

Social Intercourse and Social Epistemology from Thomas Reid's Point of View

by

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BMus, University of Victoria, 2008
BA, University of Victoria, 2013

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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The first aim is to present the correct interpretation of Thomas Reid's (1710-96) social epistemology. The second is to use Reid's insights on these matters to help make some progress on a related contemporary philosophical problem. In the first chapter, I present and argue for an original interpretation of Reid's account of the social operations. In the second, I do the same with respect to Reid's account of testimony (a particular species of social operation) and its epistemology. In the third, I discuss a contemporary debate between epistemic individualists and epistemic socialists. I point out that the theorists engaged in that debate assume that epistemic individualism and epistemic socialism are inconsistent positions. I then consider the debate from Reid's perspective, and, in doing so, show how the two positions might be reconciled.

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Dedication

To my favourites: Bach, Beethoven, Reid, and Wittgenstein.

Chapter 1: Thomas Reid's Account of the Mind and its Social Operations

Introduction

Thomas Reid published three major works in his lifetime: *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764), the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), and the *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (1788).¹ In all three works, Reid's aim is to describe the various powers (i.e., the various capacities or abilities) of the human mind. In the *IHM*, Reid focuses on the mind's power to perceive physical objects. There, Reid famously rejects what he calls the "theory of ideas" – i.e., the view that the immediate objects of thought are mental entities – and then develops a direct realist theory of perception. In the later *EIP* and *EAP*, Reid not only refines his earlier thought, but also goes on to describe powers that go wholly unmentioned (at least explicitly so) in the earlier work. One such power is the ability to perform the social operations of the mind. Examples of social operations include testifying to a fact, making a promise, and giving a command. In this chapter, I present an original – and, I argue, the correct – interpretation of Reid's account of the social operations.

Interest in Reid's work, for the historian of philosophy, derives in no small amount from the striking extent to which many of Reid's views resemble those commonly taken to be uniquely characteristic of the thought of the twentieth century. Reid's account of the social operations, in particular, finds contemporary analogs among theories of wide mental content and theories of speech acts. My aim, however, is not to compare Reid's

¹ In what follows, I refer to the *Inquiry in the Human Mind* as the 'IHM', the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers* as the 'EIP', and the *Essays on the Active Powers* as the 'EAP'.

account of the social operations to these analogs in any significant detail, but merely to understand Reid's account wholly from within his own conceptual and / or metaphysical framework. My aim, as it were, is just to see the world from Reid's point of view.

This chapter has four sections: (1) I present Reid's relevant background commitments; (2) I both present and motivate a preliminary statement of my interpretation of Reid's account of the social operations; (3) I both discuss and critique the other major interpretations of said account; and (4) I refine my preliminary interpretation in light of the discussion in section three.

Reid's Relevant Background Views

This section has two parts: (i) I characterize Reid's account of individuals and their attributes in general; and (ii) I characterize Reid's account of minds and their attributes in particular. My aim is both to introduce the reader to Reid's philosophical system as well as to avoid any need to go on long explanatory tangents later in the chapter

Reid on Individuals and their Attributes, in General

First, a brief comment on terminology: Reid uses the term 'individual' to refer to things that can exist independently of all other things; and Reid uses the term 'attribute' to refer to things that cannot exist independently of those things of which they are predicated.²

Reid's account of individuals, then, is properly considered his account of substances. I

² This use of the term 'attribute' is somewhat anachronistic. I am suggesting that Reid uses the term to refer, neutrally, to the properties of bodies and the operations and powers of minds. Although Reid often does speak this way, he is not perfectly consistent. Reid often (although not always) uses 'attribute' to refer to universals, which are, on his account, conceptually distinct from the particular properties, operations, and powers of particular individuals. I choose to adopt the neutral use of 'attribute' for the following two reasons: (1) glossing over Reid's distinction between particular properties instantiations and universal attributes (at this point in the discussion, at least) is not problematic, and (2) the neutral use of 'attribute' is, to my ear, a natural way to speak.

prefer the term ‘individual’ to ‘substance’ – it is the less historically and theoretically loaded of the two – and so I will use it exclusively in the discussion that follows.

Concerning individuals and their attributes, Reid writes that

There are some things which cannot exist by themselves, but must be in something else to which they belong, as qualities or attributes... That thing, whatever it be, of which they are qualities, is called their subject, and such qualities necessarily suppose a subject. Things which may exist by themselves, and do not necessarily suppose the existence of any thing else, are called substances. (*EIP*, p. 43)

All things which we immediately perceive by our senses... are things which must be in something else as their subject. Thus, by my senses, I perceive figure, colour, hardness, softness, motion, resistance, and such like things... It is not to these qualities, but to that which is the subject of them, that we give the name of body... In like manner, the things I am conscious of, such as thought, reasoning, desire, necessarily suppose something that thinks, that reasons, that desires. We do not give the name of mind to thought, reason, or desire; but to that being which thinks, which reasons, and which desires. (*EIP*, p. 43-44)

The essence of both body and of mind is unknown to us. We know certain properties of the first, and certain operations of the last, and by these only we can define or describe them. We define body to be that which is extended, solid, moveable, divisible. In like manner, we define mind to be that which thinks. (*EIP*, p. 20)

Evidently, then, Reid holds that there are two fundamentally distinct types of individuals – namely, minds and bodies – and thus Reid is some manner of substance dualist. In the just-quoted passages, Reid makes the following three claims: (a) individuals are subjects of predication to various attributes; (b) individuals are ontologically distinct from said attributes; and (c) individuals are conceived relative to their known attributes. In what follows, I provide brief clarifications of each of these claims.

Concerning (a), note that Reid calls the attributes of bodies either ‘properties’ or ‘qualities’, and he calls the attributes of minds ‘operations’ and ‘powers’. Typical examples of Reidian properties include colours, shapes, locations, and so on. Typical examples of Reidian operations include perceptions, memories, and judgements; and the powers just are the mind’s abilities to perform such operations.

Concerning (b), note that Reid’s claim is that the essence of any individual is not identified with any of its attributes. The essence of the mind, e.g., is not identified with thought, but rather with the thing that thinks; and the essence of body, likewise, is not identified with extension (or any other property, for that matter) but rather with the thing that is extended. The individual, on Reid’s account, is the subject of predication not what is predicated of it. Reid’s view can be well-understood in contrast, e.g., to that of Rene Descartes, who identifies the essence of mind with thought and the essence of body with extension; Reid’s view is more similar to that of someone like John Locke.

Concerning (c), just note that the claim is epistemic. Reid’s view is that one can conceive an individual (i.e., that one can make the individual an object of thought) only insofar as one conceives the individual as “that unknown something that is subject to these known attributes”.³ This is just to say, on Reid’s account, that one’s conception and knowledge of an individual is, in principle, completely exhausted by one’s conception and knowledge of the fact that it stands in subject-predicate relations to its known attributes.

Now, let’s consider Reid’s account of the attributes more particularly. There is much that might be said on this topic, but, for our purposes, the most important point is that

³ To conceive something just is, according to Reid, to perform an act in which one makes that something an object of thought. On his account, this does not require that one subsume the object under a concept or category. To conceive some object, rather, is just to make *cognitive contact* with it, so to speak.

Reid draws a distinction between attributes that are *simple* and attributes that are *complex*. This distinction, according to Reid, applies equally to the attributes of minds and the attributes of bodies. To put it roughly, the distinction is this: An attribute is simple just when it is neither a combination nor a modification of another attribute, and an attribute is complex just when it is not simple.⁴ To clarify this important distinction, I discuss, in what follows, the nature of Reidian combinations and modifications separately and in turn.

Concerning complex combinations, Reid writes that

By the intellectual analysis of objects, we form conceptions of single attributes... [and] by combining several of these into one parcel, and giving a name to that combination, we form general conceptions that may be very complex. (*EIP*, p. 373)

In performing an “intellectual analysis” of an object, one conceives an attribute all by itself, which is just to say that one conceives it without concomitantly conceiving of either an individual or of another attribute. Think, e.g., of a body in your vicinity that is subject to both a colour property and a shape property. Now, think just of the colour property without also conceiving of either the subject or its figure. That – what you just did – is an intellectual analysis of the object. On Reid’s account, an intellectual analysis just is an act of taking an object of thought apart in thought. Reid is of course committed to saying that colour properties – like all other attributes – cannot exist independently of some individual that is its subject. But this is, Reid thinks, not a problem, precisely because the object is taken apart in thought only.

⁴ Reid sometimes uses the term ‘composition’ to refer to particularly complex combinations, and, more particularly, to the sorts of highly complex combinations involved in the production of the fine arts. Fundamentally speaking, however, they are just the same kind of thing, and so, in what follows, I will merely refer to combinations. If one is not inclined to take my word for it, just see Reid’s discussion at (*EIP*, p.376).

Concerning attributes that are complex in virtue of being combinations, the reader need only note that once an intellectual analysis of an object is performed, Reid thinks that one can construct, in thought, complex combinations of single attributes. To do so, one simply conceives distinct single attributes as jointly constituting one attribute.

An interesting (and important) question: Why does Reid write, in the just-quoted passage, that “we form *general* conceptions that may be very complex”? Well, on Reid’s account, distinct individuals can be – and often are – subject to the very same attributes. This is just to say, e.g., that two different books can be the very same colour in the very same sense. Reid holds, then, that attributes are universals. An attribute is conceived as non-universal, Reid thinks, just when it is conceived along with a conception of the particular individual that is its subject (e.g., a colour might be conceived as *the whiteness of this sheet of paper* as opposed to *the whiteness of that one*). An attribute is conceived as a universal, on the other hand, just when it is conceived, by way of an intellectual analysis, apart from any such conception of its subject (e.g., the colour is conceived merely as *whiteness per se*).⁵

Concerning complex modifications, Reid writes that

There are not only attributes belonging to individual subjects, but there are likewise attributes of attributes, which may be called secondary attributes. Most attributes are capable of different degrees, and different modifications... Thus it is an attribute of many bodies to be moved; but motion may be in an endless variety of

⁵ The relevant passages are found in EIP pp. 354-405. For an in-depth discussion of Reid’s account abstracta, see Castagnetto (1992). Note, however, that Castagnetto’s discussion is flawed. While Castagnetto gives the correct account of Reidian abstracta, she does not distinguish, in her paper, between abstracta and universals, which, according to Reid, are conceptually distinct. E.g., Reid writes that “the whiteness of this sheet is one thing, whiteness another; the conceptions signified by these two forms of speech are as different as the expressions: The first signifies an individual quality really existing, though it be an abstract one: The second signifies a general conception [i.e., a universal], which implies not existence, but may be predicated of everything that is white, and in the same sense” (EIP, p. 367).

directions. It may be quick or slow, rectilinear or curvilinear; it may be equable, or accelerated, or retarded. (*EIP*, p.356)

The attribute *motion*, then, can be modified by (i.e., can itself become subject to) distinct sorts of attributes called ‘secondary attributes’.⁶ Relevant examples of secondary attributes include *accelerated* and *retarded*. Now, the point to note is just that although *accelerated motion* is indeed a single attribute – which is just to say that is not complex in virtue of being a combination – it is, nevertheless, complex in virtue of being a modification. On Reid’s account, then, it is only the constituent primary and secondary attributes of modifications – e.g., the attribute *motion* and the attribute *accelerated* – that are properly considered simple.⁷

Moving on from the notion of simplicity, then, the last point to make about Reidian attributes concerns the ways one can, on Reid’s account, identify different classes of attributes. Concerning the way one identifies classes of individuals, Reid writes that:

Observing many individuals to agree in certain attributes, we refer them all to one class, and give a name to that class: This name comprehends in its signification not one attribute only, but all the attributes that distinguish that class; and by affirming this name of any individual, we affirm it to have all the attributes which characterize the class. (*EIP*, p. 356)

And Reid immediately adds that

⁶ Note that the primary / secondary attributes distinction here is not Reid’s distinction between primary and secondary qualities. The distinction between attributes discussed here is a distinction between the relation attributes bear to each other, whereas the distinction between the distinction between primary and secondary qualities involves the manner in which the mind conceives such qualities.

⁷ Note that modifications can be intellectually analyzed just like individuals. This is just to say that one can distinguish, in thought, between (i) the primary attribute, (ii) any secondary attributes that modify the primary attribute, and (iii) the modification as a whole. There is, however, one important difference to note between the conception of modified primary attributes and the conception of individuals: of individuals, one can only have a relative conception (i.e., one cannot conceive the essence of an individual, but merely it in relation to its various attributes), but, of primary attributes, one can directly conceive their essence. One can, e.g., think about *motion* without merely thinking of it relative to some particular secondary attribute that happens to modify it.

Nor is it only substances that we thus form into classes. We do the same with regard to qualities, relations, actions, affections, passions, and all other things. (Ibid.)

On Reid's account, then, one identifies a class of individuals by identifying a combination of attributes, associating a name with that combination, and then by using that name to refer to all those individuals subject to the attributes included in that combination. And Reid holds that classes of attributes can be identified in much the same way. One can identify a class of attributes, then, by using the same name to refer to all those primary attributes subject to some combination of secondary attributes. It is important to note, however, that there is another sense, on Reid's account, in which an attribute might be identified as a member of a class. The different modifications of the same primary attribute, e.g., might well be considered members of the same class. The modifications *accelerated motion* and *decelerated motion*, e.g., might well be considered members of the class *types of motion*. The reader just need note that these two sorts of classes of attributes are conceptually distinct.

Reid on Minds and their Attributes, in Particular

To begin, recall that the attributes of minds are their operations and powers. Operations are the things the mind does: the mind, e.g., thinks, perceives, imagines, remembers, loves, hates, desires, and so on. Powers just are the mind's abilities to do such things.

Concerning operations in particular, Reid writes that

It deserves our notice, that the various modes of thinking have always, and in all languages, as far as we know, been called by the name of operations of the mind, or by names of the same import. To body we ascribe various properties, but not operations, properly so called... [The body is] a dead in active thing, which moves only as it is moved, and acts only by being acted upon. But the mind is from its very

nature a living and active being. Every thing we know of it implies life and active energy; and the reason why all its modes of thinking are called operations, is, that in all, or in most of them, it is not merely passive as body is, but is really and properly active. (*EIP*, pp. 20-21)

Evidently, then, Reid holds that the attributes of the mind are fundamentally dissimilar to the attributes of the body. There are, on his account, not only two fundamentally distinct kinds of individuals, but also two fundamentally distinct kinds of attributes. One key difference between these two kinds of attributes is this: In performing operations an individual is active, whereas in bearing properties an individual is passive. Reid's view, then, can be rightly understood in contrast to that of Aristotle, according to whom my cup, e.g., in bearing some particular colour property, *does* something in very much the same sense as my mind, when, that is, my mind perceives that particular colour.⁸

In what follows, I characterize one important feature of Reid's account of the operations of the mind by comparing operations to two token examples of acts: that is, by comparing said operations to token examples of things one *does*. First, I present and comment on the token examples, and then I highlight one similarity the examples have, on Reid's account, to the operations of the mind, and also to one sense in which the picture painted by the examples is potentially misleading.

