp. 285-85.

to *S* that there is some undercutter or rebutter for her belief that *p*.¹ For example, suppose, after engaging in an lengthy and intricate philosophical train of reasoning, *S* comes to believe that her faculty of perception cannot be proven trustworthy. Since the evidence of her senses no longer *seems* to her to be evidence, she would refrain from believing in an external world, or at least not of the kind presented to her by her senses. It follows that the resistance of a self-evident belief is, in Reid's view, quite possible. However, Reid also sets down an important rider. A genuine self-evident belief is resistible in just the same sense as swallowing one's food or breathing is resistible. That is to say, just as our resistance of instinctive actions can only be sustained temporarily and in abnormal circumstances, so it is with our resistance of a self-evident belief. Like the inclination of instincts, a self-evident belief will soon reassert itself, either when normal circumstances resume, or when the agent is forced to decide between his continued resistance and his preservation or well-being.²

Now the example we have given above, of an agent resisting the evidence of her senses, is especially interesting. For her reasoning is based upon the following principle:

A₈₉ *S* is justified in believing that *p* if and only if *p* has epistemic mediacy for *S*.

Take, for instance, our belief in an external world. A₈₉ requires the following: (i) we must find some proposition (or set of propositions) *p*, such that we have a distinct conception of *p*, and our belief that *p* is justified; and (ii) we must construct a sound argument, the premise of which is *p* and the conclusion, that there is an external world. However, suppose we discover that the only propositions that do not beg the question, and which satisfy condition (i), are those that describe our sensations. There are two problems here. First, no one, Reid would argue, has ever provided a sound deductive or inductive inference from sensations to an external world. But then, it follows from A₈₉ that we are not justified in believing in an external world. The second problem is

¹ As Michaud seems to think: "Reid says that [first principles] are judgments of nature, original principles of belief, that reason can neither give birth to them nor destroy them. . . . it is somewhat embarrassing that such strong and irresistible principles could ever be challenged, even by lunatics if not by sceptics." Y. Michaud, "Reid's Attack on the Theory of Ideas", in M. Dalgarno and E. Matthews, eds. *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid* (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, PSS 42, 1989): p. 16.

² "My belief is carried along by perception, as irresistibly as my body by the earth. And the greatest sceptic will find himself to be in the same condition. He may struggle hard to disbelieve the informations of his senses, as a man does to swim against a torrent; but ah! it is in vain. It is in vain that he strains every nerve, and wrestles with nature, and with every object that strikes upon his senses. For after all, when his strength is spent in the fruitless attempt, he will be carried down the torrent with the common herd of believers." HM, p. 164; "when they condescend to mingle again with the human race, and to converse with a friend, a companion, or a fellow-citizen, the ideal system vanishes; common sense, like an irresistible torrent, carries them along; and, in spite of all their reasoning and philosophy, they believe their own existence, and the existence of other things." HM, p. 33.

that our belief in the external world has doxastic immediacy for us: that is, as soon as we find ourselves within a normal environment, we cannot help but immediately form beliefs in the existence of external objects.¹

Suppose we argued that, even though we cannot divest ourselves of our belief in an external world, such a belief is nevertheless unjustified: for, by A_{89} , no belief is justified unless it is formed on the evidence of reasoning.² Reid would say that this reply is patently inconsistent. No belief can be formed unless it seems to the agent that there is evidence for that belief. The instant that it seems to S that she has insufficient evidence for p , is the instant that she will no longer believe that p . But if this is so, it must follow that, despite our apparent adherence to A_{89} , it must seem to us that we have evidence for our belief in the existence of external objects: otherwise we would not form such beliefs. But since this evidence could not be the evidence of reasoning, it must be a self-evident belief. In short, those who find they cannot resist the evidence of their senses, and yet continue to accept A_{89} are so far forth inconsistent. They must believe either that there is no external world, or that A_{89} is false. But since no one can sustain the former belief, they must, on pain of inconsistency, accept the latter.³

6.4 FOUNDATIONALISM

Reid's second argument for the existence of propositions that have epistemic immediacy for us is this: either there are some beliefs that are immediately justified, or there will turn out to be a circularity of justification or an infinite regress of justification, in which case no beliefs are justified. But the only beliefs that might count as being immediately justified are those that are self-evident: that is, propositions that have both doxastic and epistemic immediacy for us. Hence, if we are to have any justified beliefs some propositions must have epistemic immediacy for us.⁴

¹ "Many eminent Philosophers thinking it unreasonable to believe, when they could not show a reason, have laboured to furnish us with reasons for believing our senses; but their reasons are very insufficient, and will not bear examination. Other Philosophers have shewn very clearly the fallacy of these reasons, and have, as they imagine, discovered invincible reasons against this belief; but they have never been able either to shake it in themselves, or to convince others." IP, pp. 273-74.

² This, Reid thought, was Hume's solution: "Our author indeed was aware, that neither his scepticism, nor that of any other person, was able to endure this trial, and therefore enters a caveat against it. . . . 'all our reasonings concerning causes and effects, are derived from nothing but custom, and that belief is more properly an act of the sensitive than of the cogitative part of our nature'." IP, pp. 710-11; cf. "There is nothing so shameful in a philosopher as to be deceived and deluded; and therefore you ought to resolve firmly to withhold assent, and to throw off this belief of external objects, which may be all delusion." HM, p. 164.

³ "All we would ask of this kind of Sceptic is, that he would be uniform and consistent, and that his practice in life do not belie his profession of scepticism with regard to the fidelity of his faculties: For the want of faith, as well as faith itself, is best shown by works. If a Sceptic avoid the fire as much as those who believe it dangerous to go into it, we can hardly avoid thinking his scepticism to be feigned, and not real." IP, p. 710.

⁴ Cf. W. P. Alston, "Two Types of Foundationalism", in *Epistemic Justification* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989): p. 19.

In more detail, Reid takes “just reasoning” to be a process whereby a person takes propositions she believes and connects them together into a sequence in such a way that, for each proposition p in the sequence, there is some proposition (or set of propositions) earlier in the sequence that constitutes “just ground” for S 's belief that p .¹ However, as Reid notes, such a process cannot continue backwards indefinitely. Take “synthetical reasoning”: we take a proposition (or set of propositions) p and deduce from p another proposition q and from that r , and so on “in a connected chain untill we come to the conclusion which is the end of our Reasoning”.² If our belief in the conclusion is to be justified, then the belief that p must be justified. But if the belief that p is justified by being based on other justified beliefs, each of which are themselves likewise justified, an infinite regress results. Again, take “analytical reasoning”: if a person examines upon what evidence a proposition immediately rests, he will find either that it is supported by no other proposition, or that “it rests upon one or more propositions that support it”. If the latter, then:

“The same thing may be said of the propositions that support it; and of those that support them, as far back as we can go. But we cannot go back in this track to infinity. Where then must this analysis stop? It is evident that it must stop only when we come to propositions, which support all that are built upon them, but are themselves supported by none”.³

Reid does not, unfortunately, tell us precisely why he thought an infinite regress would prevent justification;⁴ nor does he mention, in this context, the problem of circular justification. He does, however, state elsewhere that “reasoning in a circle proves nothing”,⁵ and we have seen this manifested in his rejection of epistemic circularity. But Reid clearly did hold that the only way to terminate the regress, and so provide justification, would be if there were some beliefs that are justified by something other than being grounded upon other justified beliefs. In other words, either some beliefs are immediately justified or no beliefs are mediately justified. Now beliefs that have doxastic immediacy for us are the only candidates for immediate justification. Hence, if we think that some propositions have epistemic mediacy for us, then we must also accept that at least some propositions have epistemic immediacy for us: that is to say, some beliefs must be self-evident.⁶

¹ Cf. Pollock, p. 47.

² MS 4/1/8a, 4

³ IP, p. 558; “we trace things backward untill we come to premises that are not founded upon any antecedent truth but upon our constitution” MS 4/1/8a, 4.

⁴ See P. K. Moser, *Empirical Justification* (Holland: D. Reidel, 1985).

⁵ IP, p. 605.

⁶ “without first principles, analytical reasoning could have no end, and synthetical reasoning could have

6.5 DOXASTIC INSTINCTS

We have one more element to examine before we proceed to Reid's account of the prejudices. We have suggested that the error of each kind of prejudice, arises just because a person takes a proposition that has doxastic immediacy for them also to have epistemic immediacy for them. Now Reid took there to be two kinds beliefs that have doxastic immediacy for us: those that arise by what I shall call 'doxastic instincts', and those that are formed upon the inclination of what I shall call 'doxastic habits'. I shall argue, then, that all four kinds prejudices arise by way of the exertion of our voluntary intellectual powers to form beliefs upon insufficient evidence with a frequency sufficient to form a 'vicious doxastic habit'. To reach this conclusion, however, we must first articulate Reid's notion of a doxastic instinct.

First, we have seen that Reid distinguished between instinctive actions that occur only in infancy or early childhood, and those that occur in adulthood. There is a similar distinction he makes with regard to beliefs that are regulated by constitutional rules, or the first principles. Some are present from infancy, others continue into adulthood. Thus I shall use the phrase 'doxastic infant-instincts' to denote the former, and 'doxastic instincts', the latter:

- A₉₀ *S* has the doxastic infant-instinct *I* to form or sustain belief *B* if and only if (i) *S* is inclined by *I* toward forming or sustaining *B*, (ii) *B* is not an object of *S*'s will, (iii) *B* is indirectly necessary for her preservation or well-being, (iv) *S*'s intellectual development is such that (a) *S* could not yet have discovered that *B* is indirectly necessary for her preservation or well-being, (b) *S* could not yet have confirmed *B*, (v) the agent could not have learned or otherwise acquired the habit of forming or sustaining *B*.
- A₉₁ *S* has the doxastic instinct *I* to form or sustain belief *B* if and only if (i) *S* is inclined by *I* toward forming or sustaining *B* (ii) *B* is not an object of *S*'s will, (iii) *B* is indirectly necessary for her preservation or well-being, (iv) *S*'s intellectual capacity is such that (a) *S* can discover that *B* is indirectly necessary for her preservation or well-being, (b) *S* may confirm *B*; (v) the agent could not have learned or otherwise acquired the habit of forming or sustaining *B*.

no beginning; and that every conclusion got by reasoning must rest with its whole weight upon first principles, as the building does upon its foundation." IP, p. 407. "if there were not first principles of belief for which no reason can be given, which are not acquired but natural original and constitutional, Synthetical reasoning could have no beginning, no bottom or foundation to rest upon; it would be merely hypothetical; and on the other hand analytical Reasoning would have no end nor could ever be brought to an issue. . . . There must therefore in all other Sciences, as well as Mathematicks, be Axioms into which all our reasonings in that science are resolved". MS 4/1/8a, 4.