The two examples are: (1) Bill handles the controls in the cockpit of a plane, and (2) Bill flies a plane. Clearly, (1) and (2) are both acts, and, what's more, acts performed by Bill. The first point to note, for our purposes, is that (1) and (2) are distinct acts. What motivates this claim? Well, consider the following case: Bill handles the controls in an cockpit exactly like when he is flying a plane, but here the cockpit is in an elaborate

⁸ A tangential point: It is in light of this point, I believe, that Reid's strict adherence to Berkeley's doctrine that nothing can be like an idea but another idea is perhaps best understood.

simulator – i.e., the controls are not hooked up to the rest of the mechanism of a plane in the appropriate way (and perhaps the simulator is even so life-like that Bill cannot tell the difference). In this case, Bill handles the controls in a cockpit but he does not fly a plane. Thus, (1) and (2) are distinct acts. Bill’s act of flying a plane, then, unlike his act of handling the controls, can be performed only if the controls are hooked up to the mechanism of a plane in the appropriate way. This illustrates the fact that some acts can be performed only in a particular environmental context; put somewhat differently, environmental conditions are sometimes necessary conditions for the performance of acts.

The similarity between our token examples and Reidian operations, then, is just this: Some operations are such that they, too, can be performed only if certain environmental conditions are satisfied. It might be helpful to consider some examples.

First, consider all those operations that are exertions of what Reid calls ‘active powers’. Active operations are all those operations that, in performing them, the mind causes some change in something distinct from the operation itself. Concerning the mind’s various active operations and powers, Reid writes that

The name of a cause and of an agent, is properly given to that being only, which, by its active power, produces some change in itself or in some other being. The change, whether it be of thought, of will, or of motion, is the effect.... The [production of the] effect cannot be in his power unless all the means necessary to its production be in his power. (*EAP*, p. 203)

To prevent mistake, it is proper to observe, that a being may have a power at one time which it has not at another. It may commonly have a power, which, at a particular time, it has not. Thus, a man may commonly have power to walk or to run; but he has not this power when asleep, or when he is confined by superior force. In common language, he may

be said to have a power which he cannot then exert. But this popular expression means only that he commonly has this power, and will have it when the cause is removed which at present deprives him of it. (*EAP*, p. 203)

Take, for example, that active power that is one's ability to move one's hand.

According to Reid, to exert that power – i.e., to perform the active operation in question – just is to cause one's hand to move. The important point to note is that, on Reid's account, the power to move one's hand is exerted only if one's hand actually moves. The act *attempting to move one's hand* is, on this picture, simply a different operation than *moving one's hand*, and this is true whether the attempt is thwarted by a malfunction of one's cognitive system or by some external impediment to motion. So for it to be possible to exert one's power to move one's hand, it must be the case that, among other things, one's hand is not trapped under a really big rock. What this shows is that, on Reid's account, environmental conditions are sometimes necessary conditions for the performance of active operations.

Next, consider those operations that are exertions of the mind's intellectual powers. Examples of intellectual powers are perception, judgment, and memory. Unlike the active operations, the exertion of an intellectual power does not cause a change in an object distinct from the operation itself. On Reid's account, however, the mind's intellectual operations, although they cause no change in an object distinct from themselves, are nevertheless directed towards such objects. In the contemporary literature, operations of this sort are often called 'intentional acts'. The interesting thing to note is that, on Reid's account, it is a necessary condition for the performance of intentional acts that there is an

object distinct from the act itself – namely, that object at which the act is directed.⁹ It is, e.g., possible to perceive some object only if it presently exists, and it is possible to remember some object only if it existed in the past.

Some of Reid's interpreters, however, might disagree with me here. Some might suggest that Reid is only committed to the claim that, in performing an intentional act, the mind must merely act *as if* there is such an object. This alternative line of interpretation, however, is problematic. Consider, e.g., the following passages:

Perception... hath always an object distinct from the act by which it is perceived; an object which may exist whether it be perceived or not. I perceive a tree that grows before my window; there is here an object which is perceived, and an act of mind by which it is perceived; and these two are not only distinguishable, but they are extremely unlike in their natures. The object is made up of a trunk, branches, and leaves. (*IHM*, p. 168)

What never had an existence cannot be remembered; what has no existence at present cannot be the object of perception. (*EIP*, p. 24)

I cannot see without seeing something. To see without having an object of sight is absurd. I cannot remember, without remembering something. The thing remembered is past, the remembrance of it present. (*EIP*, p. 44)

In these passages, Reid asserts that, in order for it to be possible to perceive an object, it is necessary that the perceived object exists. How else one might plausibly interpret these passages is quite unclear.¹⁰

⁹ On Reid's account, the only intellectual operations that do not require objects are sensations. Sensations are not, according to Reid, intentional acts; sensations are not about objects distinct from themselves, and do not produce any change in such objects. In virtue of this fact, having a sensation of pain, for example, does not, on Reid's account, seem to have any necessary environmental conditions.

¹⁰ A tangential point: As with most direct realists, the possibility of perceptual error poses a problem for Reid. And the consideration of Reid's response to this problem raises some interesting questions. In (*EIP*, p.241-52) Reid directly address this problem. There, Reid argues that original perception is infallible, and that perceptual error only occurs in acquired perception. (Acquired perception is original perception plus a habitual inference.) Perception, properly so called, is really just original perception. Reid explicitly states, earlier in the

The similarity to the token examples, then, is just that, like Bill's act of flying a plane, many of the operations of the mind are such that their performance is subject to environmental conditions. And what is the dissimilarity? How, exactly, is the comparison potentially misleading? Well, the problem is that understanding Reidian operations on analogy with Bill's act of flying a plane can produce, in some readers, a picture of the mind on which its operations are thought to literally take place "in the mind" in the same sense that Bill's actions literally take place "in the cockpit" – the picture, here, is one on which the mind is thought to be, literally, in some "inner" space that is distinct from the physical / external world. According to Reid, however, to speak of operations as being "in the mind" is just a convenient way of talking. Reid writes, e.g., that

We frequently meet with a distinction in writers... between things in the mind, and things external to the mind. The powers... and operations of the mind, are the things in the mind... When therefore we speak of things in the mind, we understand by this, things of which the mind is the subject. Excepting the mind itself, and things in the mind, all other things are said to be external. It ought therefore to be remembered, that this distinction between things in the mind, and things external, is not meant to signify the place of the thing we speak of, but their subject. (*EIP*, pp. 21-22)

On Reid's account, then, to say that something is "in the mind" is merely to identify it as one of the mind's attributes. To say that something is "in the mind" is not to say that it is located in some peculiar "inner" location. Further, in his lecture notes, Reid writes that

essay, that he only refers to acquired perception as a species of perception as a concession to ordinary language use. Of course, on Reid's account, acquired perceptions are still intentional acts. In perceptual error, we do not perceive but rather conceive or imagine objects that do not exist. Conceptions and imaginings are intentional acts too, and so Reid is thereby committed to saying there are intentional objects that do not exist. For a good discussion of Reid's commitment to some form of Meinongianism, see Ryan Nichols (2004). On the present interpretation, Reid is committed to saying that it is necessary condition for the performance of such an act of imagining that there is an object that is its intentional object, but that the object does not need to exist.

The soul [i.e., the mind] has no place... yet there is a certain sphere to which its perceptions are limited so as to extend no farther... [And] we cannot move any body but by means of our own... The space within which its agency [is limited] & its power of perceiving external things {is limited} may be called its place. (*LNDS*, pp. 619-20)

The content of Reid's lecture notes ought to be considered delicately; Reid chose, after all, not to include said content in his published work. This passage, however, is too interesting to ignore. Reid asserts that the mind itself has no location, at least not in any literal sense. Not only are the operations of the mind are not located "in the mind", then, but also the mind itself is not located anywhere. Why does Reid make the latter claim? Well, note that it is not clear how, given his background commitments, Reid can make sense of the claim that the mind has a location. Reid holds that there is a fundamental difference between the attributes of bodies and the attributes of minds, and so since *location* is clearly an attribute of bodies, Reid is committed to saying that *location* is fundamentally different than any attribute of the mind. In occupying a particular location, Reid ought to say, an individual does not *do* something, at least not in any sense that implies life and activity. It does not make sense, then, for Reid, to talk about the mind as having a location. The mind is just not that kind of thing.

It is interesting to note, however, that, in the just-quoted passage, Reid writes that although the mind itself has no location, the mind can nevertheless be said to operate in particular locations. Concerning the mind's active powers, this sphere of operation potentially extends (at least) to the limits of one's physical body; and, concerning the intellectual operations, the sphere extends well beyond the limits of one's physical body. How can we make sense of this claim? My suggestion is Reid holds that, in exerting an active power, the mind directly engages with external objects – at least, that is, in the

sense that the act of mind directly effects some change in such objects. And my further suggestion is that Reid holds that, in exerting intellectual powers, although the mind does not produce a change in an external object, it nevertheless directly engages with such objects in something of an analogous sense. The act of perceiving an object, on this suggestion, just is the act of engaging with an object in such a way that the mind is acquainted with some of its properties. In perceiving a physical object, the mind makes cognitive contact, as it were, with the object; perceiving is much like reaching out and grabbing. If this suggestion is correct, Reid's reasoning might be that it is in virtue of the fact that the mind directly engages with objects that occupy locations that one may, in an analogous sense, say that the mind itself is in those locations.

What is the point to take away here? How does recognizing that the comparison to Bill's act is potentially misleading help us to better understand Reid's general account of the operations of the mind? My suggestion is that if we understand that Reid thinks of the mind as something that reaches out and engages with objects in the external world – as opposed, e.g., to something whose acts are wholly contained within the limits of one's skull – we can better understand Reid's reason for thinking that the mind's operations have the necessary environmental conditions. Reid's reasoning, I suggest, is as follows: In performing an operation, the mind engages with an external object. And so if there is no such object – or, for whatever reason, the object is not in such a state that it can be engaged with in the appropriate way – then the mind simply cannot engage with it, which is to say that the mind cannot perform the relevant operation.

Preliminary Characterization of the Social Operations

In this section, I argue that Reid's account of the social operations consists, minimally, of eight basic claims. The section has three parts; in each part, I directly comment on a selection from the primary text.

Social Operations are Characterized by their Necessary Conditions

Concerning the social operations, Reid writes that

Some operations of our minds, from their very nature, are social, others solitary. By the first, I understand such operations as necessarily suppose an intercourse with some other intelligent being. (*EIP*, p. 68)

I call those operations solitary, which may be performed by a man in solitude, without intercourse with any other intelligent being. I call those operations social, which necessarily imply social intercourse with some other intelligent being. (*EAP*, p. 330)

Between the operations of the mind, which, for want of a more proper name, I have called solitary, and those I have called social, there is this very remarkable distinction, that, in the solitary, the expression of them by words, or any other sensible sign, is accidental. They may exist, and be complete, without being expressed, without being known to any other person. But, in the social operations, the expression is essential. They cannot exist without being expressed by words or signs, and known to the other party. (*EAP*, p. 330)

There are several claims here. First, Reid identifies the social operations as attributes of the mind and contrasts them with the solitary operations. These two classes of operations are evidently taken to be mutually exclusive, and, together, taken to exhaust the class of operations in general. Second, Reid distinguishes the social operations from the solitary by identifying two necessary conditions for the performance of the social. The first such condition is that the mind engages in social intercourse with another intelligent being, and the second is that the operation be expressed by words or other sensible signs. Put

somewhat differently, this is to say that the social operations can be performed only if expressed and only if there exists an intelligent being who responds in some appropriate way.¹¹

Some interpreters might object to my reading of these passages. Along the same lines as the imagined reading above, whereby the mind merely “supposes” an external object in perceiving and remembering, some might suggest that Reid does not claim, here, that there are such necessary environmental conditions, but merely that the mind *necessarily supposes* that such conditions obtain in the sense that the mind *necessarily acts as though* they obtain. Such interpreters might reason that, if Reid intends to identify necessary conditions, he would use a term like ‘entails’ rather than ‘implies’ or ‘supposes’; the thought being that the word ‘entails’ has more of the logical connotation that I evidently wish to read out of the text.

There is, however, good reason to dismiss this objection. The first is that Reid clearly states, in the third quoted passage, that the social operations cannot exist without being expressed and without being known to another party. It is not, of course, clear whether the social intercourse to which Reid refers consists merely in the existence of the social operation being known to another party, but Reid clearly asserts that the social operations cannot exist unless expressed and unless there exists an intelligent being who responds appropriately. And this is all I mean to suggest when I write that Reid identifies two necessary conditions for the performance of the social operations. The second reason is

¹¹ The a good discussion of Reid’s account of expressive linguistic signs see D.D. Todd (1987), B.E. Rollins (1978), or Somerville (1989). Reid’s most concise discussion of this is found at is found at *IHM*, pp.58 – 61.

that Reid uses the phrase “necessarily suppose” elsewhere, and his usage, there, supports my interpretation. Reid writes that

...there are some things which cannot exist by themselves, but must be in something else to which they belong, as qualities or attributes. Thus motion cannot exist but in something that is moved... That thing, whatever it be, of which they are qualities, is called their subject, and such qualities necessarily suppose a subject... In like manner, the things I am conscious of, such as thought, reasoning, desire, necessarily suppose something that thinks, that reasons, desires. (*EIP*, p. 43)

So Reid uses the phrase “necessarily suppose” to indicate that, necessarily, an attribute cannot exist unless there exists something that is its subject. Evidently, then, Reid, uses the phrase ‘x necessarily supposes y’ to indicate that x cannot exist unless y exists. My claim that Reid identifies necessary environmental conditions for the performance of the social operations, then, is grounded merely in the assumption that we ought to take Reid to mean much the same thing when he uses the same expression – unless, that is, there is good reason to do otherwise. Since Reid distinguishes the social operations from the solitary by claiming that the social necessarily suppose social intercourse with another intelligent being, a straightforward reading of the text suggests that Reid distinguishes the social from the solitary by noting that it is necessary for the performance of the social operations that there exists another intelligent being that responds appropriately and that the social operation is expressed by words or signs.

Social Intercourse is Constituted by Reciprocal Pairs of Social Operations

Concerning the social operations, Reid writes that

...when [a man] asks information, or receives it; when he bears testimony, or the receives testimony from another;

when he asks a favour, or accepts one; when he gives a command to his servant, or receives one from a superior... these are acts of social intercourse between intelligent beings, and can have no place in solitude. They suppose understanding and will; but they suppose something more, which is neither understanding nor will; that is, society with other intelligent beings. (*EIP*, p. 68)

Here, Reid not only identifies social operations, but also pairs of social operations. I take this passage to illustrate that, when Reid claims that the social operations necessarily suppose social intercourse with other intelligent beings, he means more than just that the existence and nature of the social operation must be known to another party. Reid means, rather, that there must exist another intelligent being who exercises his/her intelligence by performing another social operation - i.e., one that appropriately completes the pair. One cannot, e.g., perform the social operation of giving testimony unless there is another person that performs the social operation of receiving testimony. In what follows, I refer to the later as a 'reciprocal operation'. We can say, then, that the performance of a social operation necessarily supposes that an intelligent being performs the appropriate reciprocal social operation.

Further, note that it follows, here, that it is an interesting and distinctive feature of the social operations that their performance satisfies a necessary condition for the satisfaction of one of their own necessary conditions. Put more simply, that the view is that just as one cannot give testimony unless another receives it, one cannot receive testimony unless another gives it. Note, then, that the social operations stand in this respect, in a symmetric existential dependence relation with the relevant reciprocal operations.¹² An interesting

¹² Is the existence of the operation's expression sufficient for the existence of the social operation? No, the existence of a particular expression or utterance (i.e., the existence of a certain set of sounds) is not; one can utter the sounds "the cat is on the mat" even when nobody is around to hear it. But what if Reid uses the term 'expression' to refer specifically to an utterance that is appropriately received by another person,

and distinctive feature of the social operations, then, is that, in performing them, the mind not only engages with the external world – like most other operations of the mind – but also, necessarily, the world engages back.

What else does Reid have to say about the general nature of reciprocal operations?

Reid that writes in the *EAP* that

...the social intercourse of mankind, consisting of those social operations which I have mentioned, is the exercise of a faculty appropriated to that purpose, which is a gift from God, no less than the powers of seeing and hearing. And that, in order to carry on this intercourse God has given to man a natural language, by which his social operations are expressed... No man can perceive any necessary connection between the signs of such operations, and the things signified by them. But we are so formed by the author of our nature, that [when the signs are distinctly conceived] the operations themselves become visible, as it were. (*EAP*, pp. 331-332)

Reciprocal operations, then, are not only acts in which one conceives of a social operation, but also, more particularly, acts in which one conceives a social operation by means of interpreting the linguistic signs that constitute its expression.¹³ What are we to make, then, of Reid's enigmatic suggestion that, in social intercourse, the social operation "becomes visible, as it were" to the one who performs the reciprocal operation. I take this comment to indicate an important difference between the reciprocal operations and intentional acts in which one merely knows of the existence a social operation. This

rather than to the mere vocalization of certain sounds which, under the right conditions, would constitute such an expression? If so, then both of the necessary conditions of the social operations are also sufficient. This suggestion, however, does not sit particularly well with the text, for the phrase "they cannot exist without being expressed *and known to the other party*" becomes needlessly repetitive. What is clear, though, is that Reid does not take the mere production of certain physical signs to be sufficient for the performance of the social operation.

¹³ It is unclear, here, whether the social operations are expressed only by natural language in all cases, or whether they might ever be expressed, either in part or in whole, by artificial signs. I am inclined to accept the latter view, but whether I am correct on this point is not, in my best judgment, of any real significance to my arguments that follow.

difference is similar to that between an act of perception and an intentional act in which one merely knows of the existence of a presently-existing physical object. In perception, one comes, by means of interpreting the natural language of one's sensations, to be directly acquainted with a presently existing physical object, whereas mere knowledge of a presently existing object does not require that one is directly acquainted with the object or that one comes to know of it by such means.¹⁴ The mind's reciprocal operations, too, are not merely operations in which one knows of the existence of a social operation, but operations in which one comes to be directly *acquainted*, as it were, with a social operation – and, what's more, that one comes to be so acquainted by means of interpreting the signs that constitute the social operation's linguistic expression. To clarify: if, e.g., Jane testifies to me today that Bill testified to her back in 1962, I do not thereby perform the reciprocal act of receiving Bill's original act of testimony – it is, rather, Jane who performed that reciprocal operation back in 1962. I come to know of the existence of Bill's testimony, of course, but his act of testimony does not thereby “become visible, as it were” to me.¹⁵

Social Operations are Simple

Concerning the social operations, Reid writes that

¹⁴ There is a lot of background theory concerning Reid's account of perception presupposed here. For the best discussion of Reid's picture of what I refer to as “the natural language of one's sensations” and its analogy to the linguistic signs by which we “perceive”, as it were, the operations of other minds, see Lehrer (1985), D.D. Todd (1987), and Somerville (1989). Also, see Reid's own words at IHM, pp.190-193. There Reid explicitly lays out his analogy between the cognitive mechanisms involved in perception / the interpretation sensation and the cognitive mechanisms involved in the interpretation of linguistic signs.

¹⁵ Note that the class of reciprocal operations cannot be straightforwardly identified with the class of intentional operations in which one conceives / knows of an operation by means of interpreting that operation's linguistic expression. Reciprocal operations are, rather, intentional operations in which one is so acquainted with the social operations of other minds, not solitary ones.

[The social operations] are neither simple apprehension, nor judgment, nor reasoning [i.e., examples of particular solitary operations], nor are they any [combination] of these... To ask a question, is as simple an operation as to judge or to reason; yet it is neither judgment, nor reasoning, nor simple apprehension, nor is it any combination of these. Testimony is neither simple apprehension, nor judgment, nor reasoning. The same may be said of a promise, or of a contract. These acts of mind are perfectly understood by every man of common understanding. (*EIP*, p. 68)

I take it to be the common opinion of Philosophers, that the social operations of the human mind are not specifically different from the solitary, and that they are only various modifications or compositions of our solitary operations, and may be resolved into them... I apprehend, however, it will be found extremely difficult, if not impossible, to resolve our social operations into any modification or [combination] of the solitary. The social operations appear as simple in their nature as the solitary. (*EAP*, p. 330)

To begin, recall Reid's distinction between simple and complex attributes. Next, note that Reid writes, in the just-quoted passages, that the social operations are irreducible to the solitary in virtue of the fact that the social are just as simple as the solitary. The social operations, then, are not mere combinations of solitary operations and not modifications of primary solitary operations.

We can ask the following question: Is it the particular token social operations that are simple, or is it that the particular social operations are complex modifications of some common primary attribute that is itself the social operation simpliciter? Both readings seem compatible with Reid's claim that the social operations are not reducible to the solitary operations. The answer to the question, however, is quite clear. Reid clearly states that the question is just as simple as a judgement, and elsewhere he states that a judgement is just as simple as a bare apprehension – which, on Reid's account, is as simple an operation as any. It is the question (in the sense of the mental operation), then,

that is simple, and the same ought to be said of the other particular social operations. It is testimony, question, and command, then, on Reid's account, that are essentially distinct from the solitary (and from each other) in virtue of their simple primary characters.

What of the term 'social operation'? Reid uses 'social operation' to refer to a class of attributes, and, more particularly, to refer to that class that the particular social operations are members of. Given Reid's account of how one identifies classes of attributes, then, the social operations must all share some common secondary attribute(s), those attribute(s) included in the combination used to identify the class. This is clear because the social operations cannot all be members of the same class in virtue of being distinct complex modifications of the same primary attribute, for they would not, then, be simple attributes in their own right. What must the common secondary attribute(s) be? Well, Reid characterizes the social operations in general – i.e., in opposition to the solitary – by noting it is a distinctive feature of the social that they can be performed only if there exists an intelligent being who responds appropriately and only if they are expressed by words or signs. On the most straightforward reading, then, in identifying these distinctive features, Reid is identifying those secondary attributes that, taken together, jointly constitute the complex combination used to identify the social operations as a class.

Summary of the Preliminary Characterization

Reid's account of the social operations, then, consists, minimally, of the following eight claims:

1. Social operations are attributes of the mind.
2. Every operation of the mind is either solitary or social, but not both.

3. There are two necessary conditions for the performance of social operations: (i) that the operation is expressed by words or signs, and that (ii) an intelligent being performs the appropriate reciprocal operation.
4. There is at least one sufficient condition for the performance of a social operation: (ii) that an intelligent being performs the appropriate reciprocal operation.
5. Reciprocal operations are themselves social operations.
6. Reciprocal operations are intentional acts in which one is acquainted with a social operation, by way of interpreting its sensible expression.
7. Social operations are simple.
8. Social operations are members of the same class – i.e., they are social as opposed to solitary – in virtue of the fact that they share some common secondary attribute(s).

I do not mean to suggest that these eight claims exhaustively constitute Reid's account of the social operations. In what follows – both in the remainder of this chapter and continuing into the next – I supplement this preliminary characterization in various ways.

Critical Discussion of Reid's Interpreters

In what follows, I present and critique the two main published interpretations of Reid's account of the social operations. The first is presented in P.S Arsdal (1986), Keith Lehrer (1989), and Karl Schuhmann and Barry Smith (1990). The second is presented in Gideon Yaffe (2011). In what follows, I argue that both of these interpretations are incorrect. I discuss them for two main reasons. The first is that understanding what is wrong with them helps one to understand certain confusions that arise in the literature concerned with Reid's account of testimony. These confusions will be discussed in detail in chapter two.

The second is that a consequence of discussing these other interpretations is that I am led to ask questions about my own interpretation of Reid's account.¹⁶

Critique of the "Social Operations are Speech acts" Interpretation

Karl Schuhmann and Barry Smith present their interpretation in "Elements of Speech Act Theory in the Work of Thomas Reid" (Schuhmann and Smith, 1990). They write that

[Reid's] writings leave no doubt that he is acutely aware of the very problems concerning language structure and use out of which contemporary speech act theory has evolved and that he goes a good way towards solving these problems in the spirit of the modern theory. (Schuhmann and Smith, p. 47)

The technical term Reid usually employs for all such utterances is 'social operations'. (Schuhmann and Smith, p. 54)

Their relation [i.e., between the social operation and the linguistic expression] is more like that which obtains between a complete operation and some incipient part, rather than like that between questioning act and the corresponding question sentence. (Schuhmann and Smith, p. 59)

P.S. Arsdal adopts a similar view in his article "Hume and Reid on Promise, Intention, and Obligation" (1986). Arsdal writes that

[The social operations] are indeed speech acts and Reid gives the following examples: asking for information, testifying to a fact, giving a command to a servant, making a promise and entering into a contract. (Arsdal, p. 62)

Keith Lehrer, moreover, in his widely influential book *Thomas Reid* (1989), adopts this line of interpretation. Lehrer, e.g., writes that

¹⁶ It should be noted that there is a third published interpretation. This third interpretation is presented by C.A.J Coady in, among other works, his paper "Thomas Reid on the Social Operations of the Mind" (2004). Coady's comments are discussed in detail in chapter two.

[On Reid's account of the social operations,] promising and contracting... are no mere modifications of the intellect. Indeed, the theory that Reid proposes comes rather close to that for which J.L. Austin became famous. It is the expression that constitutes the promise. (Lehrer, pp. 252-3)

Lehrer, Schuhmann, and Smith, then, hold that the social operations are a certain class of utterances, and, what's more, that very same class of utterance investigated by J.L. Austin and his followers in the twentieth century. Arsdal, moreover, goes so far as to explicitly state that the social operations just are speech acts.

Before discussing this claim that Reid's social operations are speech acts, it might be helpful, here, to briefly outline what exactly a speech act is. Contemporary speech act theory has its origins in J.L. Austin's classic book *How to do Things with Words* (1962). Perhaps the most direct way to get at the important point here is to appreciate Austin's notion of an illocutionary act. Let's consider an example. Suppose, e.g., that you and I are standing next to each other in a crowded room I say quite loudly (and directly in your ear) "You are standing on my foot". Here, Austin distinguishes the semantic content this utterance from its illocutionary force. The semantic content of the utterance is just the proposition that you are standing on my foot. The force of utterance, on the other hand, is that I am telling you to stop standing on my foot: that is, the semantic content of this utterance just is *what I literally say*, whereas the force of the utterance involves *what I am doing in saying it*. A speech act, then, is an utterance that carries illocutionary force, and so the claim that the social operations are (or, rather, are analogous to) speech acts is the claim that the social operations are such utterances.

Now, it is not entirely clear how best to cash out the claim that the social operations are speech acts. On Schuhmann and Smith's version of the interpretation, e.g., the claim is that the audible utterance that is the sensible expression of the social operation is thought

to be a constituent part of the social operation itself. This interpretation, however, is clearly incorrect. If it were correct, Reid's account of the social operations is both incompatible with his other commitments and also internally inconsistent. The incompatibility is with Reid's commitment to mind/body dualism. The problem, quite simply, is that a dualist like Reid – i.e., one who holds that bodies and their properties are fundamentally distinct from minds and their operations – cannot hold that an bodily utterance is rightly thought of as a constituent part of an operation of the mind.¹⁷ The inconsistency, meanwhile, is with Reid's claim that the social operations are simple. On Schuhmann and Smith's reading, the social operations are conceived to have at least two distinct parts: (i) the expressive utterance, and (ii) whatever active / intellectual operation(s) are those that produce the expressive utterance (and, presumably, that produce it freely and with understanding). I take it to be clear that each of these two points provide sufficient reason to reject Schuhmann and Smith's version of the speech acts interpretation.

There is another way to understand the claim that the social operations are speech acts. One might suggest that the expressive utterance itself is not part of the social operation, but rather those operation(s) involved in the production of the utterance. The virtue of this line of thinking is that the social operations are conceived to be purely mental, and so this version is compatible with Reid's commitment to mind/body dualism. The problem with this line of thinking, however, is that it is inconsistent with Reid's claim that the social operations are simple. The operation(s) involved in the production of an utterance

¹⁷ Interestingly, Schuhmann and Smith note the incompatibility between Reid's account of the social operations (as they read it) and Reid's commitment to dualism. But instead of considering that this might indicate a problem with their interpretation, they conclude, rather, that Reid's views are inconsistent. They do not, however, even note Reid's claim that the social operations are simple.

can be performed wholly apart from the existence and reciprocity of another intelligent being – one can, e.g., utter the phrase “where are the cupcakes?” in a room all by oneself. The social operations, however, on Reid’s account, cannot exist apart from the existence and appropriate reciprocal operations of another intelligent being. The fact that the operations that produce the utterance can exist in solitude entails that the social operations cannot be wholly identified with said operation(s). The social operations, then, on this alternate version, must be something more – i.e., the social operations must be identified with a complex whole of which the operation that produces the expressive utterance is but one part. This alternate version of the claim that the social operations are speech acts, then, is also incorrect.

Ultimately, I think that the claim that the social operations are speech acts cannot be correct: the social operations as such are not speech acts. But it is important to note that the less ambitious claim that Reid’s account of the social operations bears a striking resemblance to speech act theory is quite insightful. Complex Reidian attributes composed of (i) a social operation, (ii) the bodily properties that constitute the expression of that operation, and also (iii) the complex of active / intellectual operations needed to produce said expression with both understanding and will, might well be identified as something directly analogous to an Austinian speech act. After all, Reid’s account of the social operations is an account of something that people do, and, what’s more, it is an account of something that people do when producing expressive linguistic signs. Reid’s account of the social operations, then, while not an account of speech acts *per se*, might properly be understood as an account of one aspect of the psychology of speech acts. One might say that the social operations are analogous to Austin’s notion of an illocutionary

force, so long as it is remembered that, on Reid's account, the social operations are simple acts of mind that are expressed by utterances, not properties or parts of utterances.

The connection between Reid's account of the social operations and Austinian speech act theory, then, is undeniably there. The mistake Reid's other interpreters make is not that they point to this connection, but rather that they mis-characterize it. This mistake, moreover, is a consequence of their failing to interpret Reid's account the social operations from the appropriate point of view – i.e., a consequence of their failing to interpret Reid's account wholly within his own conceptual and/or metaphysical framework. I say this because, if Reid's claims are read in the correct light, it is just *odd* to suppose that the social operations are anything other than a class of simple operations of the mind. The moral of the story, then, is that one should aim, first, to understand historical views on their own terms – at least, that is, as much as possible – before going on to compare (or even to identify) said views to (or with) contemporary analogs.

Critique of Gideon Yaffe's Interpretation

Yaffe presents his interpretation in "Promises, Social Acts, and Reid's First Argument for Moral Liberty" (Yaffe, 2011). Yaffe writes that

Reid seems to be offering the following definition of a social act: a mental act is social if, and only if, the act's performance necessarily implies the existence of intelligent beings, other than the agent of the act, exercising their intelligence. (Yaffe, pp. 281-282)

Yaffe then offers the following clarifications:¹⁸

¹⁸ Yaffe presents several other clarifications – three of them, to be precise. In my best judgment, it is not necessary to go over them here. The readers, however, are welcome to question my best judgment and to investigate this for themselves.