Several comments on these analyses are in order: first, with respect to (iii), Reid appears to hold that beliefs are not *directly* necessary for an agent's preservation or well-being: for, as immanent acts of the mind, they have no effect beyond their own exertion. However, every action that *is* directly necessary for an agent's preservation or health, presupposes a certain belief in the agent: the action would not be performed unless the agent held the appropriate belief. It is in this sense, then, that a belief is said to be *indirectly* necessary for an agent's preservation or well-being.

Second, with respect to (iv) (b), Reid appears to suggest that, in adulthood, we may confirm the epistemic credibility of beliefs that seem to us to be self-evident, either on theological or inductive grounds:¹

"He who is persuaded that he is the workmanship of God, and that it is a part of his constitution to believe his senses, may think that a good reason to confirm his belief: But he had the belief before he could give this or any other reason for it."²

"The credit we give to [the testimony of our senses] is at first the effect of instinct only. When we grow up, and begin to reason about [it], . . . the credit given to the testimony of our senses, is established and confirmed by the uniformity and constancy of the laws of Nature."³

However, this act of confirmation must be understood with great care. Given Reid's rejection of epistemic circularity, any such confirmation must proceed by an internal or reflexive evaluation: for example, we might think that the "uniformity and constancy" of the relation we have found to exist between the presence of certain material objects and our having certain sensations and beliefs, is confirmation that the evidence of our

¹ This view is very similar to that found in Alston's epistemology of 'doxastic practices': "(1) By engaging in SP [i.e. the doxastic practice of sense-perception] and allied memory and inferential practices we are enabled to make predictions many of which turn out to be correct and thereby we are able to anticipate and, to some considerable extent, control the course of events. (2) By relying on SP and associated practices we are able to establish facts about the operation of sense perception that show both that it is a reliable source of belief and why it is reliable. Our scientific account of perceptual processes shows how it is that sense experience serves as a sensitive indicator of certain kinds of facts about the environment of the perceiver." W. P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991): p. 173.

² IP, p. 275: "if we believe that there is a wise and good Author of nature, we may see a good reason, why he should continue the same laws of nature, and the same connections of things, for a long time: because, if he did otherwise, we could learn nothing from what is past, and all our experience would be of no use to us. But though this consideration, when we come to the use of reason, may confirm our belief of the continuance of the present course of nature, it is certain that it did not give rise to this belief; for children and idiots have this belief as soon as they know that fire will burn them. It must therefore be the effect of instinct, not of reason." HM, p. 191; "This is one of those principles, which, when we grow up and observe the course of nature, we can confirm by reasoning. We perceive that Nature is governed by fixed laws, and that if it were not so, there could be no such thing as prudence in human conduct; there would be no fitness in any means to promote an end; and what, on one occasion, promoted it, might as probably, on another occasion, obstruct it. ¶ But the principle is necessary for us before we are able to discover it by reasoning, and therefore is made a part of our constitution, and produces its effects before the use of reason." IP, p. 603.

³ HM, p. 166.

senses is a just ground of belief: that is, the instinct by which we form perceptual beliefs is, on the whole, reliable. But, of course, we must trust the deliverances of this very instinct to establish the uniformity of this relation.

So why should we take this kind of confirmation at all seriously? One good reason is that we can easily imagine a world in which we found things to be very different. We might, for instance, have found that the majority of our instinctive perceptual beliefs are either inconsistent with one another, or with the output of some other faculty of mind.¹ However, we do not find that this is the case in our world. The inconsistencies or errors that appear to be the product of our senses may be explained by reference either to (i) our having drawn “rash” conclusions from our immediate or original perceptual beliefs, whether explicitly or by the more immediate process of acquired perception,² or (ii) to cognitive malfunctioning, an inappropriate cognitive environment, and so on.

Now there is a possible objection to this account of confirmation. The detection of inconsistency can only be achieved by the exertion of our faculty of reason; but then it would seem that we may confirm the reliability of our faculty of perception without employing that faculty itself. In short, the act of confirmation would appear not to involve any epistemic circularity, unless, of course, it is the faculty of reasoning we are seeking thereby to confirm.

However, whilst we may conclude that certain propositions p and q are inconsistent, we cannot then go on to infer that the source of our beliefs in p and q (say, the faculty of perception) is unreliable unless we are justified in believing the following propositions: (a) our faculty of reasoning is reliable; (b) p and q are the deliverances of our faculty of perception; (c) our memory of (a), (b) and the deliverance of our faculty of reasoning with respect to the inconsistency of p and q (and so forth) is reliable. But, with respect to (a), there is no non-circular confirmation available for the deliverances of the faculty of reasoning; again, we can only know (b) by the faculty of consciousness. But there is no non-circular confirmation available for the deliverances of either of these faculties; and of course the same will be true for (c) with respect to the faculty of memory.³

¹ Cf. “If two perceptual beliefs contradict each other, at least one is false. The existence of even one pair is sufficient to show that SP is not perfectly reliable. A large number of pairs, relative to the total output, would show that SP is not sufficiently reliable to be source of justification for the beliefs it generates and hence that it is not rational to engage in it, or would not be rational if we had a choice in the matter.” (p. 170.); “a massive and persistent inconsistency between the outputs of two practices is a good reason for regarding at least one of them to be unreliable.” (p. 171) Alston, *Perceiving God*.

² IP, p. 291ff.

³ “it seems to have been a common error of Philosophers to account the senses fallacious. And to this error they have added another, that one use of reason is to detect the fallacies of sense. ¶ It appears, I think, from what has been said, that there is no more reason to account our senses fallacious, than our reason, our memory, or any other faculty of judging which Nature hath given us. They are all limited and imperfect; but

The difference between infant and adulthood instinctive beliefs, is, then, merely that adults normally have the capacity to engage in an internal, reflexive evaluation of their doxastic instincts; and thereby, to determine the laws of nature according to which they operate, and the ends for which these instincts are necessary means. But this kind of evaluation *cannot* demonstrate the epistemic reliability of those faculties.¹ At best, its conclusions can serve only to contribute to the rationality of the trust we cannot help but place in the reliability of our faculties.²

Third, with respect to (v), in the two analyses above, we have seen that some instinctive actions are such that the ability to perform them could only be the result of a process of education, imitation, reasoning and extensive practice leading to the formation of a habit; but since no such process either has or could have occurred, the action must therefore be instinctive. Now we have also seen Reid argue that some beliefs are such that, under normal circumstances, we might have expected them to arise only as a result of extensive deliberation or reasoning. But no such process either has or could have occurred; hence, her belief must be instinctive.

We may be more precise, however. Earlier we saw that there are three kinds of instinctive actions, each of which has a particular function or end for which it was designed. I suggest there are, in Reid, three kinds of instinctive beliefs individuated by the same analyses we gave for instinctive actions. The first kind of instinctive belief is designed to enable the agent to form beliefs that (i) she could otherwise form as a result of exerting a voluntary intellectual power, namely, deliberation, and which are (ii) required for her preservation, but which (iii) she cannot in fact form without first performing an act of deliberation that is of such complexity, that no human agent could make it an object of her will.

The second kind of instinctive belief is designed to enable the agent to form beliefs with a frequency that is required for her preservation or health, but which, if she had to take the time and effort required to will such beliefs, then she would not be able to form any other belief. Reid gives, as an example that captures both of these kinds of beliefs, our belief that the attributes we perceive belong to bodily substance:

wisely suited to the present condition of man. We are liable to error and wrong judgment in the use of them all; but as little in the informations of sense as in the deductions of reasoning." IP, p. 301. Cf. Alston, *Perceiving God*, p. 176-77.

¹ "the truth and fidelity of our faculties can never be proved by reasoning; and therefore our belief of it cannot be founded on reasoning." IP, pp. 711-12.

² Alston takes this kind of confirmation "to function as a way of strengthening the prima facie claim of a doxastic practice to a kind of practical rationality, rather than as something that confers probability on a claim to reliability." Alston, *Perceiving God*, p. 174.

“Sensible qualities make so great a part of the furniture of our minds, their kinds are so many, and their number so great, that if prejudice, and not nature, teach us to ascribe them all to a subject, it must have a great work to perform, which cannot be accomplished in a short time, nor carried on to the same pitch in every individual. We should find not individuals only, but nations and ages, differing from each other in the progress which this prejudice had made in their sentiments; but we find no such difference among men. What one man accounts a quality, all men do, and ever did.”¹

The third kind of instinctive belief is designed to enable the agent to form beliefs with a speed or immediacy that is required for her preservation or health, but which, if she were to take the time necessary both to determine that she must form that belief, and will to form it, she would not be able to do so with the immediacy required. For example, take the instinctive belief that all fire burns. Now children normally form this belief upon having only one instance of experiencing the burning sensation occasioned by fire. But, clearly, while no inductive argument would justify such a conclusion, if the child were to take the time and effort required to construct such an argument, based upon numerous experiences of being burnt by fire, before she consented to the general proposition that fire burns, the probability of her survival or health would decrease significantly.²

6.6 DOXASTIC HABITS

As we stated earlier, Reid holds that some propositions that have doxastic immediacy for us, arise by way of what I call ‘doxastic habits’. There are two kinds of doxastic habits: namely, imitative-habits and general-habits. Reid’s definition of ‘instinctive imitation’, applied to belief, runs as follows:

D₅₂ Instinctive imitation = *af* the formation of the belief that *p* in circumstance *C* toward which an agent is inclined by her observation of the frequent expression of the belief that *p* in *C* by some person or group of persons, and which is not an object of her own deliberation with respect to *p*.

Now, as with habits of action, if an agent were to be inclined by a doxastic instinct toward imitating the beliefs of others merely once or twice in her lifetime, then she would not acquire an doxastic imitative-habit of forming the same kind of belief.

¹ IP, p. 258.

² “Thus, a child who has once burnt his finger, by putting it in the flame of one candle, expects the same event if he puts it in the flame of another candle, or in any flame, and is thereby led to think that the quality of burning belongs to all flame. This instinctive induction is not justified by the rules of logic, and it sometimes leads men into harmless mistakes, which experience may afterwards correct; but it preserves us from destruction in innumerable dangers to which we are exposed.” IP, p. 457.

However, if her instinctive imitation is a frequent occurrence, then, eventually, she would acquire a doxastic imitative-habit. Henceforth, her judgments would be inclined by the doxastic imitative-habit, rather than her previous instinct to imitate. Thus:

A₉₂ *S* has the doxastic imitative-habit *H* of believing that *p* in circumstance *C* if and only if (i) *H* inclines *S* toward the belief that *p* in *C* without the exertion of will, and (ii) *S* was inclined by instinct toward imitating the belief that *p* made by other persons in *C* to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of *H*.