Reid considers the social-solitary distinction to be, in the first instance, a distinction between acts of mind. (Yaffe, pp. 282-283)

Reid's claim, then, that social acts cannot exist without being expressed – while not logically entailed by his definition of a social act – seems to follow from it; it is not built into his definition of a social act. In fact, Reid seems to treat the claim that social acts must be expressed to exist as following from his definition, rather than being a part of the definition itself. Social acts are mental acts that are always accompanied by, but are not identical to, another act, which is the act of expression. (Yaffe, p. 283)

Yaffe rightly insists that Reid's solitary operation / social operation distinction is a distinction between operations of the mind – i.e., not a distinction between “pure” operations of the mind on the one hand and ontologically mixed speech acts on the other. Unlike Schuhmann and Smith, then, who take the defining feature of the class of social operations to be that they are expressed, Yaffe takes the defining feature to be that they necessarily suppose social intercourse. Yaffe does think, of course, that social operations are necessarily expressed, but he does not think this is true by definition.¹⁹ Although Yaffe does not explicitly elaborate on this point, I take his view to be that the sensible expression is necessary in virtue of the fact that the social operations necessarily suppose social intercourse, but only because it is true, additionally, that it is possible for humans to engage in social intercourse through a medium of sensible signs. Yaffe's suggestion, then, as I understand it, is that if humans were constituted such that they had direct access to the contents of each other's minds, then, on Reid's account, the existence of the expression would not be necessary for the existence of the social operation. This claim

¹⁹ It is perhaps of interest to note that this would explain why Reid can say that the reciprocal operations are themselves social operations. It is not clear, after all, that reciprocal operations need to be expressed in order to exist. The reciprocal operations do necessarily presuppose expression, of course, but expression of the social operation, not expression of the reciprocal operation itself. The point here is just that, if Yaffe is correct that being expressed is not part of the definition of what it is to be a social operation, then Reid is not committed to saying that reciprocal operations themselves need be expressed.

might well be true, but there is no textual evidence with which to motivate it. Seemingly, the only evidence is that Reid begins his account of the social operations by noting that their performance necessarily supposes social intercourse, and that it is only several paragraphs later that Reid goes on to say that the social operations cannot exist unless expressed. Perhaps Yaffe is correct to think that Reid only intends his first passage to constitute his complete definition of the class of operations, but Reid does not say so. So while I do not deny this claim, I nevertheless withhold from it my firm assent.

How does my interpretation explicitly differ from Yaffe's? Consider the following passages:

Reid is accepting... a position according to which at least sometimes the relational properties of an act – properties that can be lost without any change in the act's intrinsic features – are among the act's essential properties. (Yaffe, p. 284)

How can something going on in my head depend, for its existence, on the existence of other people? Notice, however, that this query reveals the reductionist bias that Reid is trying to warn against. That is, Reid claims, in some passages just quoted, that social acts are not reducible to any combination of solitary acts. The claim is that we cannot build the occurrence of an agent's social act merely by stipulating the things that he does in his head. Not until we say not just that you think that there is an intelligent being in the room, but that there is one, can we *transform your mental action* into one of commanding, questioning, offering or promising. (Yaffe, p. 284)

On Yaffe's reading, then, what is already "in the head" – which can only be a solitary operation because it is not already social – is modified just when an external state of affairs obtains – i.e., that external state of affairs whose existence satisfies the necessary conditions for the performance of the social operation. On Yaffe's interpretation, then,

the social operations are identified with primary solitary operations that are modified by characteristic relational secondary attributes.

Yaffe's interpretation is incorrect for a number of reasons. To begin, just note that Yaffe implicitly suggests that one can characterize the solitary operations merely by describing what one does "in one's head". It is quite clear, however, for reasons already discussed, that Reid holds that many (if not most) of the solitary operations necessarily suppose that environmental conditions are satisfied. The difference between the solitary and the social is not, as Yaffe implicitly suggests, that the social are essentially related to the external world while the solitary are not. The solitary and the social, rather, are both "in the mind" in the very same sense, which is just to say that they are predicated of the mind as subject.

Can Yaffe's interpretation be *modified* to avoid this first problem? Perhaps Yaffe ought to say that the social operations are irreducible to the solitary in virtue of the fact that the social are essentially related to a distinctive sort of thing in the external world – i.e., to an intelligent being that responds in an appropriate way. Here, the irreducibility of the social to the solitary is not explained by the fact that the social are essentially related to the external world, but rather by the fact that the social operations are essentially related to a characteristic kind of thing in the external world. This modified version of Yaffe's interpretation, however, still has problems. The social operations are still identified, here, with modifications of operations that are not themselves social. The social operations are still thought to come into existence when what is already existing "in the head" – i.e., a particular solitary operation – is modified by the addition of some characteristic relational

secondary attribute. The problem with this interpretation, of course, is simply that Reid straightforwardly denies that the social operations are modifications.

How else can we defend Yaffe's interpretation? Well, note that Yaffe suggests that the modification of what is already in the head is an essential rather than an accidental modification. That Yaffe conceives that modification to be essential is evident from the fact that he identifies the relational attribute as being among the operation's essential properties. Perhaps Yaffe's considered view, then, is that when Reid claims that the social are not modifications of the solitary, Reid is merely ruling out the possibility that the social operations are modifications of the accidental rather than the essential variety. This version of Yaffe's interpretation might well render Reid's account of the social operations consistent with Reid's claim that the social are irreducible to the solitary, at least on some sense of the term 'irreducible'. The problem, however, is that Reid not only says that the social operations are irreducible to the solitary, but also that the social operations are simple. Reid gives us no reason to think that essential modifications are anything other than complex attributes. It is not even entirely clear how Reid would cash out Yaffe's distinction between essential and accidental modification. Reid might, of course, consider those secondary attributes by which an operation is identified as a member of a particular class to be the operation's essential secondary attributes. But then it is just not clear – at least, that is, from Reid's point of view – that this distinction captures anything more than the way the speakers of a language happen to use words.²⁰ In any case, even if Reid concedes that the distinction in question gets at the structure of the

²⁰ Reid is something of a nominalist about classes of individuals. It stands to reason, then, that he is something of a nominalist about those classes of attributes constructed in the same way.

world in some important way, there is no reason to think that this is importantly related to Reid's notion of simplicity.

Yaffe's mistake is that he wrongly interprets Reid's description of the features common to the social operations to be a description of something belonging to the essence of each of the social operations. This is perhaps an easy mistake to make, if, that is, one does not get clear on Reid's relevant background commitments. It's not unreasonable for Yaffe to suggest that a relational secondary attribute is part of the combination of secondary attributes Reid uses to identify the class of social operations – although even this more innocuous suggestion, I will argue, is false – but it is incorrect to suggest that any such secondary attribute are part of the essence of a social operation.²¹ This is incorrect just because, if true, the social operations are not simple. On the correct interpretation, then, each of the social operations are distinct from each of the solitary – and, what's more, are distinct from each other – in virtue of its simple, primary character.

To conclude, then, note that Yaffe makes one key mistake: Yaffe does not interpret Reid's account of the social operations in a way adequately informed by Reid's background views. If Yaffe were not to make this key mistake, he simply would not suggest that the social operations are complex. If I were to speculate, I would suggest that Yaffe is just too quick to identify Reid's account of the social operations with contemporary externalist theories of mind and language. Such contemporary theories – e.g., those of figures such as Hilary Putnam, Tyler Burge, and Donald Davidson –

²¹ Note that the definitions of kinds of individuals, on Reid's account, do not characterize the essence of particular individuals either. If one recalls the quotations in (1.1), one will note that Reid explicitly states that the essence of individuals is wholly distinct from their attributes, even though it is by their attributes that they are defined. The same point, here, can be made about Reid's definition of the social operations. The social operations are defined by their secondary attributes, but the individual essences of the particular social operations are wholly distinct from their secondary attributes. There is, then, a consistency to Reid's account.

recognize that some mental states are necessarily connected to the external world, but then go on to explain this connection by way of an appeal to the idea that what it is to be in such a state just is to be in a “narrow” state that bears certain relations to external objects. Yaffe’s mistake is that he assumes that Reid is merely a contemporary thinker who happened to live and work in an earlier time, rather than a thinker in a different time with a similar yet distinctive point of view. Yaffe’s mistake, then, is a version of the mistake made by Arsdal, Schuhmann, and Smith. The moral of the story, once again, is that to avoid making interpretive errors, one should attempt, to the greatest possible degree, to understand historical views wholly within the context of the author’s conceptual and/or metaphysical framework.

The other extant interpretations of Reid’s account of the social operations, then, are clearly flawed. There is, however, more to be discussed concerning them. Further consideration of Yaffe’s interpretation, in particular, leads me to ask certain questions about the general nature of the social operations, questions I have not yet explicitly asked or answered. Engaging with these questions leads me to refine (or, perhaps more properly, to add to) my own interpretation in several ways.

Question (i): Why (or in what sense) do the Particular Social Operations Necessarily Suppose Social Intercourse?

Yaffe has an easy answer here. On his reading, the social operations necessarily suppose social intercourse as a matter of definition, because the social operations just are complex modifications partially composed of a secondary relational attribute for which the reciprocal operation is one of the relata. On Yaffe’s reading, then, it is a mere conceptual or analytic truth that the social operations necessarily suppose the existence of

social intercourse. Yaffe's interpretation is clearly incorrect, but at least he provides an answer to the question. I cannot give the same answer for obvious reasons. In what follows, I present what I take to be the correct answer. To begin, note Reid writes that

The distinction commonly made between abstract truths, and those that express matters of fact, or real existences, coincides in great measure, but not altogether, with that between necessary and contingent truths. (*EIP*, p. 469)

Reid's claim, here, is that abstract truths – i.e., what we commonly refer to as 'analytic truths' (that is, things that are true in virtue of the meaning of the words) – are not the only necessary truths. Reid explicitly identifies, e.g., the following as a necessary truth that is not an analytic truth:

...the qualities which we perceive by our senses must have a subject, which we call body, and that the thoughts we are conscious of must have a subject, which we call mind. (*EIP*, p. 495)

Reid identifies this fact as a 'necessary metaphysical truth'. Why does Reid think it is necessary but not analytic? He doesn't explicitly say. In light of Reid's background commitments, however, it is clear that the relational secondary attribute *predicated of that subject* cannot possibly be part of an attribute. This is simply because, if it this were the case, then it would be impossible to conceive an attribute as a universal. On Reid's account, after all, it is possible to perform an intellectual analysis of an object only if it is possible to conceive an attribute wholly apart from any conception of a particular individual subject. The attribute *whiteness*, e.g., may be conceived as predicated of a particular sheet of paper, but *whiteness* per se is not so conceived. Thus, the relational secondary attribute *predicated of that sheet of paper* is not, on Reid's account, part of the very concept of *whiteness*. Since this point generalizes to all attributes, it cannot, on

Reid's account, be a mere analytic truth that particular attributes can exist only if they are predicated of a subject.

Now, let's return to our question. My suggestion is that Reid takes it to be just such a necessary metaphysical truth that the social operations necessarily suppose social intercourse. Recall that there is some textual evidence to support this suggestion. Reid uses 'x necessarily supposes y' to express the idea that 'x can exist only if y exists', and he uses that exact phrase to characterize the nature of the relation between the social operations and social intercourse. It is reasonable to think, then, that Reid conceives the relation between attributes and subjects to be relevantly similar to the relation between social operations and social intercourse. The relevant similarity is this: attributes can be conceived but cannot exist apart from being predicated of an individual subject; social operations can be conceived but cannot exist apart from social intercourse.²² It is, then, reasonable to think that, on Reid's account, it is metaphysically necessary that social intercourse exists for a social operation to be performed.

Why does Reid think this? Or, rather, why are we supposedly justified in believing this? To begin, note Reid takes it to be a *first principle* that the existence of an attribute necessarily supposes the existence of a subject of which it is predicated²³, which is to say that Reid takes this claim to be self-evidently true to any sound mind that distinctly understands it. Perhaps, then, Reid takes it to be a first principle that the performance of

²² The structure of Reid's thought is very consistent on this point: What makes particular attributes all members of the same class? What makes particular operations of the mind all members of the same class? What makes particular properties all members of the same class? My suggestion is that, according to Reid, all attributes necessarily suppose the existence of a subject, all operations of the mind necessarily suppose the existence of a subject that is active, and all properties of body necessarily imply the existence of a subject that is passive. The account appears clear and consistent (whether ultimately true or false). In the same way, on the present reading, the social operations necessarily imply the existence of an intelligent being that reciprocates.

²³ See Reid's discussion of the first principles of necessary truths at EIP, pp. 490-512.

any of the particular social operations requires the existence of social intercourse. However, I think there is a better way to get inside Reid's thinking here. First, recall my previous suggestion that, in performing many of its operations, the mind directly engages with objects in the external world. Next, recall that understanding this picture of the mind helps make sense of Reid's claim that the objects of perception, e.g., necessarily exist if perceived. My suggestion, then, is just that Reid is motivated by the same sort of reasoning in the case of the social operations. That Reid holds such a view is illustrated when he writes that

This intercourse of human minds, by which their thoughts and sentiments are exchanged, and *their souls mingle together* as it were, is common to the whole species from infancy. (*EAP*, p. 332-3)

My suggestion, then, is that Reid's answer to question (i) is this: The social operations necessarily suppose social intercourse because, if another intelligent being does not both exist and respond appropriately, the mind cannot engage with the world in the appropriate way – which is just to say that the relevant social operation cannot be performed.

Question (ii): Is the Secondary Attribute used to Identify the Class of Social Operations a Relation or an Intrinsic Attribute?

The terms 'intrinsic' and 'relation' carry a lot of historical and theoretical baggage. I wish to avoid any discussion about what the "correct" meaning of such terms might be – the aim, after all, is merely to articulate Reid's point of view. For the purposes of this discussion, then, I will say that an intrinsic attribute is an attribute that it is possible for an individual to bear wholly independent of the existence of any other individual, and I will say that a relational attribute is one that an individual bears wholly in virtue of the facts

that (i) the individual bears certain intrinsic attributes and (ii) some other existing individual bears certain intrinsic attributes.

To clarify, consider the following example: There are two lumps of clay; each lump of clay bears both a distinct shape property and a distinct colour property. Here, note these properties – i.e., shapes and colours – are such that the lumps can bear them independent of the existence of any other lump. These properties, then, are intrinsic properties. Now, note that the lumps will also bear relational properties. Suppose, e.g., that the colour of the first lump is darker than that of the second lump. The property *darker than the second lump*, then, is a property that the first lump bears in virtue of the fact that the second lump and itself bear the intrinsic properties that they do. The property *darker than the second lump*, then, is a relational property of the first lump of clay.

Returning to question (ii), note that Yaffe answers ‘yes’. But what is my answer? To begin, recall, once again, that Reid holds that all attributes (qua attributes) necessarily suppose the existence of a subject of which they are predicated. Recall also that all attributes, on Reid’s account, can be conceived, by way of an intellectual analysis, without a concomitant conception of a subject or other attribute. Last, recall that when attributes are conceived as such, attributes are conceived apart from any such relational secondary attributes. Now, note that if Reid were to use a relational secondary attribute to identify that class which just is the class of all attributes, then attributes conceived as universals would not be members of that class. But this is obviously not Reid’s view. To be an attribute, on Reid’s account, just is to be something that necessarily supposes a subject; that is, it is to be something of which it is true that, necessarily, if it *were* to exist, then there *would* exist a subject of which it is predicated. This subjunctive feature is not a

relational attribute, for it may be truly predicated of an attribute wholly apart from whether that attribute bears any such relation to an existing subject. The characteristic secondary attribute, then, that all attributes share, is not a relational attribute; the common secondary attribute, rather, is an *intrinsic* secondary attribute, insofar as intrinsic secondary attributes just are attributes that a primary attribute can bear independent of the existence of other things.

Now, let's return to question (ii). The reader need only note that the foregoing line of reasoning can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the special case of the social operations. In just the same sense that all attributes (*qua* attributes) necessarily suppose the existence of a subject, all social operations (*qua* social operations) necessarily suppose the existence of social intercourse with other intelligent beings. It is, then, an intrinsic secondary attribute of social operations (*qua* social operations) that, necessarily, if they *were* to exist, there *would* exist an intelligent being that performs the appropriate reciprocal operation. The class of social operations, then, on Reid's account, is distinguished from the class of solitary operations in virtue of the fact that the social share a characteristic intrinsic secondary attribute.

Question (iii): Are the Social Operations Intrinsic Attributes or Relations?

To begin, recall that Yaffe thinks the social operations are modifications composed of both intrinsic and relational attributes. In response to question (iii), then, Yaffe clearly answers "both". Yaffe's answer is incorrect, of course, because Reid claims that the social operations are simple. But what is my answer? To begin, consider the following three claims: (a) Individuals are subjects of intrinsic properties, (b) Individuals are

subjects of mere relational properties, and (c) Every attribute is either intrinsic, relational, or some combination and / or modification of the two.

It is a mistake to assume that Reid holds all three claims – at least, that is, insofar as one’s aim is to articulate the correct interpretation of Reid’s account of the social operations. The social operations are not, on Reid’s account, intrinsic attributes, because the social operations are not attributes that an individual can bear wholly independently of how everything else is. It is clear, moreover, that the social operations are not mere relational attributes either. If the social operations are not intrinsic attributes, not mere relational attributes, and not a complex of the two, then Reid clearly rejects (c). The correct answer to question (iii), then, is “neither”.

So what are the social operations if neither intrinsic nor relational? The social operations are *extrinsic* attributes of the mind, insofar, that is, as ‘extrinsic’ applies to those attributes that an individual bears in virtue of the fact that it engages or interacts with individuals distinct from itself. What this means, however, is that Reid’s important and interesting claim, is not, as Yaffe suggests, that “relational properties are sometimes essential properties of mental acts”. Reid’s important and interesting claim, rather, is that “there are simple extrinsic attributes of the mind”. To put it figuratively, then, we can say that Reid’s important and interesting claim is that the mind is extrinsic all the way down.

Of course, Reid’s claim might strike many readers as highly counter-intuitive. How might Reid respond to such responses? Well, to begin, note that Reid writes that:

Analogical reasoning... is not, in all cases, to be rejected. It may afford a greater or a less degree of probability, according as the things compared are more or less similar in their nature (*EIP*, p. 53)

...all arguments, drawn from analogy, are still the weaker, the greater disparity there is between things compared; and therefore must be weakest of all when we compare body with mind, because there are no two things in nature more unlike. (*EIP*, pp. 54)

The conclusion I would draw from all that has been said on analogy, is, that, in our enquiries concerning the mind, and its operations, we ought never to trust reasonings drawn from some supposed similitude of body to mind. (*EIP*, p. 55)

Reid is highly suspicious of analogies between bodies and minds, but how does this inform Reid's response? Reid might argue that his critics are in the grip of picture of a mind that is motivated by this sort of weak analogy. Note that if (c) is a claim merely about the attributes of bodies, Reid likely agrees that (c) is correct, simply because bodies do not, on his account, engage with the external world in the sense that minds do, and so there is no reason to think that bodies can ever be subject to simple extrinsic properties. What Reid rejects, however, is the claim that the fact that bodies cannot be subject to simple extrinsic attributes provides reason to think that minds cannot be either. The sceptical reader, Reid might suggest, is suspicious of his claim simply because the reader (for whatever reason) is inclined to conceive of the mind's attributes as things that are very much like properties of bodies only not properties of bodies. This conception of the mind and its various acts, Reid might suggest, is at best poorly motivated and at worst utterly confused. The mind, Reid insists, is nothing like a mere lump of clay.

Final Characterization of the Social Operations

Recall that, on my preliminary interpretation, Reid's account of the social operations consists, minimally, of following eight claims:

1. Social operations are attributes of the mind.

2. Every operation of the mind is either solitary or social, but not both.
3. There are two necessary conditions for the performance of social operations: (i) that the operation is expressed by words or signs, and that (ii) an intelligent being performs the appropriate reciprocal operation.
4. There is at least one sufficient condition for the performance of a social operation: (ii) that an intelligent being performs the appropriate reciprocal operation.
5. Reciprocal operations are themselves social operations.
6. Reciprocal operations are intentional acts in which one is acquainted with a social operation by way of interpreting the social operation's sensible expression.
7. Social operations are simple.
8. Social operations are members of the same class – i.e., they are social as opposed to solitary – in virtue of the fact that they share some common secondary attribute(s).

Now, in light of the discussion in section three, I can add the following three claims:

9. It is a necessary metaphysical truth that the social operations cannot exist unless another intelligent being performs the appropriate reciprocal operation.
10. The social operations characteristically share some common intrinsic secondary attribute(s).
11. The social operations are extrinsic attributes.

This completes my interpretation of Reid's account of the general nature of the social operations. I have shown that it is, if not definitely correct on every last point, the best interpretation available. There is, however, interpretive work still to be done on Reid's account of the nature of each of the particular social operations. In the next chapter, I do some of this work by interpreting Reid's account of testimony.

Chapter 2: Thomas Reid's Later Account of Testimony and its Epistemology

Introduction

Reid's accounts of testimony and its epistemology are both more widely discussed and more influential than is his account of the social operations. Notable discussions of the topic include Lehrer and Smith (1983), Lehrer (1989), Coady (1989 / 1992 / 2004), Wolterstorff (2001), Audi (2006), and Van Cleve (2006). Major contemporary figures who explicitly cite Reid's work on the topic as a direct influence on their own include Coady (1992), Plantinga (1993), and Audi (2006). And the family of views that has grown out of the shadow of Reid's direct influence – i.e., those views called “anti-reductionist” accounts of the epistemology of testimony, which will be discussed below – have been widely discussed in the recent literature.

Perhaps the most notable feature of this body of literature is that only C.A.J. Coady attempts to interpret Reid's account in light of the fact that testimony is one of the social operations of the mind. One reason for this might be that Reid's various interpreters focus primarily on passages in the earlier *IHM* – i.e., those passages in which Reid provides his most contained and direct exposition of anti-reductionism – and that Reid's account of the social operations, as such, is found only in the later *Essays*. Another reason might be that the neglect of Reid's account of the social operations has produced a situation in which the collective understanding of that account is too impoverished to permit of a fruitful application to the more particular cases. But whatever the reason, the current state of the literature is such that Reid's early account of testimony has been widely discussed,

and his later account – i.e., his account of testimony qua social operation – has barely been discussed at all. The idea, then, is that chapter one well-positions me to interpret the later view. My aim in this chapter is to present an original – and, I argue, the correct – interpretation of Reid’s later account of both testimony and its epistemology. The focus of my discussion, moreover, is on precisely those aspects of Reid’s later account that go beyond the view he expounds in the *IHM*.

This chapter is structured in sections: (1) I present Reid’s relevant background views; (2) I apply Reid’s account of the social operations to the particular case of testimony; (3) I then present and critically discuss Coady’s relevant work; and (4) I summarize my conclusions.

Reid’s Relevant Background Views

Reid’s relevant background views fall into three groups. The first includes the content of chapter one. The second includes Reid’s general views on epistemic normativity, and the third includes Reid’s views on the epistemology of testimony in the *IHM*.

Reid on Epistemic Normativity, in General

Central to Reid’s account of epistemic normativity is his notion of evidence.²⁴ About evidence, Reid writes that

We give the name of evidence to whatever is a ground of belief. (*EIP*, p. 228)

[All kinds of evidence] agree only in this, that they are all fitted by Nature to produce belief in the human mind, some of them in the highest degree, which we call certainty,

²⁴ For an excellent (and more detailed) discussion of Reid’s account of evidence, see Rysiew (2005).

others in various degrees according to circumstances. (*EIP*, p. 229)

Reid's basic picture is this: Evidence is called "the ground of belief", and the one thing that all kinds of evidence have in common – i.e., the feature in virtue of which they are a kind of evidence – is they are fitted to produce belief in the human mind. It is, of course, not entirely clear what this means. In what follows, I present five points to help clarify this basic picture.

In the first chapter, I wrote that Reid's aim is to describe the powers of the human mind. The first point to note, then, is that this characterization is not quite precise. Reid's aim is to describe the powers of a *sound* human mind that operates in a *normal* human environment.²⁵ In general, then, Reid's claims are best understood as descriptions of how things are when everything goes right: that is, Reid's project is best understood as both descriptive and normative. About evidence, then, just note that, in identifying something as evidence, Reid is best understood as claiming not that it produces belief in a human mind, but that it produces belief in a sound mind in a normal environment. Evidence is not, strictly speaking, something that *does* produce belief in the mind, but rather something that *ought* to do so.

Second, note that Reid's use of 'ground' is a little bit misleading to modern ears. It is reasonable, in general, to take 'P grounds Q' to mean something like 'P in virtue of Q'.²⁶ If Reid's claim is taken this way, however, one might be led to believe that one's evidence for P just is all those facts in virtue of which one believes that P. This reading is

²⁵ A lot of current epistemological discussion treats of exceptional or extravagant scenarios. This is likely, in part, a hold-over from the early modern epistemological worries driven by scepticism, such as the whole-world/evil-demon type scepticism suggested by Descartes. But this is not Reid's immediate concern, nor is it central to his methodological strategy.

²⁶ In what follows, I often single capital letters - e.g., 'P' and 'Q' - to stand in for a generic fact or states of affairs.

not correct. You might, e.g., form some perceptual beliefs partly in virtue of facts about the structure of your eye – facts which are, we might suppose, facts about which you never have and never will think or form beliefs. But such facts about your eye are not your evidence for believing in what you see. To clarify Reid's view, it helps to think about his account of evidence on analogy with his account of signs. Something is a sign of something else, on Reid's account, just when a conception of the former suggests to the mind a conception of the latter:²⁷ that is, something is a sign just when the conception of the sign is normally followed, for whatever sort of reason²⁸, by a conception of the thing signified. The point to note, then, is that Reid thinks of evidence in much the same way: a fact P is evidence for a fact Q just when acquaintance with P is normally followed by belief that Q.

In the just-quoted passages, Reid states that belief comes in various degrees of strength, degrees that constitute a plenum from the strongest possible belief that P to the strongest possible belief that not-P. The third point to note, then, is that Reid thinks that evidence comes in these degrees of strength as well. Reid writes that

... we measure the degrees of evidence by the effect they have upon a sound understanding, when comprehended clearly and without prejudice. Every degree of evidence perceived by the mind, produces a proportioned degree of assent or belief... Belief is mixed with doubt, more or less, until we come to the highest degree of evidence, when all doubt vanishes... This degree of evidence, the highest human faculties can attain, we call certainty. (*EIP*, p. 557)

²⁷ The most concise presentation of Reid's account of signs is found at (*IHM*, p.58 – 61). For an excellent discussion of that account see D.D. Todd (1987), B.E. Rollins (1978), or Somerville (1989).

²⁸ Sorts of reasons include (i) the connection obtaining in virtue of innate features of the mind's constitution or (ii) in virtue of the mind having undergone a particular kind of training.

Reid's claim, here, is just that the degree of evidence that acquaintance with P provides for the belief that Q is measured by the strength of that belief acquaintance with P would normally produce in a human mind.

The fourth point to note is that Reid is both a pluralist and non-reductionist about evidence. This means, first, that Reid thinks there are different kinds / sources of evidence – there is, e.g., the evidence that is provided by the senses, by memory, by reasoning, and by the testimony of others. This means, second, that Reid thinks these different kinds of evidence do not *reduce* to each other: that is, one's acceptance of the evidence of perception, e.g., need not itself be grounded on evidence provided by other sources. In the *IHM*, e.g., Reid writes that

Reason, says the sceptic, is the only judge of truth, and you ought to throw off every opinion and every belief that is not grounded on reason. Why, Sir, should I believe the faculty of reason more than that of perception; they both came out of the same shop, and were made by the same artist; and if he puts one piece of false ware into my hands, what should hinder him from putting another? (*IHM*, p. 169)

Here, Reid argues that the evidence of perception is not reducible to that of reason, but note that Reid would make this same this line of argument more generally. It is on the evidence of perception that one grounds one's beliefs about presently existing bodies, on memory that one grounds one's beliefs about past facts, on consciousness that one grounds one's beliefs about one's own mind, and it is by the exercise of one's social powers that one grounds one's beliefs about other minds. Reid's distinctive view, here, is that one's acceptance of any one of these kinds of evidence need not be grounded on evidence of another sort. It is not by way of the evidence of perception that I thereby acquire reason to trust the evidence of memory, and it is not by way of the evidence of

memory that I thereby acquire reason to trust the evidence or reason, and so on. Each cognitive faculty constitutes an independent source of evidence.

Fifth, consider Reid's account of knowledge, and, in particular, the relation knowledge bears to evidence. Reid writes that,

Knowledge, I think, sometimes signifies things known; sometimes that act of the mind by which we know them. And in like manner opinion sometimes signifies things believed; sometimes the act of the mind by which we believe them. But judgment is the faculty which is exercised in both these acts of the mind; in knowledge, we judge without doubting; in opinion, with some mixture of doubt. (*EIP*, p. 435)

Reid uses the term 'knowledge', then, to refer to belief that is not doubted: that is, Reid holds that one knows that P if one has the strongest possible belief that P. When Reid says, e.g., that "Paula knows that the keys are in the kitchen", Reid says something like "Paula is absolutely sure that the keys are in the kitchen". This is not to say, of course, that Reid thinks it impossible for Paula to imagine, in such a case, possible grounds for doubting her belief. The only relevant point is that Paula does not – as a matter of psychological fact – have actual grounds for doubt. Note, then, that although the relevant sense of 'certainty', here, is clearly psychological, the sense is partially normative too. Reid's aim is to describe the case where things go right, and so to say that Paula knows that the keys are in the kitchen is to say not only that Paula is certain of this fact but also that Paula is both of a sound mind and operating in a normal environment. Note that it follows, then, that Reid is committed to saying that knowledge is, by definition, grounded on the strongest possible degree of evidence – strength of evidence, after all, is measured by the strength of belief produced in a sound mind. And note that it follows, also, Reid is

committed to saying that it epistemically irrational to doubt what is known, simply because to do so is to doubt what a sound mind would not doubt.²⁹

Reid on the Epistemology of Testimony in the *IHM*

Reid's most important claim about testimony, in the *IHM*, is simply that it is evidence: that is, the fact that a person says "P" provides one acquainted with it some evidence for believing that P. Put a little differently, this is to say that if one is acquainted with the fact that another testifies to P, then at least some degree of belief that P ought to be produced in one's mind. The other important claim in the *IHM* is that one's reliance on the evidence of testimony is not grounded on evidence provided by other sources. This is to say that one does not need reason to trust what other people say. It is this second claim that is referred to in the literature as Reid's "anti-reductionism" about testimony.