The formation of a doxastic general-habit requires that the agent consistently form the same kind of judgment in the same kind of circumstances; and this may well be the consequence of a general fixed purpose to exert her voluntary powers of deliberation and attention so as to bring it about that her judgment remains of the same kind with respect to a certain subject domain. This result may be achieved by either (i) failing to attend to or deliberate about any new evidence, such as might constitute an undercutter or rebutter for her belief; or by (ii) failing to attend to or deliberate about the original evidence upon which the agent first formed her belief, and which produced the general fixed purpose to judge likewise at any time in the future, that is, beyond the recollection that the evidence seemed to be sufficient at the time. This kind of doxastic habit, whereby a general fixed purpose produces a doxastic general-habit, Reid calls a “habit of the understanding”.¹ Thus:

A₉₃ *S* has the doxastic general-habit *H* of believing that *p* in circumstance *C* if and only if (i) *H* inclines *S* toward believing that *p* in *C* without the exertion of either her own deliberation or attention, and (ii) *S* was inclined by some general fixed purpose toward believing that *p* in *C* to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of *H*.

6.7 VICIOUS DOXASTIC GENERAL-HABITS

It follows from this account, that an agent may be held *directly* accountable for the acquisition of a doxastic general-habit, and *indirectly* accountable for those beliefs toward which she is inclined by that general-habit. Moreover, she may be blameworthy

¹ “When a man is come to years of understanding, from his education, from his company, or from his study, he forms to himself a set of general principles, a creed, which governs his judgment in particular points that occur. ¶ If new evidence is laid before him which tends to overthrow any of his received principles, it requires in him a great degree of candour and love of truth, to give it an impartial examination, and to form a new judgment. Most men, when they are fixed in their principles, upon what they account sufficient evidence, can hardly be drawn into a new and serious examination of them. ¶ They get a habit of believing them, which is strengthened by repeated acts, and remains immovable, even when the evidence upon which their belief was at first grounded, is forgot. . . . [This] may be called . . . a habit of the *understanding*. By such habits chiefly, men are governed in their opinions” AP, p. 91

or praiseworthy for the kind of doxastic general-habits that she has acquired. For the acquisition of a doxastic general-habit involves the exertion of the voluntary operations of deliberation and attention; and, as we have seen, there are certain obligations attached to these intellectual obligations. More precisely:

A₉₄ *S* will acquire a virtuous doxastic general-habit *A* with respect to believing that *p* in circumstances *C* if and only if (i) *S* has a general fixed purpose *P* to regulate her acts of deliberation and attention with respect to believing that *p* in *C* according to the obligations attached, and (ii) *S* adheres to *P* to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of *A*.

An agent may also acquire a vicious or blameworthy doxastic general-habit by the consistent failure to resist adhering to the obligations that attach to attention or deliberation, thus producing a circumstance- or state-irresistible inclination to resist these obligations, which in turn will tend to incline an agent to do so to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of a vicious doxastic general-habit:

A₉₅ *S* will acquire a vicious doxastic general-habit *A* with respect to believing that *p* in circumstances *C* if and only if either (i) *S* has a general fixed purpose *P* to regulate her acts of deliberation and attention with respect to believing that *p* in *C* according to the obligations attached, and *S* fails to adhere to *P* to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of *A*; or (ii) *S* merely violates the obligations of deliberation and attention with respect to believing that *p* in *C* to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of *A*.

Now I suggest that this analysis of vicious doxastic general-habits captures precisely the intent of Reid's account of the prejudices. Take the prejudices of *idola specus*: Reid states that these arise from "the particular way in which a man has been trained, from his being addicted to some particular profession, or from something particular in the turn of his mind".¹ Put in our terms, a person's judgment may be erroneous just because, over time, his domain of interest or expertise has been such as to bring it about that he violates the obligations of deliberation and attention with respect to certain kinds of beliefs in certain circumstances to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of a vicious doxastic general-habit. For example, it is an obligation of deliberation that an agent does what is within her power to identify the arguments for and against some proposition *p*, and give equal consideration to each. But if the agent has confined his attention to the subject domain of her profession, it is likely that, if *p* lies outside of that

¹ IP, p. 665.

domain, she will identify arguments for and against p that arise from within the domain and which may therefore be irrelevant to the truth of p . For example:

“The mere Mathematician is apt to apply measure and calculation to things which do not admit of it. Direct and inverse ratios have been applied by an ingenious author to measure human affections, and the moral worth of actions.”¹

Again, a good example of vicious doxastic general-habits that arise from instinctive imitation is the set of prejudices that fall under Reid’s *idola theatri*: that is, prejudices that arise from the agent’s being exposed to or trained in a “false system” or “sect”, thus producing a habit of forming beliefs according to or consistent with the tenets of that system. That is, a person’s belief that p in C may be erroneous just because she has formed that belief by instinctively imitating the manner in which her immediate culture or peer group forms beliefs of that kind; and this has been such as to bring it about that she violates the obligations of deliberation and attention with respect to the belief that p in C to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of a vicious doxastic general-habit.²

Finally, most doxastic instincts, Reid suggests, are such that the application of deliberation and attention is eventually required, so as to modify or correct its deliverances. The failure to do so, results in the class of prejudices he calls *idola tribus* and *idola fori*. For example, we have a doxastic infant-instinct “to receive implicitly what we are taught”³. However, this instinct must, as we mature, be modified so as to take account of the prevalence of dishonesty and falsehood.⁴

Unfortunately, through laziness or indifference to truth we may fail to exert our powers of deliberation and attention, so as to judge for ourselves the weight we should give to authority; and instead, persist in adhering to the deliverances of this infant-instinct. The result is that we are likely to form a doxastic instinctive-habit, the deliverances of which are erroneous.⁵

¹ IP, p. 665.

² “A false system once fixed in the mind, becomes, as it were, the medium through which we see objects: They receive a tincture from it, and appear of another colour than when seen by a pure light. . . . A certain complexion of understanding may dispose a man to one system of opinions more than to another; and, on the other hand, a system of opinions, fixed in the mind by education or otherwise, gives that complexion to the understanding which is suited to them.” IP, p. 669.

³ IP, p. 653.

⁴ “In all matters belonging to our cognisance, every man must be determined by his own final judgment, otherwise he does not act the part of a rational being. Authority may add weight to one scale; but the man holds the balance, and judges what weight he ought to allow to authority.” IP, p. 653.

⁵ “As there are persons in the world . . . who may be called mere beggars with regard to their opinions. Through laziness and indifference about truth, they leave to others the drudgery of digging for this commodity; they can have enough at second hand to serve their occasions. Their concern is not to know what is true, but what is said and thought on such subjects; and their understanding, like their clothes, is cut according to the fashion. ¶ This distemper of the understanding has taken so deep root in a great part of

6.8 OVERCOMING PREJUDICES

We have seen that there are several ways in which the agent may exercise the power of self-government over her instincts and habits. I suggest that these apply straightforwardly to doxastic instincts and habits. First, as we have seen, the inclination of an instinct or habit may, on any single occasion, be *resisted* by the exertion of will. By constant resistance, however, the agent may acquire an 'opposing-habit', and thus eliminate the doxastic instinct or habit in question. More precisely, where:

- A₉₆ A is an opposing-doxastic habit with respect to some doxastic instinct or habit B for agent S if and only if (i) A inclines S toward believing that *p* in circumstance C, (ii) B inclines S toward believing that *q* in C (iii), since *p* and *q* are incompatible, S cannot believe both *p* and *q* in C at the same time.

and where:

- A₉₇ S may acquire an opposing-doxastic habit A with respect to some doxastic instinct or habit of belief B if and only if S exerts her will to resist the inclination of B to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of A;

Reid would hold that:

- A₉₈ S can eliminate some doxastic instinct or habit B if and only if S acquires an opposing-doxastic habit with respect to B.

This concludes my account of Reid's three necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for that degree of epistemic justification which constitutes knowledge.

mankind, that it can hardly be said that they use their own judgment in things that do not concern their temporal interest; nor is it peculiar to the ignorant; it infects all ranks. We may guess their opinions when we know where they were born, of what parents, how educated, and what company they have kept. These circumstances determine their opinions in religion, in politics, and in philosophy." IP, pp. 654-55.

Conclusion

The aim of this conclusion is to present the key findings of the forgoing reconstruction of Reid's epistemology, and to exhibit thereby its overall structure and coherence.

1. MIND

The subject of knowledge is a substance, which we call 'mind', of which our conception is *merely* relative: that is, upon obtaining a direct conception of our intellectual operations, we immediately judge that they cannot exist without a subject to which they belong as attributes. Of this subject, we know only that it is that without which the operations cannot exist. It can, however, exist apart from the existence of this or that individual operation: for these are accidental rather than essential attributes of mind. It is this feature that explains how it is possible for the mind to exist as a constant entity throughout the continuous succession of its operations.

That the mind exists continuously over time is self-evident for us: upon the remembrance of an event, we form the self-evident belief that we have had a continued existence since the time of that event, and were thus the subject of all the operations of which we were conscious in the intervening duration. It is also self-evident for us that no individual operation can be the attribute of more than one mind, and that anything that is not an attribute of a mind is external to it.

2. AGENCY

Our conception of any cause in nature is likewise *merely* relative: upon forming a distinct conception of an event, we immediately judge that there must be some efficient cause such that the event in question *E* is the effect of that cause. However, we have no grounds for thinking that any antecedent condition is such that *E* would not have occurred in its absence, and so we cannot identify it as being the cause of *E*. All we know of the cause, then, is that it bears the relation 'being the cause of' to *E*. Nevertheless, within a theistic metaphysic, scientific explanations may afford rational ground for predicting the occurrence of phenomena, that is, where those grounds consist of antecedent conditions and the relevant laws of nature.

Scientific explanations, however, are not to be confused with causal or teleological explanations. The causal explanation for some event in nature *E* is that God's judgment regarding what is best upon the whole inclined him toward the exertion of his power of liberty so as to bring about a determination of the will to act according to the rule: if, at any future time or place, certain antecedent conditions occur, then bring about *E*. More generally, the only causes are agent-causes, whether created agents or the Divine

Agent. Teleological explanations are, in Reid's view, self-evident for us: our knowledge that some event *E* was brought about by the design and purpose of an agent *C* arises just in case we have a direct conception of *E*, we do not have a direct conception of the design and purpose of *C* and, upon attending to *E*, we immediately judge that *E* must have been brought about by the design and purpose of *C*.

An agent is free with respect to the production of an effect *E* by the exertion of an active power if and only if the determination of her will to bring about *E* is itself brought about by the exertion of her power of liberty: that is, where the exertion of the power of liberty is a basic act that enables the agent to bring about or not to bring about a particular determination of the will. Having the power of liberty over the determinations of the will is not sufficient for moral liberty however: the agent must be inclined toward the exertion of that power by a rational principle: that is, that principle of action the inclination of which involves the exertion of the agent's judgment that one determination of the will is preferable to another, given that the willed action will tend to satisfy the ends of either prudence or duty.

3. PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

An agent is morally obligated to perform some action only if she has moral liberty over the determination of her will to bring about that action and she is not culpably ignorant of this obligation. An agent is morally praiseworthy (or blameworthy) in performing an action just when she judges that she ought to perform it (or not to perform it).

Two conditions must be satisfied if moral blameworthiness is to be properly ascribed to an agent on account of his failure to resist some animal principle (an appetite, affection, or passion) that is opposed to a rational principle: the agent must have judged that he ought to resist the animal principle; and the inclination of the animal principle must be within the agent's power to resist. With regard to the second condition, no animal principle is either naturally or culpably irresistible. Hence, there is no animal principle opposed to a rational principle that an agent is not morally obliged to resist. However, there are degrees to which an animal principle is resistible or culpably irresistible for an agent; and thus moral praise- and blameworthiness are to be ascribed in due proportion.

Not all animal principles ought to be resisted; some will concur with or be indifferent to the rational principles. The purpose of both animal and rational principles is to incline us toward willing acts that are conducive to our preservation and well-being. Both kinds of principle are required due to cases in which one is absent or dysfunctional, and so the other must operate independently; and where one cannot perform its function successfully or optimally without the modification or concurrence of the other.

Every agent has a set of general fixed purposes: that is, determinations of the agent's will to regulate her future actions by certain general rules, to the effect that if, at any future time or place in which certain circumstances occur, she will perform a certain action so as to bring about some general end. Three moral obligations are attached to general fixed purposes: first, such a purpose is to be formed just in case the agent judges that any action performed in accordance with that purpose would be the best and most approvable action; second, if the agent forms a general fixed purpose at a certain time, then she ought to act according to that purpose at any future time; third, if the agent encounters good evidence that acting according to a purpose she has already formed would not result in the best and most approvable action, then she ought to alter or retract that purpose.

An agent's character is constituted by the kind of general fixed purposes he has, and by whether or not his general fixed purposes satisfy the moral obligations that attach to such purposes. If the agent exerts his liberty over that determination of the will which would regulate his future actions according to what he judges to be his duty or what is prudent, then his character is properly evaluated as both 'wise' and 'good'. Again, if the agent intermittently fails to act according to his general fixed purposes, his character is properly evaluated as 'fickle' or 'inconstant'. Thus we may explain why an agent is, in any instance, motivated by duty rather than, say, immediate gratification by reference to his general fixed purposes. However, the only explanation available for the kind of general fixed purposes that an agent has, is by reference to the exertion of his moral liberty.

Mechanical principles may be distinguished into instincts and habits. Instincts incline an agent toward the performance of an action in certain circumstances, without the exertion of his will or judgment, and which is present in him at birth. There are two kinds of instincts: those that function only in infancy, and those that continue to operate in adulthood. With regard to the former, an infant has the instinct to perform a certain action ϕ in certain circumstances C just when the following conditions are satisfied: first, she must be inclined by that instinct toward performing ϕ in C ; second, ϕ must not be an object of her will or judgment; third, performing ϕ in C must be necessary for her preservation or health; fourth, the agent's intellectual development must be such that she could not yet have discovered that performing ϕ in C is necessary for her preservation or health, nor could she have yet have learned or otherwise acquired the habit of performing ϕ in C . For instincts that continue into adulthood, only the fourth condition is altered: the agent's intellectual capacity must be such that she *can* discover that performing ϕ in C is necessary for her preservation or health, and she cannot, *at any time*, learn or otherwise acquire the habit of performing that ϕ in C .

A habit is a principle of action which inclines an agent toward the performance of some action ϕ in certain circumstances C , without the exertion of her will or judgment, and which is acquired by his frequent performance of ϕ in C . There are two kinds of habits. An imitative-habit arises just when the agent is inclined by instinct to imitate the performance of ϕ in C , and she does so to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of a habit: that is, she is now inclined by habit, rather than instinct, to perform ϕ in C . A general-habit habit arises just when the agent is inclined by some principle of action (other than the instinct to imitate) to perform ϕ in C to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of that habit.

Actions that are inclined by a habit are not directly voluntary; however the actions that must be performed with a frequency sufficient to acquire a habit, generally, are subject to the agent's will. Hence, in this indirect way, habits are morally evaluable. Thus an agent may acquire a virtuous habit just when she has a determination of the will to regulate her future actions according to the rules of duty or prudence, and she adheres to this determination to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of the habit in question. Again, she may acquire a vicious habit where she fails to yield to the inclinations of some rational principle to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of that habit. Finally, it is within the agent's power to eliminate vicious or virtuous habits, that is, by exerting her will to resist the inclination of that habit to a frequency sufficient for acquiring an opposing-habit.

4. JUDGMENT

Reid holds that a person judges or believes something just when he conceives of and mentally affirms it with a certain degree of strength or firmness, and that the object of belief is not a declarative sentence, but rather the meaning of that sentence. This view of belief is explicated by reference to Reid's adverbialist theory of the operations of mind and his referential theory of meaning.

The grammatical predicates of propositions describing operations which fail to have an object merely characterise the *kind* or *mode* of operation thereby attributed to the subject of those operations. For propositions describing operations that do have an object, the grammatical predicates both characterise the mode of operation *and* pick out the object of that operation. For example, in the sentence 'I have a conception of a centaur', the term 'centaur' picks out both the mode of conceiving and the object of that conception. Thus, a person believes that London is the capital of England just in case (i) the object of her belief is London's-being-the-capital-of-England, (ii) she conceives of London in a London's-being-the-capital-of-England way, and (ii) this act of conceiving is accompanied by a mental affirmation that is expressible by the declarative sentence:

'London is the capital of England'. On this account, the operation of conceiving and believing do not produce anything beyond themselves, nor does it entail or require that the object of conception or belief is a mental representation. A belief would be false, not due to some misrepresenting image in the mind, but rather due to the manner or mode of conception failing to agree with the object of that belief.

This adverbialist approach will not, by itself, fail to avoid a sceptical outcome, since any mode of conception might, for all we know, be unreliable or dysfunctional. It must, in other words, be accompanied by a suitable externalist theory of knowledge. Even so, the adverbialist account of the operations of the mind is epistemically superior to a representational account such as Idealism inasmuch as it does not *entail* scepticism.

The meaning of a word, in Reid's view, is to be identified with its extension. The meanings of general terms are their corresponding universals (or sets of universals), that is, where universals are characterised as follows: first, a universal may be distinctly conceived by any intelligent being even if there were no instances of it; second, universals are the exemplars or models according to which God created every individual thing; third, each universal is entire in its instances without being multiplied or divided; fourth, each universal is eternal, immutable, and uncreated; and finally, each universal is the object of God's conception. This account avoids the problem of terms that are not synonymous being co-extensive. For suppose the universals corresponding to non-synonymous general terms are actualised and the world is such that their instances coincide. Under this account, these terms would fail to be synonymous, since their meanings are to be identified with two distinct universals.

An agent can form a simple general conception of some individual attribute *F* just when she can distinguish and generalise *F*: that is, she must be able to judge that *F* is non-identical to the other attributes that belong to the same substance as *F* and that *F* an instance of the universal *F-ness*. The correct meaning of a general word uttered in certain circumstances is that universal (or set of universals) to which those members of a particular language-community who best understand the language would refer whenever they utter the same word in those circumstances.

Belief is an involuntary operation of mind. However, all involuntary intellectual operations are indirectly subject to the will inasmuch as they may be either *resisted* or *directed* by the exertion of the two voluntary operations, attention and deliberation - each of which carries its own set of obligations. Involuntary intellectual operations, such as belief, are therefore indirectly morally evaluable.

Reid identifies various kinds of self-evident beliefs by a list of general propositions he presents as 'first principles'. These general propositions serve to pick out the various kinds of propositions, of which the objects of self-evident beliefs are instances. The

belief in any such general proposition is not, therefore, to be regarded as self-evident. Rather it is, or ought to be based upon an inductive argument, the premises of which contain a list of occasions in which we have *rightly* taken its instances to be self-evident; that is, where we have established that the general proposition of which they are instances is a *genuine* first principle by virtue of its having satisfied the 'marks' of a first principle.

General propositions also serve to express the constitutional rules or laws of our nature, indicating what to believe in certain circumstances, and to what degree of strength, and so, may function in a scientific explanation of the operations of mind. An agent may be said to have such a rule as part of his constitution just in case he has not at any stage learned or otherwise acquired the rule, and it is internalized in him in such a way that, without the exertion of his will, it regulates the formation and sustenance of his believing in certain circumstances whether or not he thinks, declares or believes, before or during the formation of his belief, that his believing in those circumstances should be regulated according to the rule in question.

Causal explanations of belief require the following kind of description: a person believes according to a certain constitutional rule *R* just in case God's judgment regarding what is best upon the whole inclines him toward the exertion of his power of liberty so as to bring about a determination of will to bring about a belief in the agent in accordance with *R*.

5. EPISTEMOLOGY

Evidence is both that which inclines the agent toward the formation of a judgment or belief to a certain degree of strength, and that which may (or may not) contribute to the belief's epistemic justification. A person can form or sustain a certain degree of belief at a certain time when and only when it seems to her that there is a certain degree of evidence for the belief at that time, and this degree of evidence is proportionate to her degree of belief. Believing upon 'good evidence' obtains a positive evaluation from an epistemic point of view just because it fulfils the epistemic aim of believing something if and only if there is good evidence for its being true. A person's belief has a greater degree of justification than some other belief just in case she holds the former to a stronger degree than the latter.

Reid is an externalist with respect to epistemic justification: that is, he holds that the agent need not be (or be capable of being) aware of those factors without which her belief would not be justified. However, the agent is accountable for ensuring that these justifying factors are in place to the extent that she has indirect influence upon her believings by means of the exertion of her voluntary intellectual powers.

Mere belief may be distinguished from knowledge just when three necessary and sufficient conditions are satisfied: the agent must have a "sound understanding", she must have formed a distinct conception of what she believes, and she must do so "without prejudice".

With respect to the first condition, it is more probable than not, given a theistic metaphysic, that a person with a 'sound understanding' will form mostly true beliefs. More precisely, a person has 'sound understanding' with respect to a belief just in case (i) the intellectual power or faculty by which the belief is produced was designed to produce true beliefs, (ii) it is functioning properly at the time of the belief's formation, (iii) it is functioning in an environment for which it was designed, and (iv) if these conditions are met, then it is more probable than not that the belief in question is true.