On Reid's account, then, one does not need any evidence to ground one's trust in testimony beyond the evidence of testimony itself. Note, however, that this does not entail that, on Reid's account, one ought to blindly accept everything that people say. Evidence is not needed to ground one's trust in what other people say, but evidence can both ground doubt in as well as additional support for what other people say. To clarify the point, Reid writes that

It is the intention of nature, that we should be carried in arms before we are able to walk upon our legs; and it is likewise the intention of nature, that our belief should be guided by the authority of others, before it can be guided by

²⁹ There is much more of interest to be said about knowledge and related concepts. One point is that certainty can come apart from necessity. It is facts that are either necessary or contingent, and it is our beliefs about such facts that can be certain. On Reid's account, e.g., it is entirely possible that I know a contingent fact but merely believe a necessary fact. Another point is that the certainty / mere belief distinction and the necessity / contingency distinction come apart from the probabilistic / demonstrative evidence distinction. If the reader is interested looking further into any of these points, Reid's most important discussions are found, mainly, in the essay on reasoning in the *EIP*. The aforementioned Rysiew (2005) is also an excellent resource here.

our own... When brought to maturity by proper culture, she begins to feel her own strength, and leans less upon others; she learns to suspect testimony in some cases, and to disbelieve it in others; and sets bounds to that authority to which she was at first entirely subject. But still, to the end of life, she finds a necessity of borrowing light from testimony, where she has none within herself. (*IHM*, p. 195)

On Reid's picture, then, we start out in life with decisive *prima facie* reason to accept the testimony of others, and we then come to discover that there are often reasons to doubt testimony in particular cases. E.g., the testifier might have a "twitchy" look, or the testimony might be inconsistent with what one already knows. These reasons to doubt are often grounded in other sources of evidence. The point to note, however, is just that Reid holds that our *prima facie* reason to believe what other people say is never completely diminished by the fact that there is good reason to doubt in particular cases. The mere fact that the evidence gives one reason to doubt testimony in particular cases does not thereby provide reason to doubt testimony in general.³⁰

In the rest of the chapter, my aim is to interpret Reid's later account of both testimony and its epistemology. The view in the *IHM* is, I believe, wholly consistent with the view in the *Essays*, but I ought to provide some evidence for this belief. Reid writes in the *EIP* that

Before we are capable of reasoning about testimony... there are many things which it concerns us to know, for which we can have no other evidence. The wise Author of nature hath planted in the human mind a propensity to rely upon

³⁰ Reid argues that, in this one respect, the evidence of testimony is much like that of perception. As with testimony, one starts out in life trusting one's senses and then goes on to learn there is sometimes reason to doubt them. As with testimony, moreover, the fact that one discovers reason to doubt one's senses in particular case does not give strong reason to doubt perception in general. Reid's most sustained discussion of this analogy is at (*IHM*, p. 190-202), in the section "Of the analogy between perception and the credit we give to human testimony". Much (if not most) of the secondary literature discusses this analogy and the related interpretive issues.

this evidence before we can give a reason for doing so... If children were so framed, as to pay no regard to testimony... they must, in the literal sense, perish for lack of knowledge. It is not more necessary that they should be fed before they can feed themselves, than that they should be instructed in many things, before they can discover them by their own judgment. (*EIP*, p. 487-8)

But when our faculties ripen, we find reason to check that propensity to yield to testimony... which was so necessary and so natural in the first period of life. We learn to reason about the regard due to them, and see it to be a childish weakness to lay more stress upon them than reason justifies. (*Ibid*)

These passages contain a clear restatement of the view of the *IHM*. However, it should also be noted that Reid's claim appears different here. Reid writes that adults do not rely on the evidence of testimony any more "than reason justifies". In light of this passage, it might appear, in contrast to the view of the *IHM*, that the Reid holds that the evidence of testimony, in adults, is in fact grounded on the evidence of reason. But this appearance is illusory. In the *Essays*, Reid uses the term 'reason' in a very broad sense. When broadly construed, reason just is the power to judge on the basis of evidence.³¹ The point to note, then, is just that testimony is itself one species of evidence among many. And so when Reid writes that "adults put no more stress on testimony than reason justifies", his point is merely that one ought not blindly accept what other people say, but rather that one should respond appropriately to all the available evidence. Reid's early and later accounts of the epistemology of testimony, then, are consistent.

Reid's Account of Testimony and its Epistemology in the *Essays*

³¹ Reid most direct discussion of this point is at *EIP* p.433.

This section has two parts: (i) I straightforwardly apply Reid's account of the social operations to the particular case of testimony; and (ii) I respond to Coady's discussion of Reid's comments on testimony in the *EIP*.

Application to the Particular Case of Testimony

Recall, from chapter one, that Reid's account of the social operations consists, minimally, of the following eleven claims:

1. Social operations are attributes of the mind.
2. Every operation of the mind is either solitary or social, but not both.
3. There are two necessary conditions for the performance of social operations: (i) that the operation is expressed by words or signs, and that (ii) an intelligent being performs the appropriate reciprocal operation.
4. There is at least one sufficient condition for the performance of a social operation: (ii) that an intelligent being performs the appropriate reciprocal operation.
5. Reciprocal operations are themselves social operations.
6. Reciprocal operations are intentional acts in which one is acquainted with a social operation by way of interpreting its sensible expression.
7. Social operations are simple.
8. Social operations are members of the same class – i.e., they are social as opposed to solitary – in virtue of the fact that they share some common secondary attribute(s).
9. It is a necessary metaphysical truth that the social operations cannot exist unless another intelligent being performs the appropriate reciprocal operation.
10. The social operations characteristically share some common intrinsic secondary attribute(s).

11. The social operations are extrinsic attributes.

To begin, then, let's simply take Reid's general account and apply it to testimony. It is quite clear that this application is unproblematic, because, in light of Reid's aforementioned account of the conceptual structure of classes, it is quite clear that Reid intends an account of the characteristic features of a class to be an accurate account of the particular members of that class. After boiling the list down just a little,³² it follows that Reid's account of testimony consists, minimally, of the following eight claims:

1. Testimony is an attribute of the mind.
2. Testimony is a social operation, not a solitary operation.
3. There are two necessary conditions for the performance of testimony: (i) that the testimony is expressed by words or signs, and that (ii) an intelligent being perform the appropriate reciprocal social operation.
4. There is at least one sufficient condition for the performance of a social operation: that an intelligent being performs the appropriate reciprocal social operation.
5. The reciprocal operation of testimony is a social operation.
6. The reciprocal operation is an intentional act in which one is acquainted with testimony by way of interpreting its sensible expression.
7. Testimony is a simple attribute.
8. Testimony is an extrinsic attribute.

The meaning of each of these claims ought to be clear to the reader, given that he/she is familiar with the content of the first chapter. But there are several points of clarification and / or emphasis I wish to make. To begin, note that Reid writes that

³² Why boil down the list? All eleven claims of the original list can be translated such that they directly apply to testimony in particular. The point in reducing the list to just eight claims, here, is to focus the reader's attention on those claims that are most central to the discussion that is to follow.

The expression of a question, of a command, or of a promise [i.e., token examples of social operations], is as capable of being analysed as a proposition is [i.e., the expression of a solitary operation]; but we do not find that this has been attempted; we have not so much as given them a name different from the operations which they express. (EIP, p. 70)

So the names of the social operations are ambiguous. ‘Testimony’, e.g., can refer to either (i) the social operation itself, (ii) the sensible signs that are the expression of testimony, and even (iii) what we called ‘the testimonial speech act’.³³ Reid does not always explicitly disambiguate his use of the term, but his meaning in particular cases can, it will be shown, be discerned if one attends to the context in which he uses it.

Next, note that, in what follows, I call the reciprocal operation of testimony the act of ‘receiving testimony’. What do we know about the act of receiving testimony? We know that receiving testimony is an intentional act in which one is acquainted with testimony, and, what’s more, acquainted with testimony by way of interpreting the sensible signs that constitute the testimony’s expression. The additional point to note, here, is that it is a necessary condition for performing the act of receiving testimony that one performs a distinct act – typically, e.g., a perceptual act – in which one is acquainted with the testimony’s sensible expression. If you tell me, e.g., that the cat is on the mat, I typically need to hear you say “the cat is on the mat” or perceive some other sensible sign. This point is unproblematic, of course, but just note that any such concomitant operations of receiving testimony are, on Reid’s account, distinct from the reciprocal operation itself.

³³ Recall from chapter one that numerous solitary operations that are necessary concomitants of the social operation of testimony. These concomitant operations are, on our terminology, said to be constitutive of the testimonial speech act. What is here called the testimonial speech act, then, is a complex combination of both bodily (i.e., the utterance) and mental (i.e., the operations that produce the utterance plus the social operation) attributes.

Just like all the social operations, the operation of receiving testimony is a simple and extrinsic attribute of the mind.³⁴

Understanding and Responding to Coady's Discussion

Coady is alone in the literature in discussing Reid's later account of testimony. Coady's discussion, however, is quite limited: it consists of three critiques – each of which takes aim at a different claim Reid makes about testimony in the *EIP*. In what follows, I argue that if Reid's three claims are correctly understood, it is evident that Coady's critiques miss the mark. The three claims are found the following passages:

Passage (A):

It is true, that it is by affirmation or denial that we express our judgments... [But] affirmation and denial is very often the expression of testimony, which is a different act of mind, and ought to be distinguished from judgment. (*EIP*, p. 406)

Passage (B):

The judge asks a witness what he knows of such a matter to which he was an eye or ear witness. He answers, by affirming or denying something. But his answer does not express his judgment; it is his testimony. Again, I ask a man his opinion in a matter of science or of criticism. His answer is not testimony, it is the expression of his judgment. (*EIP*, p. 406-7)

Passage (C):

³⁴ Note that it is reasonable to think that acts of receiving testimony need not be expressed. Is this a problem for the claim that Reid's general account is applicable to the particular cases? Well, this is a problem, if, that is, one thinks that Reid's definition of the class of social operations includes the claim that they necessarily suppose expression. Recall that Yaffe rejects this claim, and that the speech act interpreters accept it. Instead of posing a problem for Reid then, this point might just pose a problem for the speech acts interpretation.

In testimony a man pledges his veracity for what he affirms; so that a false testimony is a lie: but a wrong judgment is not a lie; it is only an error. (*EIP*, p. 407)

Concerning (A), Coady writes that

Reid correctly sees that solitary judgment is different from warning or testifying and locates the difference in that between judgment as such and the social operations. But the fact seems rather to be that judgment may operate in a solitary or a social way, since such social operations as warning or testifying clearly involve a form of judgment. My private judgment that the ice is thin becomes a component in the social act of warning that the ice is thin. (Coady (2004), p. 198-9)

Concerning (B), Coady writes that

Reid is right that there are some sorts of theorizing, some matters of opinion and judgment, that are unsuited for a testimonial role, but he is wrong to rule out all results of expertise, theorizing and judgment as so suitable. The courts, I would argue, are a good guide here in allowing expert testimony in certain circumstances, and our ordinary epistemic practices increasingly reflect this sort of dependence on the authority of others. (Coady (2004), p. 199-200)

Concerning (C), Coady writes that

It must be conceded that there is a tendency in ordinary speech to reserve the expression ‘false testimony’ for what is produced by deceitful witnesses but this seems to have resulted from the influence of that family of uses of the term ‘false’ which expresses our interest in treacherous, disloyal or dishonest behaviour... Nonetheless it is surely clear that the testimony a witness gives may be perfectly sincere and yet false (in the sense of not-true). (Coady (2004), p. 199)

In what follows, I discuss four additional passages taken from the *EIP* that are, when presented, labelled (D), (E), (F), and (G). These seven lettered passages, taken all together, constitute the whole body of text in which Reid characterizes testimony and its

epistemology in the *Essays* in ways that go beyond the view that he expounds the *IHM*.

In motivating my claim that each of Coady's critiques misses the mark, I develop detailed interpretations of each of these seven lettered passages. The results of this section, then, are twofold: (i) I show that Coady's three critiques miss the mark; and (ii) I develop an original interpretation of Reid's later account of testimony and its epistemology.

Reid's Claim in (A) and Coady's Critique of it

In passage (A), Reid makes two distinct claims: (i) that testimony is a distinct operation from judgment, and also (ii) that both judgment and testimony can be expressed by a statement. When uttering, e.g., a sentence such as "the cat is on the mat", the claim is that one can either testify to the fact that a cat is on the mat or express one's judgment that the cat is on the mat. If one recalls, moreover, that the different operations of the mind are, on Reid's account, the different sorts of things that the mind does,³⁵ it is clear that Reid's basic claim in (A) is that there are at least two different sorts of things one can do when uttering a statement.

Evidently, Coady does not think that Reid can draw a clear distinction between the operations of testimony and judgment. It is, however, difficult to make sense of Coady's argument. Testimony is, on Reid's account, a simple operation of the mind, and so it is odd for Coady to suggest that a judgment that P is part of the act of testimony to P. I think that Coady's reasoning might make a little more sense if he takes Reid's claim to be about the testimonial speech act, for it would then at least make sense to claim that testimony is the sort of thing that has any sort of parts whatsoever. Even so, there are several problems with Coady's reasoning.

³⁵ This point was first discussed p.9

First, there is no reason to think a judgment that P is part of the speech act in which one testifies to P. It makes sense to say an operation is part of a speech act just when that operation is a necessary concomitant of the social operation, but it appears, at least to me, that judgment that P is not a necessary concomitant of testimony to P. People sometimes lie, after all, which is just to say that they sometimes judge precisely the opposite of what they testify.

Second, Reid's distinction is meant to be, first, a distinction between operations of the mind, not between the speech acts. After all, Reid writes in (A) that testimony is "a different *act of mind* and ought to be distinguished from judgment". I have no good explanation for why Coady might be led to think Reid's claim is about the testimonial speech act. If I were to speculate, however, I would suggest that Coady might be somewhat sympathetic to one of the more problematic versions of the speech acts line of interpretation discussed in chapter one. If this suggestion is correct, then Coady would not appreciate Reid's distinction between the testimonial speech act and the testimonial operation as such. But note that this suggestion is only speculation: Coady never explicitly rejects or accepts the speech acts interpretation.

Third, even if Reid's claim were about the speech act, he can draw a clear distinction between the testimonial speech act and the speech act that merely involves the expression of judgment. Such a distinction is wholly compatible with Coady's claim that a judgment that P is part of the testimonial speech act, and also with the further claim that any statement used to express testimony to P also expresses judgment that P. Reid's distinction between the speech acts only needs to be that, if a statement is used to express testimony as well as judgment, then the speech act is one of testimony; and if a statement

is used to express judgment but not also testimony, then the utterance is merely an expression of judgment. If there is a clear distinction to be drawn between the operations, then there is a clear distinction to be drawn between the two speech acts.

Coady's critique of (A), then, appears seriously misplaced. Note, however, I have not yet shown that Reid draws a clear distinction between the two operations. If it turns out, then, that Reid's distinction between testimony and judgment cannot be made sense of, then Reid's claim in (A) is problematic (albeit not for Coady's reasons). My aim in what follows, then, is to understand the distinction between the operations. The two questions to be addressed are: What is it that the mind does when giving testimony? And how is this distinct from what the mind does when merely expressing judgment?

What is the plan going forward? Well, note that (A) is from the opening section of Reid's essay on judgment³⁶. There, Reid's stated aim is to characterize the nature of judgment – and, what's more, to do so by contrasting the nature of judgment with that of testimony. Now, note that (B) and (C) are also taken from that section. Reid indicates, there, that his comments in (B) and (C) are intended to clarify the nature of the distinction he wishes to draw between testimony and judgment. Going forward, then, the plan is to better understand Reid's comments in (B) and (C) in the hope of thereby acquiring a better understanding of Reid's distinction.