The second necessary condition of epistemic justification requires that we have a distinct conception of the object of belief. One difficulty with this condition is Reid's claim that we can know the objects of "obscure" or "indistinct" conceptions, namely, (i) mere relative conceptions and (ii) the conceptions we obtain by our external senses and by consciousness. With respect to the problem of mere relative conceptions, our conception of the essential attribute of substance, namely, 'being a subject of' is sufficiently distinct to enable us to distinguish it from other attributes; and so, it must be possible to form a general conception of that attribute; but general conceptions are distinct conceptions; hence, if we have a mere relative conception of a substance then we are justified in believing that it exists and that it is the subject of certain attributes.

With respect to the conceptions we obtain by our external senses and by consciousness, I take Reid to distinguish between presentational immediacy and conceptual immediacy: that is, an object has presentational immediacy for a person just in case the manner in which she conceives it is such that she is made directly aware of that object; and an object has conceptual immediacy for a person just in case the manner in which she conceives it is such that she forms a distinct conception of some attribute of that object at the same time that she is directly aware of it. If we only had presentational immediacy with respect to internal and external objects, then we *would* find ourselves with 'obscure and indistinct' conceptions. However, this is not the case. We have conceptual immediacy with respect to both the attributes of mind and the primary and secondary qualities of external objects; and this ensures that, if the relevant external justifying factors are in place, our conceptions of internal and external objects will be sufficiently distinct for epistemic justification.

The third necessary condition of knowledge requires that the belief is formed 'without prejudice'. There are four kinds of prejudices, each of which may be analysed as a belief that has the following three features: first, it has doxastic immediacy for the

believer, that is, she forms the belief at the same time that she forms a distinct conception of its object; second, it does not have epistemic immediacy for the believer, that is, she is not immediately justified in believing it; and third, it arises by virtue of the inclination of a vicious doxastic habit: that is, although she might have formed a general fixed purpose to regulate her acts of deliberation and attention with respect to forming such a belief in certain circumstances, she has either (i) failed to adhere to that purpose to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of a virtuous doxastic habit; or (ii) she has violated the obligations of deliberation and attention with respect to forming that kind of belief in those circumstances to a frequency sufficient for the acquisition of a vicious doxastic habit. Moreover, she may have failed to do what she could to eliminate the vicious doxastic habit: she may not, that is, have attempted to acquire an opposing virtuous doxastic habit. Consequently, given the voluntary influence she has on the formation of the relevant doxastic habit, and so indirectly, on the formation of her belief, she is accountable, in due proportion, for its failure to satisfy the third condition.

APPENDIX 1: FIRST PRINCIPLES

The following is a complete listing of the general propositions explicitly referred to in Reid's *Intellectual Powers* as 'first principles'.

CONTINGENT

- CP₁ "every thing of which I am conscious [exists]" (IP, p. 578)
- CP₂ "the thoughts of which I am conscious, are the thoughts of a being which I call *myself*, my mind, my person"(IP, p. 581)
- CP₃ "those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be" (IP, p. 587)
- CP₄ "those things did really happen which I distinctly remember" (IP, p. 583)
- CP₅ "[we have] our own personal identity and [a] continued existence, as far back as we remember anything distinctly" (IP, p. 586)
- CP₆ "in the phaenomena of nature, what is to be, will probably be like to what has been in similar circumstances" (IP, p. 603)
- CP₇ "we have some degree of power over our actions, and the determinations of our will" (IP, p. 589)
- CP₈ "the natural faculties, by which we distinguish truth from error, are not fallacious" (IP, p. 591)
- CP₉ "there is life and intelligence in our fellow-men with whom we converse" (IP, p. 594)
- CP₁₀ "certain features of the countenance, sounds of the voice, and gestures of the body, indicate certain thoughts and dispositions of mind" (IP, p. 596)
- CP₁₁ "there is certain regard due to human testimony in matters of fact, and even to human authority in matters of opinion". (IP, p. 601)
- CP₁₂ "There are many events depending upon the will of man, in which there is a self-evident probability, greater or less, according to circumstances." (IP, p. 602)

GRAMMAR

- NP_{G1} "every adjective in a sentence must belong to some substantive expressed or understood" (IP, p. 605)
- NP_{G2} "every complete sentence must have a verb" (IP, p. 605)
- NP_{G3} "active verbs which denote some action or operation . . . supposes a person" (IP, p. 605)

LOGIC

- NP_{L1} “any contexture of words which does not make a proposition, is neither true or false” (IP, p. 605)
- NP_{L2} “every proposition is either true or false” (IP, p. 605)
- NP_{L3} “no proposition can be both true and false at the same time” (IP, p. 605)
- NP_{L4} “reasoning in a circle proves nothing” (IP, p. 605)
- NP_{L5} “whatever may be truly affirmed of a genus, may be truly affirmed of all the species, and all the individuals belonging to that genus.” (IP, p. 605)

ARITHMETICAL

- NP_{A1} “two right lines can cut one another in one point only” (IP, p. 606)

ETHICS

- NP_{E1} “an unjust action has more demerit than an ungenerous one” (IP, p. 610)
- NP_{E2} “a generous action has more merit than a merely just one” (IP, p. 610)
- NP_{E3} “no man ought to be blamed for what it was not in his power to hinder” (IP, p. 610)
- NP_{E4} “we ought not to do to others what we would think unjust or unfair to be done to us in like circumstances” (IP, p. 610)

METAPHYSICAL

- NP_{M1} “the qualities which we perceive by our senses must have a subject, which we call body, and . . . the thoughts we are conscious of must have a subject, which we call mind. . . . [and] every action must have an agent.” (IP, p. 612)
- NP_{M2} “whatever begins to exist, must have a cause which produced it.” (IP, p. 613)
- NP_{M3} “design and intelligence in the cause, may be inferred, with certainty, from marks or signs of it in the effect.” (IP, p. 621)

APPENDIX 2: MANUSCRIPT CATALOGUE

The following catalogue lists all the manuscripts that the author judged to be of relevance to Reid's epistemology, and which were therefore used in the process of gathering the textual evidence upon which the present dissertation is based.

MS	Pages	Title /Subject	Occasion	Date
1/I/1	3	<i>An Inquiry into the Human Mind . . . Chap 1. Introduction. Sect. 1.</i>	Work	-
		The obligation of justice not derived from its utility.	Work?	-
1/I/2	2	<i>An Inquiry into the Human Mind . . . Book 2d. Chap. 1. Of Memory.</i>	Work	-
		The Hypothesis of Ideas and Memory.	Lecture Outline	Dec.11-12
1/I/3	28	1. The Nature of Ideas; their use as mediums of thought or as representatives of objects. 2. Why Philosophers have supposed Ideas. Of Smell Of Taste	Work	-
		3. Four meanings of the word "Idea"		
1/I/4	8	A. Three Classes of Sensations. 1. Pleasure and Pain; 2. Smell, Taste, Sound, Heat & Cold, Colour; 3. Hardness & Softness, Roughness & Smoothness, that which suggests Motion. B. Simple Notions obtained by Sensations. 1. A Mind; 2. Occult & Real Qualities; 3. A Subject of these Qualities; 4. Motion and Space.	-	-
		<i>Preface. Difficulties of an Inquiry</i>	Work	-
		Common Sense		

Active and Intellectual Powers MSS

1/II/1 Bk. II	81	Ch 1 (64.3 -) Continuation of 1/II/6. Ch 2 <i>Of the Influence of Incitements and Motives upon the Will.</i> Ch 3 <i>Of Operations of Mind which may be called Voluntary.</i> Ch 4 <i>Corollaries.</i> <i>Essay 3^d Of the Principles of Actions</i> <i>Part First Of the Mechanical Principles of Action</i> Ch 1 <i>Of the principles of Action in general.</i> Ch 2 <i>Of Instinct.</i> Ch 3 <i>Of Habit.</i> <i>Essay 3^d Part 2^d Of the Mechanical Principles of Action</i> Ch 1 <i>Of Appetites.</i> Ch 2 <i>Of Desires. (- 134.5)</i>		
1/II/2	77	Ch 2 (- 134.6)		

- Bk. III
 Ch 3 Of benevolent Affection in General.
 Ch 4 Of the particular benevolent affections.
 Ch 5 Of Malevolent Affection.
 Ch 6 Of Passion.
 Ch 7 Of Disposition.
 Ch 8 Of Opinion.
- 1/II/3
 Bk. IV 78 *Essay 3^d Part 3^d Of the Rational Principles of Action.*
 Ch 1 There are rational Principles of Action in Man.
 Ch 2 Of regard to our Good on the whole.
 Ch 3 The Tendency of this Principle.
 Ch 4 Defects of this Principle.
 Ch 5 Of the Notion of Duty, Rectitude, moral Obligation.
 Ch 6 Of the Sense of Duty.
 Ch 7 Of Moral Approbation & Disapprobation.
 Ch 8 Observations concerning Conscience.
- Essay 4th Of the Liberty of moral Agents.*
 Ch 1 The notions of moral liberty & necessity stated.
 Ch 2 Of the words Cause & Effect, Action & Active Power.
- 1/II/4
 Bk. V 83 Ch 3 Causes of the Ambiguity of those words.
 Ch 4 Of the Influence of Motives.
 Ch 5 Liberty Consistent with Government.
 Ch 6 First Argument.
 Ch 7 Second Argument
 Ch 8 Third Argument
 Ch 9 Of Arguments for Necessity.
 Ch 10 The same Subject
 Ch 11 Of the Permission of Evil.
- 1/II/5
 Bk. IV 96 Ch 1 (- 673.5) Continuation of 1/II/7.
 Ch 2 Whether Morality be Capable of Demonstration.
 Ch 3 Of Probable Evidence
 Ch 4 Of Mr Humes Skepticism with Regard to Reason.
- Essay VIII Of Taste*
 Ch 1 Of Taste in General.
 Ch 2 Of the Objects of Taste & first of Novelty
 Ch 3 Of Grandeur.
 Ch 4 Of Beauty. (- 760.3)
- 1/II/6
 Bk. VII 78 Ch 4 (760.3 -)
- Essays on the Active Powers of the Human Mind*
 Introduction
- Essay 1 Of Active Powers in General.*
 Ch 1 Of the Notion of Active Power.
 Ch 2 The same Subject.
 Ch 3 Of Mr Lockes Account of our Idea of Power.
 Ch 4 Of Mr Humes opinion of the Idea of Power.
 Ch 5 Whether Beings that have No Will nor Understanding may have Active Powers.
 Ch 6 Of the Efficient Causes of the Phenomena of Nature.
 Ch 7 Of the Extent of Human Power.
- Essay 2d Of the Will.*
 Ch 1 Observations concerning the Will. (- 64.3) Continued 1/II/1.
 1/II/7
 Bk. VIII 93 Ch 5 (- 581.2) Continuation of 1/II/20.
 Ch 6 First Principles of Necessary Truths
 Ch 7 Opinions Ancient & Modern about first Principles.
 Ch 8 Of Prejudices, the Causes of Error.
- Essay VII. Of Reasoning*
 Ch 1 Of Reasoning in General, & of Demonstration. (- 673.4) Continued 1/II/5.
- 1/II/8
 Bk. IX 41 *Essay I.*
 Ch 2 Principles taken for Granted.
 Ch 3 Of Hypotheses.
 Ch 4 Of Analogy.
 Ch 5 Of the proper Means of knowing the Operations of the Mind.
 Ch 6 Of the Difficulty of attending to the Operations of our own Minds.
 Ch 7 Division of the Powers of the Mind.

- 1/II/9
Bk. X 40 Ch 8 *Of the Social Operations of Mind*

Book II Of the Powers we have by Means of our external Senses
Ch 1 *Of the Organs of Sense.*
Ch 2 *Of the Impressions of the Organs, Nerves & Brain.*
Ch 3 *Hypotheses concerning the Nerves & Brain.*
Ch 4 *False Conclusions drawn from the Impressions before mentioned.*
Ch 5 *Of Perception (- 110.2)*
- 1/II/10
Bk. XI 40 Ch 5 (110.2 -)
Ch 6 *What it is to account for a Phenomenon of Nature?*
Ch 7 *Sentiments of Philosophers about the Perception of external Objects & first Of the Theory of Father Malebranche.*
Ch 8 *Of the Common Theory of Perception & of the Sentiments of the Peripateticks & of Des Cartes.*
Ch 9 *Of the sentiments of Mr Locke. (- 150.4)*
- 1/II/11
Bk. XII 44 Ch 9 (150.5 -)
Ch 10 *Of the Sentiments of Bishop Berkeley.*
Ch 11 *Bishop Berkeleys Sentiments of the Nature of Ideas.*
Ch 12 *Of the Sentiments of Mr Hume.*
Ch 13 *Of the Sentiments of Antony Arnauld. (- 194.3)*
- 1/II/12
Bk. XIII 40 Ch 13 (194.3 -)
Ch 14 *Reflexions of the common Theory of Ideas.*
Ch 15 *Account of the System of Leibnitz.*
Ch 16 *Of Sensation.*
Ch 17 *Of the objects of Perception & first, of primary and secondary qualities. (- 237.3)*
- 1/II/13
Bk. XIV 39 Ch 17 (237.3 -)
Ch 18 *Of other objects of perception.*
Ch 19 *Of Matter and Space.*
Ch 20 *Of the Evidence of Sense, & of Belief in general.*
- 1/II/14
Bk. XV 42 Ch 21 *Of the Improvement of the Senses.*
Ch 22 *Of the Fallacy of the Senses.*

Book 3^d Of Memory.
Ch 1 *Things obvious & certain with regard to Memory.*
Ch 2 *Memory an Original Faculty.*
Ch 3 *Of Duration.*
Ch 4 *Of Identity.*
- 1/II/15
Bk. XVI 40 Ch 5 *Mr Lockes Account of the Origin of our Ideas, & particularly of the Idea of Duration.*
Ch 6 *Mr Lockes account of our personal Identity*
Ch 7 *Theories concerning Memory*

Essay 4th Of Conception.
Ch 1 *Of Conception or simple Apprehension. (- 360.3)*
- 1/II/16
Bk. XVII 41 Ch 1 (361.5 -)
Ch 2 *Theories concerning Conception.*
Ch 3 *Mistakes Concerning Conception. (- 399.6)*
- 1/II/17
Bk. XVIII 39 Ch 3 (399.6 -)
Ch 4 *Of the Train of Thought in the Mind.*

Essay 5 Of Abstraction.
Ch 1 *Of General Words. (- 434.4)*
- 1/II/18
Bk. XIX 64 Ch 1 (434.5 -)
Ch 2 *Of General Conceptions.*
Ch 3 *Of general Conceptions formed by analysing Objects.*
Ch 4 *Of general Conceptions formed by combination.*
Ch 5 *Observations concerning the Names given to our general Notions. (475.1-2 missing "see schedule 12 p. 18")*
Ch 6 *Opinions of Philosophers about Universals.*
- 1/II/19
Bk. XX 42 **Book 6 Of Judgment.**
Ch 1 *Of Judgment.*
Ch 2 *Of Common Sense.*
Ch 3 *Sentiments of Philosophers Concerning Judgment. (- 541.6)*

1/II/20 Bk.XXI	40	Ch 3 (541.7 -) Ch 4 <i>Of first Principles in General.</i> Ch 5 <i>The first Principles of Contingent Truths.</i> (- 581.2) Continued in 1/II/7.		
2/I/19	22	"The distinction between things in the mind and things external . . ."	-	-
2/III/1	7	Abstract of <i>Inquiry</i>	-	-
2/III/2	18	Theory of Ideas	IP Es II Ch 14	
2/III/3	4	<i>Of Secondary Qualities</i>	-	-
2/III/4	8	Memory	-	-
2/III/5	22	<i>Of Memory</i>	Discourse	-
2/III/6	20	<i>Of the Faculty of Imagination</i>	Discourse	Feb 1766
		<i>Mistakes of Philosophers with regard to Simple Apprehension</i>	-	-
2/III/7	18	<i>Of Common Sense - Cura Prima</i>	Work	
2/III/8	17	Common Sense	Discourse/Society-	
2/III/9	8	Common Sense	Discourse	-
2/III/10	18	<i>Common Sense</i>	Discourse	-
2/III/11	8	First Principles of Necessary Truths	Discourse/Society	
2/III/12	43	Abstraction	Discourse, Work (p.36)	-
2/III/13	10	Mind and Matter	Discourse	
2/III/14	14	First Principles of Contingent Truths	Discourse/Society	
3/I/25	5	<u>Priestly</u> - Natural Religion	Notes	18 June 1774
		<u>Hartley</u> - Ideas, Sensations, Brain, Pain & Pleasure, Assent, Truth, Mathematical method and Logic.	Notes	19 June 1774
3/II/3	13	<i>First Discourse</i> on Lord Bacon	Discourse/Society <i>post 1777</i>	
		<i>Discourse 2 Attention</i>	"	"
		<i>Of Conception</i>	"	"
3/II/9	2	<i>From Aristotle's Catagories</i>	Notes	-
3/II/10	1	<u>Collier</u> - Existence of External World	Notes	21 Feb 1771
3/II/14	6	<u>Buffon</u> - Classing, Dividing, Subdividing Natural Bodies; Mathematical and Physical Truth; Theory of the Earth; The Generation of Animals.	Notes	-
3/II/16	5	<i>Of the Subjects of Active Power</i>	-	-
		<u>Bonnet</u> - Operations of the Mind, Nerves; Origin of Organized Body; Passions and Moral Sense; Sensation and Perception; Matter; Natural History; Nature and Duration of Animal Souls; Insects.	Notes	-
3/III/5	4	<i>Copy to Dr Price</i> <i>Conception not the Test of Possibility</i> <i>Reasons for not answering Dr Priestly</i>	Letter	-

3/III/21	4	Theory of Ideas	-	-
3/III/22	2	Theory of Ideas, Berkeley; Seat of the Soul	-	-
3/III/23	4	Hartley's Theory of Vibrations; Perception; Seat of the Soul	-	post 1773
3/III/24	2	Perception, Impressions, Ideas, Locke, Hume, Aristotle, Peripatetics.	-	post 1777
3/III/25	1	<u>Bayle</u> - Ideas, Volition, Liberty	Notes	-
4/I/1	1	<u>Introduction to Lectures.</u> The Ends of Education	Lecture	-
		<u>Introduction to Lectures on</u> -	Lecture Fine Arts	-
4/I/2	4	Nature and Duration of the Soul, Leibnitz, Descartes.	-	-
4/I/3	4	Culture of the Powers of Judgement	12 pm Lecture	29 Jan 1770
		Reference to IP - Chap. 22, Book 1, "Fallacy of the Senses"	Work	-
		Common Sense	-	-
4/I/4	11	<i>Of Composition</i> On Hume's Associating qualities of ideas <i>Of the Essence of Universals</i>	Work	-
4/I/5	35	<i>Of General Words or Terms</i> <i>Of General Conceptions</i> <i>The Use of the Power of Abstracting and General Conceptions</i> <i>The Opinions of Philosophers about General Conceptions</i>	Work	-
4/I/6	2	<i>Pneumatology Part 2^d - Of the Culture of the Mind</i>	Lecture Outline-	
4/I/7	2	<i>Of Memory</i>	Lecture Outline-	
4/I/8	4	First Principles	Lecture/Outline	15 Jan
		<i>Gen Rules for directing us in the investigation of Truth ; or Directions for the Conduct of the Understanding - 1. To have a clear and distinct apprehension of what we judge or reason about</i>	Lecture	2 Jan
		Culture of the Rational Powers	Lecture Outline	7 Jan 1765
4/I/8a	4	2. To form right judgements concerning what we judge or reason about. Original and Natural Judgement.	Lecture/Outline-	
		Culture of the Rational Powers First Principles, Analytical & Synthetic	Lecture Reasoning	12 Jan 1765
4/I/9	4	<i>Of Inductive Reasoning</i> <i>Reasoning by Analogy & Examples</i>	Lecture Lecture Outline	6 Feb 1765

		<i>Gen Rules for Improving Rational Powers</i>	Lecture Outline	
		Culture of the Active Powers	Lecture Outline	13, 18 Feb
		Connections and Mutual Influences of the Body & Mind; Fine Art	Lecture	20 Feb
		<u>Summary of Lectures on - Connections and Mutual Influences of the Body & Mind; Fine Art</u>	Lecture	27 Feb
4/I/10	3	Culture of Nature Culture of Society Culture of Education	Lecture 3/Outline-	
4/I/11	3	Culture of the Senses 1. Preserving the Organs of Sense in a Sound and Natural State.	Lecture	-
4/I/12	3	Culture of the Senses	Lecture Outline	
4/I/13	3	<u>Introduction to Lectures on - Natural Theology, Morals, Jurisprudence & Politics?</u> <u>Summary of Lectures on - The Intellectual and Active Powers, and on the Nature and Duration of the Soul.</u>	Lecture	-
4/I/14	2	<i>Fancy</i>	12 pm Lect. Outline	6 Dec 1768
		<i>2 Disc. on Imagination</i>	Discourse	-
4/I/15	3	<i>Of the Improvement of the Faculty of Imagination</i>	12 pm Lecture	10 Jan 1769
4/I/16	1	Induction	-	-
4/I/17	1	<i>Idola Theatri</i>	Outline	-
		Reasoning, Induction	Outline	
4/I/18	5	Culture of Society Culture of Education	Lecture 4	-
4/I/19	1	Evidence, Demonstration and Probable Reasoning	-	-
4/I/20	3	<u>Introduction to Lectures. Fine Arts.</u>	Lecture	-
		Improvement of Moral Character	Lecture	-
4/I/21	2	<i>Of Probable Reasoning</i>	12 pm Lect. Outline	28 Feb 1768
		<i>Of Testimony</i>		29 Feb 1768
		<i>The Extent of the Knowledge we have by Testimony</i>		2 Mar 1768
4/I/22	1	<i>Of Contrariety</i>	Outline	-
4/I/23	3	Inductive Principle, Laws of Nature Causation, Reasoning and Physicks	-	-
		<i>Of the Culture of Our Active Powers</i>	Lecture	-
4/I/24	4	<i>Improvement of our Moral Perception</i>	12 pm Lect. Outline	11 Dec 1768
		Improvement of Moral Character	Lecture Outline	-
		<i>Of the Culture of our Active Powers</i>	Lecture Outline	14 Mar 1770