Reid's Claims in (B) and (C)

Recall Passage (B):

The judge asks a witness what he knows of such a matter to which he was an eye or ear witness. He answers, by

³⁶ The comments are all found at (*EIP*, pp.406-408)

affirming or denying something. But his answer does not express his judgment; it is his testimony. Again, I ask a man his opinion in a matter of science or of criticism. His answer is not testimony, it is the expression of his judgment. (Ibid)

Here, Reid claims that one testifies only to facts that one knows – as opposed, that is, to facts about which one only has some opinion. With the phrase ‘a matter to which one is an eye or ear witness’, Reid intends to provide a token example of a fact one is typically in position to know. Likewise, with the phrase ‘a matter of science or of criticism’, Reid intends to provide a token example of a fact that one is typically in position to only believe. If one recalls Reid’s account of knowledge, it is clear that the claim in (B) is that one testifies only to facts that one does not doubt. If one recalls, further, that Reid’s claims are best understood as descriptions of the case where things go right, it is clear Reid’s claim in (B) is that one *properly* testifies to facts that one does not doubt.³⁷

Reid’s claim in (B), then, is simple enough. What is not so clear, however, is Reid’s reason for thinking that one properly testifies only to what one knows, and it is not so clear, likewise, what this is supposed to reveal about the substance of Reid’s distinction between testimony and the mere expression of judgment. Here, I think that it is helpful to understand Reid’s claim in (C). There, Reid writes that “in testimony a man pledges his veracity for what he affirms”. What does this mean? The phrase “to pledge” means roughly “to put on the line”. Reid’s claim, then, is that “in testimony a man puts his veracity on the line for what he affirms”. Further, the phrase ‘what he affirms’ refers to the fact to which one testifies. Reid’s claim, then, is that “in testimony a man puts his veracity on the line for that fact to which he testifies”. And what is the meaning of ‘one’s

³⁷ The recalled points were first discussed at pp. 47-48

veracity'? One's veracity clearly has something to do with what might be called 'one's truthfulness', but this paraphrase does not get us all that much farther. To say "one is a truthful person", after all, is to say something ambiguous: It might mean that one generally says things that are true, or, alternately, it might mean that one does not intentionally mislead others. If one says a lot of false things merely in virtue of making honest mistakes, then one is a truthful person in the former sense but not in the later.

To resolve this ambiguity in (C), consider passage (D):

The belief we give to testimony in many cases is not solely grounded upon the veracity of the testifier. In a single testimony, we consider the motives a man might have to falsify. If there be no appearance of any such motive, much more if there be motives on the other side, his testimony has weight independent of his moral character. (*EIP*, p. 558)

Here, Reid uses the phrase 'one's veracity' to refer to some aspect of one's moral character – specifically, to some aspect associated with being a "truthful person". The ambiguity in (C) can be resolved, then, if one notes that the fact that a person that says a lot of false things merely in virtue of honest mistakes is not a fact about his/her moral character. It is more plausible, then, to interpret Reid as referring, in (C), not to a tendency to say true things, but rather to the aspect of one's moral character called "one's honesty" – i.e., to that aspect of one's moral character in virtue of which one is not disposed to lie. Reid's claim in (C), then, means something like "in testimony, a man puts his honesty on the line for the fact to which he testifies".

It is not clear, however, what exactly it means to "put one's honesty on the line" for something. It might help, here, if we more closely consider the point Reid is trying to make in (D) about the evidence upon which testimonial belief is grounded. Reid indicates

that testimonial belief is, in some sense or another, grounded on the moral character of the testifier him/herself. What does this mean? It means that in believing on the basis of testimony one believes in virtue of accepting / recognizing that the person who testifies is an honest person – i.e., that the person is not of such a character that they would intentionally lie or mislead (at least, that is, without good reason for doing so). When this is combined with the fact that, on Reid’s account, an act of testimony itself is the ground of such beliefs, it follows that testimony, on Reid’s account, just is that act in which one presents one’s interlocutor with an opportunity to believe on the basis of accepting that one is an honest person: that is, one commits the weight of one’s moral character in support of the truth of the fact testified to. Reid’s picture is one according to which, in giving testimony, one says something like “Trust me: P”, “Have faith in me: P”, or “I assure you: P”. An act of testifying to P, then, on Reid’s account, is something very much akin to an act of promising that P is true.³⁸

Why does Reid claim that one properly testifies to P only if one knows that P? Recall that this claim is best understood as the claim that one normally, in the sense of properly, testifies to P only if one is certain that P. To say that one only properly testifies to what one knows, then, is just to say that unless one is certain that P, one ought not to give one’s assurance that P. This claim, I take it, is motivated by the same reasons that motivate the analogous claim that if I doubt that I can pick you up from the airport, I ought not to promise to do it.

³⁸ Reid’s account of testimony bears a resemblance to those contemporary accounts called “Assurance Views”. Examples of such accounts are Moran (2006) and Faulkner (2011). On these accounts, an act of testimony is conceived to be an act of giving one’s assurance that something is the case. These views differ from Reid’s in that said contemporary hold that, in giving your assurance that P, what you do is give your interlocutor the right to rely on your evidence. This is called the “transmission thesis”. Reid, however, rejects the transmission thesis. On Reid’s account, your interlocutor’s evidence for P just is your act of giving assurance, not the evidence that grounds your knowledge that P.

What does this reveal about the distinction between testimony and the expression of judgment? In testifying, one gives one's personal guarantee, as it were, that something is the case, whereas in merely expressing judgment, one gives expression to the fact that one believes something is the case. The distinction between testimony and the expression of judgment, then, is analogous to the distinction between saying "I promise I will pick you up at the airport" and merely saying "I believe I will pick you up at the airport". The difference, I take it, is quite clear.

However, the sceptical reader has an interesting objection here. When one gives expression to the fact that one believes something, it might appear that what one does is testify to the fact that one believes that something. If this is a correct picture of what is going on in such cases, then it would follow that the expression of judgment is a particular species of testimony – i.e., an act in which one testifies to some fact about what one believes. So if this is a correct picture, then it seems that Reid cannot draw a clear distinction between testimony and the expression of judgment after all. This objection, however, misses the mark. Testimony is a social operation and judgment is a solitary one, and so the correct analysis, here, is that when one judges P and then utters "P" while in solitude, one can rightly be said to have expressed one's judgment, but it is only when another intelligent being exists and responds appropriately can one rightly be said to testify to the fact that one believes that P. It is not correct, then, on Reid's account, to say that the expression of judgment just is a particular case of testimony.

To conclude, then, Reid draws a clear distinction between the operations of testimony and judgment, and thus Reid draws a clear distinction between the speech acts through

which these two operations are expressed. It is clear, then, that Coady's critique of (A) wholly misses the mark.

Last, I think it worth reflecting on what becomes of Reid's epistemic anti-reductionism in the later *Essays*, in light of the fact that, on Reid's later account, testimonial belief is grounded in the acceptance of the fact that the testifier is an honest person – i.e., of a sound moral character. It is well known that, on Reid's account, our normal epistemic practice involves faith in the fact that one's cognitive faculties are well-functioning, and faith in the fact that one is not, say, an envatted brain. What his claims about testimony reveal is that Reid thinks normal epistemic practice is constituted by faith in something more: namely, faith in the moral character of other people. In the later *Essays*, Reid's anti-reductionism about testimony becomes the claim that, if there is no good reason to doubt the moral character of another person, then it is wrong to do so.

Coady's Critique of (C)

In what follows, I argue that Coady's critiques of (B) and (C) also miss the mark. I do so for two reasons. The first is simply that I believe them to be incorrect. The second reason is that it is by showing Coady's critiques miss the mark that I am led to develop an original interpretation of Reid's comments in the *Essays* that take his epistemology of testimony beyond the view he expounds in the *IHM*.

To begin, recall Coady writes about (C) that

It must be conceded that there is a tendency in ordinary speech to reserve the expression 'false testimony' for what is produced by deceitful witnesses but this seems to have resulted from the influence of that family of uses of the term 'false' which expresses our interest in treacherous, disloyal or dishonest behaviour... Nonetheless it is surely

clear that the testimony a witness gives may be perfectly sincere and yet false (in the sense of not-true). (Coady, p. 199)

Coady thinks it obvious that testimony can be false in the very same sense that judgment can be false. The first thing to note, of course, is simply that Reid does not claim that testimony cannot be false. Reid only claims, in (C), that whereas testimony can be false because it is a lie, judgment cannot be false for this same sort of reason. It appears, then, that Coady simply mischaracterizes Reid's claim. It is not controversial for Reid to claim that a judgment – i.e., a belief that something is the case – cannot itself be a lie.

However, although it wholly misses the mark, Coady's critique of (C) does raise some interesting questions. It is interesting to consider if Reid would say that testimony itself can be false, and, if so, if he would say that testimony can be false only if the testifier is dishonest – i.e., that it cannot be false in virtue of a mere honest mistake. In what follows, I consider these issues.

To begin, recall that the names of the social operations are ambiguous.³⁹ There are, then, two issues that need to be considered: The first concerns the social operation, and the second concerns the testimonial speech act.

If the question concerns the social operation – i.e., if it concerns that simple extrinsic operation in which one pledges one's veracity for P – it does not make sense to say that testimony is truth apt (i.e., capable of being true or false), much less to say that testimony can be false. Testimony *per se* is no more truth apt than any of the other social

³⁹ This point was discussed on p. 55

operations. The act of affirming that P is truth apt, of course, but this fact alone does not make the act of pledging one's veracity for what one affirms truth apt as well.

If the question concerns the speech act, however, it is clear that Reid thinks that testimony can be false, as he writes exactly that in (C).⁴⁰ But why does Reid writes this? Well, testimony is typically expressed by a statement, after all, and statements are truth apt. The expression of testimony, moreover, is included in the testimonial speech act, and so it follows that the testimonial speech act is truth apt as well (at least in part). Finally, people can and do lie sometimes, and thus that it is quite evident that Reid is committed to the claim that testimonial speech acts can be false.⁴¹

Would Reid say that the testimony can be false only if the testifier is dishonest? This is where the discussion gets more interesting. To begin, there are a few points to recall: (i) that Reid's project is one of describing the normal case; (ii) that Reid claims that, in the normal case, one testifies that P only if one knows that P; and (iii) that Reid claims that it is irrational to doubt what is known. It follows from these points that Reid is committed to saying – at least, that is, about the normal case –that it is irrational to suspect that a testifier is mistaken, and, consequently, that it is irrational to doubt the truth of testimony because one suspects the testifier is mistaken. Reid's answer, then, is something of a qualified "yes": In the normal case, it is rational to doubt the truth of the testimonial speech act only if one has reason to think the testifier is dishonest. But just to be clear, note that I am not claiming that Reid would say it is impossible for testimony to be false in virtue of the fact that the testifier made a mere mistake. I am claiming, rather, that Reid

⁴⁰ I am not sure why Coady takes Reid to be using the term 'false' in fundamentally different senses when talking about testimony and judgment respectively.

⁴¹ There is a possible objection here. Reid is always describing the normal case, and one might suppose the normal case to be one in which people do not lie. Reid is clear, however, that one can be of a sound mind (i.e., one can do everything right) and yet intentionally mislead. Reid is not a Kantian.

would say it is irrational to suspect testimony is false for this sort of reason – at least, that is, in the normal case.

What about non-standard cases? It is not uncommon, e.g., that one who is merely of the opinion that P goes ahead and testifies to P anyway. Is it still correct to say, then, with respect to such cases as these, that an act of testimony can be false only if the testifier is dishonest? Strictly speaking, perhaps, it is only when one knows and / or believes that P is false but testifies to it anyway that one can be said to lie. What I suggest, however, is that if one has some degree of doubt that P but still testifies to it, one does something very much akin to a lie. When testifying that P, one represents oneself as being in position to testify to P – and thus as knowing that P. If, then, one merely believes that P but testifies to it anyway, one mis-represents oneself in an importantly relevant sense. In the considered cases, then, I still think Reid would say it is rational to doubt testimony only if one has reason to believe the testifier dishonest.

What about extremely non-standard cases? Suppose there are cases in which one mistakenly takes oneself to know that P. In such cases as these, although it is clear that one mis-represents oneself when testifying that P, it is just as clear that one does not do so intentionally. Perhaps, then, we can say that testimony is false in these cases in virtue of a mere mistake. What would Reid say here? Well, on Reid's account, one normally has reflective access to whether one is certain that P. The only sort of cases, then, in which a testifier might mistakenly take him/herself to know that P are non-normal cases. There are, of course, several possibilities here: Perhaps the testifier is not of a sound mind, or perhaps the testifier is not operating in a normal environment. Reid's claims, however, are best understood as claims about the normal case, and thus it is incorrect to take that

what Reid says about testimony to be claims about the testimony of crazy people, about Gettier cases, or about isolated brains in vats. So although it may be possible, on Reid's account, that, in the considered non-normal cases, testimony can be false in virtue of a mere mistake, this does not undermine the more general claim that one has reason to doubt testimony only if one has good reason to doubt the honesty of the testifier. What Reid is clearly committed to saying, however, is that it is rational to doubt testimony if one has evidence to support one's belief that the testifier is of an unsound mind or one's belief that the testifier is not operating in a normal world.

To conclude, then, note that Reid would say that there are two sorts of reasons to doubt the truth of testimony: (i) reasons to believe that the testifier is dishonest, and (ii) reasons to believe the situation is non-normal. The first might take the form of reasons to believe that the testifier is of a deficient moral character, or that the testifier is a good person who has some legitimate reason to lie. The second might take the form of reason to believe that testifier is not of a sound mind, or reason to believe that something is wrong with the relevant environmental conditions.

Coady's Critique of (B)

Recall that Coady writes of (B) that

Reid is right that there are some sorts of theorizing, some matters of opinion and judgment, that are unsuited for a testimonial role, but he is wrong to rule out all results of expertise, theorizing and judgment as so suitable. The courts, I would argue, are a good guide here in allowing expert testimony in certain circumstances, and our ordinary epistemic practices increasingly reflect this sort of dependence on the authority of others. (Coady (2004), p. 199-200)

There is a problem with Coady's reasoning here. In the *EIP*, Reid distinguishes between the evidence of testimony and what he calls the evidence of "human authority in matters of opinion". In what follows, I interpret Reid's distinction and then go on to explain why the fact that Reid draws it undermines Coady's critique of (B). Reid draws the distinction in the following passages:

Passage (E):

Another first principle appears to me to be, That there is a certain regard due to human testimony in matters of fact, and even to human authority in matters of opinion. (*EIP*, p. 487)

Passage (F):

The first kind [of probable evidence] is that of human testimony, upon which the greatest part of human knowledge is built. The faith of history depends upon it, as well as the judgment of solemn tribunals, with regards to mens acquired rights, and with regard to their guilt or innocence when they are charged with crimes... and no man can act with common prudence in the ordinary occurrences of life, who has not some competent judgment of it. (*EIP*, p. 557-8)

Passage (G):

A second kind of probable evidence, is the authority of those who are good judges of the point in question. The supreme court of the judicature of the British nation, is often determined by the opinion of lawyers in a point of law, of physicians in a point of medicine, and of other artists, in what relates to their several professions. And, in the common affairs of life, we frequently rely upon the judgment of others, in points of which we are not proper judges. (*EIP*, p. 558)

There are two interpretive questions here: (i) what is the substance of Reid's distinction between the evidence of testimony and the evidence of human authority? And (ii) why

does Reid suggest in (E) that the evidence of testimony is stronger than that of human authority?