4/I/25	4	Conduct of the Understanding - Received Tradition a Cause of Error in Judgement	Lecture	-
4/I/26	4	Culture of Education	Lecture Outline	19 Dec
		Culture of the Senses	Lecture Outline	
		<i>Of the Improvement of Memory</i>	Lecture Outline	24 Dec
		<i>Of the Improvement of Taste and Genius</i>	Lecture Outline	26 Dec
		Improvement of Human Knowledge	Lecture Outline	16 Feb 1767
		Culture of the Senses	Lecture Outline	16 Feb 1767
		Demonstration and Probable Reasoning	Lecture Outline	18 Feb 1767
4/I/27	2	<u>Introduction to Lectures.</u>	Lecture/Work ?	-
4/I/28	4	<i>Of the Perception of Harmony, Beauty, Grandeur, Novelty, Wit, Humour. Why these are called Secondary Perceptions and Reflex Senses by Dr. Hutcheson.</i>	Lecture Outline	
		<i>Whether there is any Standard of Taste</i>	Lecture Outline	
		<i>Judgement Locke, Hume</i>	Lecture Outline	
4/I/29	18	<u>Introduction to Lectures on -</u> 1. Culture of the Mind 2. Connections and Mutual Influences of the Body & Mind 3. Fine Art - Eloquence	Lecture	
4/I/30	28	<i>Culture of Nature</i>	Lectures 2 & 3	-
4/I/31	10	Culture of the Mind Culture of Nature	Lecture 1/Outline	16 Dec 1765
		Culture of Society	Lecture 2/Outline	18 Dec
		Culture of Education	Lecture 3/Outline	23 Dec
		<i>Of the Culture of the External Senses</i>	Lecture 5	-
		<i>Of the Culture of Memory</i>	Lectures 5 & 6	-
		<i>Of the Culture of the Imagination</i>	Lecture 7	27 Jan 1766
		<i>Of the Culture of the Imagination as it signifies that train of thoughts, Reflections, Emotions and passions which arises spon- taneously in the Mind while we are awake</i>	Lecture 8	29 Jan 1766
4/II/1	68	<i>Pneumatology B</i>	Lecture	5 Nov 1765
4/II/2	84	<i>Pneumatology A</i>	Lecture	1768
4/II/3	2	<u>Continuation of 4/II/19</u> Common Sense, First Principles Enquiry into Human Mind	-	-
4/II/4	2	<i>Appendix to Pneumatology</i> The Nature and Duration of the Soul	Lecture Outline	
4/II/5	4	Connections between Body and Mind Tone of Voice expresses Temperament	Lecture	-
		Sensations	Lecture	20, 21, 23 Nov
4/II/6	2	Additions to Pnuematology A	Lecture	

4/II/7	8	Space	-	-
		<i>Of Personal Identity</i>	Title only	-
		Memory	Lecture Outline	24 Dec
		Imagination or Conception	Lecture Outline	13 Dec 1764
		Hume on the Association of Ideas	Lecture Outline	14 Dec
		<i>Imagination</i>	Lecture Outline	-
		<i>Train of Thought...described</i>	Lecture 25 Outline	10 Dec
		<i>Of the Influence which the various degrees of Strength in these Laws of Association may have in forming the Character, Strength of Reason and Genius</i>	Lecture 26 Outline	11 Dec 1765
4/II/8	4	<i>Pneumatology Part 1. Sight, Touch, Hearing, Taste & Smell, Memory</i>	Lecture Outline	-
4/II/9	16	<u>Introduction to Lectures.</u> Prayer. The Ends of Education.	-	-
4/II/10	6	<u>Introduction to Lectures.</u> The Ends of Education.	-	-
4/II/11	4	<i>Pneumatology</i> Imagination, Of Pleasure and Pain	Lecture Outline	-
4/II/12	4	Read from the <i>Inquiry</i>	Lecture 20	2 Dec 1765
		Pleasure and Pain	Lecture 21	3 Dec 1765
		Read Discourse on Memory	Lecture 22	4 Dec
		Read last part of Discourse on Memory concerning theories of Locke, Berkeley, Hume about Duration	Lecture 23	5 Dec
		<i>Of Dividing and Classing Things & Of Compounding</i>	Lecture 27	12 Dec
		<i>Of Judgement</i>	Lecture 28	13 Dec
		<i>Reasoning</i>	Lecture 29	16 Dec
		<i>Probable and Demonstrative Reasoning</i>	Lecture 30	17 Dec
		<i>Hume's Reasoning against Demonstration</i>	Lecture 30	17 Dec
4/II/13	8	The Will, Active Powers	Lecture 34	23 Dec 1765
4/II/14	7	First Principles, Prejudices and the Causes of Error		
		<i>Idola Tribus</i>	-	-
		<i>Idola Species</i>	-	-
		<i>General Defects or faults in the Rational Powers which [are] to be guarded against</i>	Lecture Outline	-
		<i>General Byasses</i>	Lecture Outline	-
		<i>Inductive Reasoning</i>	Lecture Outline	3 Mar 1766
		<i>General Observation on Reasoning by Induction</i>	Lecture Outline	5 Mar 1766
		<i>Idola Fori</i>	Lecture Outline	5 Mar 1766

4/II/15	1	Acquired Perceptions	Lecture	5 Dec 1766
4/II/16	34	Theories concerning Perception	Lecture/Outline	18 Nov 1768
		The System of Leibnitz	Lecture	22 Nov
		Sensation	Lecture	23 Nov
		<i>Of the Objects of Perception</i>	Lecture/Outline	24 Nov
		<i>Objects of Sight</i>	Lecture/Outline	
		<i>Of the Distinction of Primary & Secondary Qualities</i>	Lecture/Outline	25 Nov 1768
		Disorders of our Bodies which we perceive	Lecture/Outline	28 Nov
		by means of certain painfull sensations that are natural signs of them		
		Recapitulation of the above lectures	Lecture/Outline	29 Nov
		<i>Of Original and Acquired Perception</i>	Lecture/Outline	1 Dec
		<i>Laws of Nature Relating to the Senses</i>	Lecture/Outline	2 Dec
		Fallacies of the Senses	Lecture/Outline	-
		Relative Notions	Notes	23 Oct 1773
4/II/16a	2	Perception, Theory of Ideas	-	-
4/II/17	8	Primary and Secondary Qualities	Lecture 12	20 Nov
		<i>Of Visible Figure</i>	Lecture 12-13	20-21 Nov
		<i>Of Seeing Objects by Inverted Images</i>	Lecture 14	24 Nov
		<i>Limits of Vision Explained</i>	Lecture 14	24 Nov
		<i>Of Seeing Objects Single with Two Eyes</i>	Lecture 15-16	25-26 Nov
		<u>Summary of Lectures on -</u> The original perceptions which we have by sight and the laws of nature by which we have those original perceptions.	Lecture 17	27 Nov
		<u>Proceed to Lectures on -</u> The Things which we learn by experience to perceive by means of those things which are originally perceived.	Lecture	-
		Perception of the Distance of Objects from the Eye	Lecture	-
		<u>Review</u> of observations on Sensation and Perception.	Lecture	-
		The train of operations by which we perceive external objects; and remarks on the mistakes of philosophers in this respect.	Lecture 19	1 Dec
4/II/18	8	Theory of Ideas - Locke, Berkeley, Hume	-	-
		Theories of Perception		
4/II/19	8	<i>Of the Immateriality of The Soul</i>	Lecture 41 Outline	6 Jan 1766
		<i>Of the Place of the Soul</i>	Lecture 42 Title only	7 Jan 1766
		The Nature Duration and Place of the Soul	Lecture	20 Jan 1766
		<u>Continued in 4/II/3</u>		
4/II/20	1	<u>Summary of Lecture on -</u> Train of Thought/Imagination	Lecture Outline	6 Apr 1772

6/I/1	8	<i>Of Imagination</i>	Discourse?	-
6/I/2	4	<i>Of the Train of Thoughts in the Human Mind</i>	Discourse?	-
6/I/3	4	<i>Of Abstraction</i>	Outline	-
		<i>Of Dividing and Classing Things</i>	Outline	-
		<i>Compounding</i>	Outline	-
		<i>Of the Will & Principles of Action</i>	Outline	-
6/I/4	7	<u>The Understanding/Pneumatology</u> 1. Old and new systems 2. Powers & Principles of the Understanding	Lecture	-
6/I/5	2	<u>Conceptions</u> Original & Simple, Derived & Compounded	-	-
6/I/6	8	Theory of Ideas <i>Of the Meaning of the Word Idea</i>	-	-
6/I/10	4	<u>Conception</u> Whether it be a true maxim that what we can conceive is possible & what is impossible cannot be conceived	Discourse/Society	pre Sep 1782
6/I/11	4	<u>Question 12</u> <i>Are the Objects of the human Mind properly divided into impressions and Ideas and must every Idea be a Copy of a preceeding Impression.</i>	Discourse/Society	-
6/I/15	1	The Power of Judging	Discourse	-
6/I/17	6	<i>Minutes of a Philosophical Club</i>		1736
6/I/18	2	The Self	-	22 Oct 1748
6/I/19	5	<u>Pneumatology</u> Knowledge acquired by Senses, Experience, Testimony reduced to Laws of Nature relating to the Powers of the Human Mind	Lecture	8 Dec 1766
6/I/20	7	<u>Pneumatology</u> Anatomy of the Mind	Lecture/Outline	-
6/I/21	4	<u>Pneumatology</u>	Lecture Outline	
6/I/22	3	<i>Consciousness</i>	Outline	-
		<i>Reflexion</i>	Outline	-
		<i>Contemplation</i>	Outline	-
		Locke, Assent, Evidence	Work (p.3)	-
6/I/23	4	<i>That we see objects at first single when our eyes are properly directed</i>	-	-
6/I/24	8	Simple Perceptions which arise from Taste in Fine Arts. e.g. Music. <i>Of the Operations of Understanding about its Perceptions and Notions - Abstraction, Compounding, Comparing Reasoning</i> <i>Of the Will & Active Powers of Mind</i>	-	-
6/I/26	2	<i>Pneumaticks</i>	Lecture Outline	-

		Nature and Duration of the Soul	Lecture	-
6/I/27	2	Nature and Duration of the Soul	Lecture	-
6/I/30	1	First Principles, Locke, Ideas	Outline	-
6/II/3	4	Theory of Ideas	-	-
		Memory	-	-
6/II/4	16	Abstraction, General Notions, General Words, Universals, Disputes of Ancient Philosophers and Schoolmen.	Discourse	-
6/II/5	20	Train of Thought/Imagination	Discourse	-
		<u>Bruherus</u> - Origin of the Theory of Ideas, Plato	Notes	-
		Nominalists	Notes	-
		Common Sense	Discourse	-
6/II/6	2	<i>The Reasons of Insisting so long upon these Theories about Perception</i>	Notes	-
6/II/7	2	Hume's theory of perception	-	-
6/III/1	1	<i>Idola Theatri</i>	-	-
6/III/2	4	<i>Idola Theatri</i>	-	-
6/III/3	4	<i>Mr Hume's notion of Causes, his Reasons why we cannot reason about a Cause of the Universe, Answered.</i>	-	-
		<i>His Objections against the Evidence of Testimony which brought in favour of Miracles.</i>	-	-
		<i>Various Kinds of Evidence</i>	-	-
6/III/4	1	<i>Improvement of Memory</i>	Lecture	-
6/III/5	8	Hume's theory of Perception, Impressions	-	-
		<u>Campbell</u> - argument against Locke's theory of Identity.	-	-
		First Principles	Lecture	1 Dec 1758
		<i>Of the Perception of Harmony, Beauty</i>	-	-
6/III/6	4	<i>Idola Tribus</i>	-	-
		<i>Idola Fori</i>	-	-
6/III/7	2	<u>Buffier</u> - on Beauty.	Notes	-
		Do our Ideas resemble the things they represent?	-	-
		On Supposition	-	-
6/III/8	4	<i>Of the Perception we have of Distance by Sight</i>	Outline	1758
		<i>Of the Perception of Extension by Sight</i>	Outline	1758
		<i>Of the Perception of Tangible Extension</i>	Outline	1758
		<i>Of External Existences</i>	Outline	1758

6/III/9	4	Judgement, Apprehension & Reasoning	-	-
		Sensation	-	-
		Operations of the Mind	-	-
6/III/10	2	Theory of Ideas, Perception of external objects, Images in the Brain, History of.	-	-
6/III/11	1	<u>Hook</u> - on Ideas	-	-
6/III/12	4	Theory of Ideas, Hook, Locke, Berkeley, Hume	-	-
6/III/13	1	Locke, Theory of Ideas	-	-
6/III/14	4	Locke, Belief, Judgement, Theory of Ideas-	-	-
6/III/15	1	Descartes, Theory of Ideas	-	-
6/III/16	4	Hume, Source of Ideas	-	-
		Agent Causation, Liberty	-	-
6/III/17	8	Operations of the Mind - Descartes, Aristotle - and followers, Malebranche, Locke.	-	-
6/III/18	4	Common Sense, First Principles	-	-
6/V/34	1	<i>Divisions</i> - Measures, Substances, Things belonging to substances	-	-
6/V/35	2	Impressions upon nerves, brain, organs of sense, by external objects.	-	-
7/V/1	6	<u>Introduction to Lectures on Pnuematology</u>	Lecture	-
		1. Connections and Mutual Influences of the Body & Mind.		
		Natural Language	Outline	-
7/V/2	1	<u>London Review</u> - Beattie's Essay on Reid's <i>Inquiry</i>	Notes	-
7/V/4	17	<u>Introduction to Lectures on Pnuematology</u>	Lecture	-
7/V/16	4	<u>Reasoning</u> - Improvement, Probable and Demonstrative, Mathematical and Meta-physical, Direct and Indirect Demonstration.	-	-
7/V/23	8	<u>Pneumatology</u>	Lecture Outline	-
7/V/26	4	Errors of Judgement, Fallacies of Sense, Prejudice.	-	-
8/I/1	14	<u>Introduction to Lectures on Pnuematology</u>	Lecture	-
		1. Connections and Mutual Influences of the Body & Mind.		
8/I/2	25	<u>Introduction to Lectures</u> - The Ends of Education	Lecture	1 Nov 1766
		<i>Eloquence</i>	Lecture	-
		<i>Of Eloquence</i>	Lecture	-
		The Orator	Lecture	-

		<i>Endowments of Mind Necessary to form the Orator</i>	Lecture	-
		<u>Summary of Lectures on -</u> Connections and Mutual Influences of the Body & Mind; Fine Art. <u>Proceed</u> to Lecture on Eloquence.	Lecture	-
8/I/3	15	Eloquence	Lecture	-
8/I/4	2	The Passions in Eloquence	Lecture	-
8/I/5	7	Oration - Facetious Kinds	Lecture	-
8/I/6	12	Eloquence of the Pulpit	Lecture	-
		<i>Eloquence of Conversation</i>	Lecture	6 Mar 1765
		<i>Eloquence of the Pulpit</i>	Lecture	-
8/I/7	2	<i>Eloquence of Popular Assemblys</i>	Lecture	-
		<i>Eloquence of the Pulpit</i>	Lecture Outline	-
		<i>Eloquence of Conversation</i>	Lecture Outline	-
8/I/8	1	<u>Conclusion to Lectures -</u> Lecture on Various Kinds of Eloquence <u>Proceed</u> to Oration	-	-
8/I/9	2	Eloquence	Lecture	11 Mar 1765
8/I/10	6	Oration	Lecture	-
8/I/11	2	Oration	Lecture	-
		<i>Elocution</i>	Lecture	-
8/I/12	6	<i>Purity of Words</i>	Lecture	-
8/I/13	6	Eloquence	Lecture Outline	-
8/I/13a	2	<i>Eloquence</i>	Lecture Outline	-
8/I/14	6	Eloquence	Lecture Outline	-
8/I/15	2	<i>Of the Fine Arts or Arts of Taste</i>	Lecture Outline	-
		<i>Pneumatology Part 3^d -</i> Lecture Outline <i>Of the Connections and Mutual Influences of Body & Mind on each other</i>	-	-
8/I/16	3	<i>Opinions of Buffier concerning Language</i>	Notes	-
		<i>Structure of Speech</i>	Lecture Outline	-
		<i>Musick</i>	Lecture Outline	-
8/I/17	2	Train of Thought	-	-
8/I/18	12	Structure of Sentence, Eloquence	Lecture	-
		<i>Personification</i>	Lecture	-
		<i>Action</i>	Lecture	-
		<i>Pronounciation</i>	Lecture	-
8/II/1	8	<i>Of Imagination</i>	-	-
		<i>To be prefixed to the Examination of Mr Hume's Account of Memory & Imagination</i>	-	-
		<i>Imagination Outline</i>	-	-

8/II/2	2	Mistakes of Philosophers concerning <u>Conception</u>	-	-
8/II/3	7	Ancient and Modern Accounts of <u>Memory</u> Theory of Ideas	-	-
8/II/4	8	<i>Of Conception</i>	-	-
8/II/5	16	<i>Of Judging</i> <i>Of Common Sense</i>	-	-
8/II/6	8	<i>Theories Concerning Judgment</i>	-	-
8/II/7	11	<i>Sentiments of Philosophers concerning Judgement</i>	-	-
8/II/8	21	<i>Of Composition</i>	Work	-
8/II/9	28	Theory of Ideas - -	-	-
8/II/10	8	<i>Things Obvious and certain with regard to Memory</i> Duration, Extension, Number, Space, Time	Work	-
8/II/11	8	<i>Of Mr Locke's Doctrine concerning Personal Identity</i> <i>Theories Concerning Memory</i>	Work	-
8/II/12	8	<i>Of Mr Locke's Account of the Origin of our Ideas in general and of his Account of the Ideas of Duration in Particular</i>	Work	-
8/II/13	14	<u>Pneumatology</u> Fine Arts Lecture Abstraction, Universals <i>Of Theories concerning Conception</i> <i>Theories concerning the Conception of Objects</i> Theory of Ideas - -	-	-
8/II/14	8	<i>Of Identity</i> <i>Theories concerning Duration and Identity</i>	-	-
8/II/15	46	The Perception of External Objects <i>Of the Common Theory of Perception</i> <i>Of the Sentiments of Bishop Berkeley</i> <i>Of the Sentiments of Mr Hume</i> Antony Arnauld vs. Malebranche <i>Ch 14 Reflexions on the common Theory of Ideas</i> Sensation Primary and Secondary qualities	Work	-
8/II/16	6	<i>Ch 20 Of the Evidence of Sense & Of Belief in general</i>	Work	-
8/II/17	12	<i>Ch 20 Of the Evidence of Sense & Of Belief in general - Later draft of 8/II/16.</i>	Work	-

8/II/18	12	<i>Ch 21 Of The Improvement of the Senses</i>	Work	-
8/II/19	8	<i>Of Prejudices the causes of wrong judgment</i>	Work	-
8/II/20	3	Prejudice	Work	-
		The Fallacies of the Senses		
8/II/20a	8	First Principles	-	-
8/II/21	9	How do we obtain the Idea of Tangible distance or extension; or the Idea of Hardness and Softness.	-	-
		<i>Definitions</i> - Apprehension, Immediate Perception, Impression or Feeling, Remembering, Simple Apprehension, conceiving, imagining		
		<i>Axioms</i> -The ingredients of remembrance and simple apprehension, Perception feeling remembrance imply the existence of their objects		
		<i>Notion</i> of extension, figure, motion.		
8/II/22	4	<i>Of The Fallacies of the Senses</i>	Work	-
8/II/23	4	<i>Of the Use and Necessity of General Words in Language</i>	Work	-
		<i>Of the Conceptions annexed to General Words</i>	Work	-
8/II/24	4	Primary and Secondary Qualities	Work	-
8/II/24a	4	Matter and Space	Work	-
8/II/24b	4	<i>Of Matter and Space</i>	Work	-
8/II/25	4	Theory of Ideas	Work	-
8/III/1	3	Introduction - Active Powers	-	-
8/V/1	4	<i>Scheme of a Course of Philosophy</i>	Lecture Outline	1759
8/VI/3	4	Single and Double Vision -	-	

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