The answer to (i) is that the testimony / human authority distinction directly tracks the testimony / expression of judgment distinction. In (E), e.g., Reid characterizes the evidence of testimony as concerned with matters of fact (i.e., with matters that are known) and characterizes the evidence of human authority as concerned with matters of opinion. In (F) and (G), moreover, Reid once again associates testimony with knowledge and human authority with opinion. Now, recall that this is exactly how Reid characterizes the distinction between testimony and the expression of judgment in (B). The most straightforward reading of the just-quoted passages, then, is that the evidence of human authority is the sort of evidence acquired when one knows that another person judges that P, and that the evidence of testimony is the sort of evidence acquired when one knows that another person testifies to P.⁴²

What of question (ii)? Recall that the strength of evidence provided by testimony is conditioned by the strength of the evidence that one has to doubt it. To understand why Reid suggests that the evidence of testimony is, in general, stronger than that of human authority, we can answer the following questions: What sorts of reasons does one have to

⁴² In both cases – i.e., in the case of testimony and authority – the *typical* story is that one is acquainted with the evidence by way of being acquainted with the sensible expression of the operation. A sceptical reader might have an objection here: Judgment and testimony are expressed (typically) by a statement, and so it is perhaps impossible to determine by what means a person is to know when they are acquainted with one form of evidence rather than the other. To this issue, however, Reid simply writes that “[I]n all languages testimony and judgment are expressed by the same form of speech... to distinguish them by the form of speech, it would be necessary that verbs should have two indicative moods, one for testimony, and another to express judgment. I know not that this is found in any language. And the reason is, (not surely that the vulgar cannot distinguish between the two, for every man knows the difference between a lie and an error in judgment, but that, from the matter and circumstances, we can easily see whether a man intends to give is testimony, or barely to express his judgment” (EIP, p. 407)

doubt the evidence of testimony? And why are these reasons, in general, weaker than the reasons that one has to doubt the evidence of human authority?

We already answered the first question in our discussion of Coady's critique of Reid's claim in (C). On Reid's account, it is rational to doubt the truth of testimony only if one has reason to suspect that the testifier is lying or else reason to suspect that the testifier is not of a sound mind and/or operating in a non-normal environment. Now, note that the evidence of human authority can also be doubted for these sorts of reasons. One can have reason to suspect, e.g., that one who expresses a judgment that P actually judges that P is false, and one can have reason to suspect that one who expresses a judgment is crazy or formed/sustained his/her belief in a non-normal environment. The important point to note, then, is that human authority can be doubted for another sort of reason: that is, one can have evidence to believe that an expert is merely mistaken, even if the expert is of a sound mind and in a normal world. Expert opinions, after all, are precisely that – *opinions* – which is precisely to say that even the expert is not certain that his/her judgment is true. And recall that testimony, of course, cannot be doubted for this sort of reason. If one knows a testifier is of a sound mind, honest, not well-motivated to lie, and operating in a normal environment, then there is no reason to doubt the fact to which he/she testifies.

There is, then, more reason to doubt the evidence of human authority than there is to doubt the evidence of testimony. There are particular cases in which the opposite is true: one might, e.g., have reason to accept the opinion of a respected expert than reason and also have reason to reject the testimony of a known pathological liar. But these particular cases do not undermine the claim that, in general, the evidence of testimony is the stronger sort of evidence.

What, then, is the problem with Coady's critique of (B)? The problem is that Reid agrees with Coady that normal epistemic practice is such that one accepts expert opinion. Human authority in matters of opinion, after all, is evidence too. Coady's mistake, then, is simply that he wrongly assumes Reid uses 'testimony' to refer to both testimony and the expression of judgment. In the *IHM*, of course, Reid does use the term in this broader sense. Reid uses the term that way in the earlier work, however, because he has not yet distinguished the social from the solitary operations of the mind, and thus has not yet distinguished between testimony proper and the mere expression of judgment. In the *EIP*, however, Reid does draw all these distinctions, and so, in the *EIP*, Reid reserves the term 'testimony' to refer more narrowly to the social operation and the speech act through which it is expressed. Coady's critique of (B), then, amounts to nothing more than a mere dispute about the meaning of a word. Coady's critique, however, is symptomatic of more than a mere mis-understanding. Coady mis-understands Reid's use of 'testimony' because he does not understand Reid's account of testimony, and, it is reasonable to suppose, because he does not appreciate Reid's account of the social operations as simple extrinsic operations of the mind distinct from the speech acts in which they are expressed.

Conclusions

Recall that the straightforward application of Reid's account of the social operations to the case of testimony reveals that Reid's account of testimony in the later *Essays* consists, minimally, of the following eight claims:

1. Testimony is an attribute of the mind.
2. Testimony is a social operation, not a solitary operation.

3. There are two necessary conditions for the performance of testimony: (i) that the testimony is expressed by words or signs, and that (ii) an intelligent being perform the appropriate reciprocal social operation.
4. There is at least one sufficient condition for the performance of a social operation: that an intelligent being performs the appropriate reciprocal social operation.
5. The reciprocal operation of testimony is a social operation.
6. The reciprocal operation is an intentional act in which one is acquainted with testimony by way of interpreting its sensible expression.
7. Testimony is a simple attribute.
8. Testimony is an extrinsic attribute.

What else have we learned? We now understand Reid's account of what one does in giving testimony, as well his distinction between testimony and the mere expression of judgment. We now understand, moreover, Reid's related distinction between the evidence of human testimony in matters of fact and the evidence of human authority in matters of opinion. And we have compelling explanations of why Reid draws these distinctions in the way that he does, as well as a compelling explanation of why Reid claims that the evidence of testimony is stronger than that of human authority.

How, then, does Reid's account of the later epistemology of testimony go beyond his view in the *IHM*? Well, in the *IHM*, Reid does not distinguish between testimony and human authority. Reid does not draw this distinction in the *IHM*, moreover, because he has not yet distinguished between the social and the solitary operations of the mind. It is only in the later *Essays* that Reid gives an account of such operations, and so it is only in the later work that Reid is able to draw his various associated distinctions in the way that

he does. It is, then, in virtue of understanding Reid's account of the social operations, that we are able to understand Reid's later account of testimony and its epistemology.

Chapter 3: Thomas Reid, Anti-Individualism, and Contemporary Social Epistemology

Introduction

Thomas Reid writes that

When we trace the history of the various philosophical opinions that have sprung up among thinking men, we are led into a labyrinth of fanciful opinions, contradictions, and absurdities, intermixed with some truths; yet we may sometimes find a clue to lead us through the several windings of this labyrinth: We may find that point of view which presented things to the author of the system, in the light in which they appeared to him. This will often give a consistency to things seemingly contradictory, and some degree of probability to those that appeared most fanciful. (EIP, p. 57)

It is by finding the appropriate point of view, Reid writes, that one can sometimes come to see that seemingly contradictory and/or absurd historical claims are actually consistent and/or somewhat reasonable. In the first and second chapters, my aim was to understand Reid's account of mind, its social operations, testimony, and its epistemology, wholly from Reid's own point of view. I suggest that I was, as a direct consequence of doing so, better able to make sense of Reid's various claims than were his other interpreters. In a sense, then, my aim in chapters one and two was, in part, to illustrate the truth of Reid's claim in the just-quoted passage.

In this chapter, however, my aim is a little different: It is to use this new-found ability to see these matters from Reid's point of view to help make a little progress on a contemporary philosophical problem. To begin, I identify a particular problem that is debated in the contemporary literature on the epistemology of testimony. This problem

manifests itself quite clearly – and, what’s more, quite explicitly – in Sanford Goldberg’s recent book *Relying on Others* (2010). I show that the problem arises as it does because the parties to the debate jointly assume that two claims are straightforwardly inconsistent. I consider this assumption from Reid’s point of view, and, in doing so, show that one can consistently make both claims. The hope is that, when the claims are no longer conceived to be the irreconcilable views of opposing ideological camps, new and interesting paths for theoretical progress are made possible.

The chapter is structured as follows: (1) I present Goldberg’s views and arguments; (2) I abstract away from Goldberg to characterize the general problem and assumption; (3) I consider the problem and assumption from Reid’s point of view.

Goldberg’s Social Reliabilism

In *Relying on Others*, Goldberg writes that

This book emerges out of my confidence in one core idea: the fact that we rely on others for so much of what we know about the world should prompt a reconsideration of the individualistic orientation of traditional epistemology. (Goldberg, p. 1)

Our result suggests a parallel between the taxonomy of positions in epistemology, and the taxonomy of positions in the philosophy of mind and language. Just as we can distinguish individualistic from anti-individualistic versions of externalism in the philosophy of mind and language... so too can we distinguish individualistic from anti-individualistic versions of externalism in epistemology. This sort of taxonomy is not yet familiar in epistemology. (Goldberg, pp. 6-7)

Goldberg’s aim, then, is to do in epistemology what has already been done in the philosophies of mind and language: that is, Goldberg’s aim is to motivate a rejection of certain “individualist” views widely shared by contemporary theorists. In this section, the

aim is to present Goldberg's view and to characterize the sorts of considerations he takes to motivate it.

To begin, let's define the views:

Epistemic individualism: If individuals S1 and S2 are twins, then, for any proposition P, S1 is justified in believing that P if and only if S2 is justified in believing that P.

Epistemic anti-individualism: Epistemic individualism is false.

To understand what exactly this means – i.e., to understand what exactly Goldberg's rejection of epistemic individualism amounts to – a few more terms need to be clarified.

The first such term is 'twin'. To put it vaguely – but in Goldberg's own words – individuals are twins just when they are "internal duplicates": that is, individuals are twins just when they share all "internal properties". But what is an internal property? Goldberg is not entirely clear on this point: he sometimes characterizes twins as individuals that share all "intrinsic properties", and sometimes as individuals that are "identical from the skin in"⁴³. But this is all Goldberg has to say on the matter.

Goldberg's view, then, is not entirely clear – indeed, he might well intend to leave it a little vague and / or ambiguous – but it is reasonable to assume, I think, that Goldberg uses 'intrinsic properties' in roughly that sense adopted in chapter one in characterizing Reid's account of the social operations: On Goldberg's account, an individual's "internal properties" are the properties that individual bears wholly apart from the way everything else is.

⁴³ Goldberg characterizes twins in these various ways in the discussion at (Goldberg, pp. 7–9)

The second such term is ‘justified’. What needs to be understood, here, is what it means to say that an individual is justified in believing that something is the case. To put it quite broadly: To say a belief is justified is to say that the belief is good in some epistemic sense, which is just to say that it is good in a sense importantly related to knowledge. The task of giving an account of the nature of epistemic justification, knowledge, and the relation between the two, is perhaps the oldest and most contested in epistemology. I cannot, then, give a more detailed explanation here without entering into large and contested matters well beyond the scope of the current discussion. But it might clarify what is at issue, if I present a couple of examples of how particular theorists think about justification.

Reid’s epistemology is already familiar to the reader, and so it might help to take a brief look at Reid’s account of justification. Of course, Reid does not use ‘justification’ in a technical sense, but we can characterize a Reidian analog of the notion. The Reidian analog of saying that a belief is justified is saying that the strength of the belief is appropriate given the strength of the available evidence – which is just to say that the belief is well-grounded by the evidence that is available to the believing subject. Reid would likely say, then, that a belief can fail to be justified only if something goes wrong with the individual’s relevant epistemic faculties or something goes wrong with some relevant aspect of the individual’s environment.⁴⁴

Next, let’s consider Goldberg’s picture of justification. Goldberg is a process reliabilist: that is, Goldberg thinks a belief is justified just when the cognitive process that produced

⁴⁴ Some might argue that it is more accurate to suppose Reid would say that justified belief only requires that the individual is of a sound mind, and that it is the further issue of whether the individual not only justifiably believes but also knows that depends on having normal environmental conditions. Which paraphrase one thinks is most accurate, might depend on how one is inclined to think about the concept of justification.

/ sustains the belief is a token of a generally reliable cognitive process type. A cognitive process type is said to generally reliable, just when, on the whole, it produces a preponderance of true beliefs. If, e.g., the cognitive process involved in producing a perceptual belief is a token of a type that, on the whole, produces mostly true beliefs, then it follows that the belief is justified. And if, e.g., the cognitive process called ‘wishful thinking’ is not also reliable in this sense, it follows that beliefs produced or sustained by wishful thinking are not justified.

It is important to note, however, that Goldberg is not your typical process reliabilist. Goldberg adopts a version of the view more accurately called “*social* process reliablism”. It is this social aspect of the view, moreover, that is particularly relevant to our concerns. In the rest of this section, then, my aim is to characterize this social aspect of Goldberg’s view as well as the sorts of considerations he takes to motivate it.

To begin, let’s note how Goldberg himself frames his critique of individualistic forms of process reliablism. Goldberg writes, e.g., concerning Alvin Goldman’s canonical and uniquely influential brand of process reliablism that

[Goldman makes] two closely related, but not identical, claims: that the theory of justification is interested in assessing “the goodness or badness of the operations that register and transform the stimulation that reaches” the “cognizer”; and that justified belief is a matter of the belief being “one that results from cognitive operations that are, generally speaking, good or successful”. The difference between these claims can seem negligible. But the phenomenon of testimonial belief suggests that, on the contrary, these two claims might actually be in some tension... Once *other people* enter into the picture, and some of the subject’s beliefs are formed in ways that implicate cognitive processes that take place in *their* minds/brains, matters get complicated. For we might then ask what justifies the restriction on the relevant cognitive processes to include only those that “register and transform

the stimulation that reaches the cognizer”.” (Goldberg, pp. 59-60)

Goldberg agrees that epistemologists ought to be interested in evaluating how well an individual performs when forming beliefs. The point in dispute is whether – in the case of testimonial belief, at least – epistemologists ought to be interested in evaluating more than just that. Goldberg’s distinctive claim is that the cognitive processes relevant to the epistemic evaluation of testimonially grounded beliefs are socially extended processes – i.e., cognitive processes that exist partly in the mind of the believer and partly in the mind of the one who testifies. Goldberg’s claim is that epistemologists ought to evaluate not only the reliability properties of the cognitive processes involved after testimony is received, but also the reliability properties of the cognitive processes involved in the production of the testimony. If the cognitive process that produced the testimony is of a type that is generally unreliable, then the extended social process as a whole is unreliable, and thus that the testimonial belief is not justified – even if all the cognitive processes “that register and transform the stimulation” that reaches “the cognizer” are reliable.

How does Goldberg motivate his distinctive claim? His approach mirrors the approach typically used to motivate anti-individualism in other philosophical domains. Goldberg writes that

Anti-individualism about the mental is typically established using ‘twin’ cases: we produce two subjects who are internal duplicates of one another and who inhabit environments that are type-identical as far as their non-social features go, and then show that these twins can nevertheless differ in the attitudes they instantiate, as a function of differences in the social features in their respective environments... Throughout this book I will be using a similar sort of thought experiment to derive results in epistemology: I will be arguing that the reliability properties of twins’ beliefs can vary as a function of

differences in the social features in their respective environments. (Goldberg, p. 7)

Note that the “social features” of an individual’s environment just are the facts about other minds that inhabit their environment. Goldberg motivates his anti-individualism, then, by asking one to imagine various hypothetical scenarios involving twins receiving testimony. In each scenario, the facts are – by stipulation – identical in every respect except for the social facts. Goldberg then suggests that when one reflects on cases of this sort, one intuitively (or, at least, one ought to intuit) that the twins are differently justified in holding some common belief. Such intuitions, Goldberg argues, provide strong reasons to reject epistemic individualism.

To clarify the idea, let’s consider an example.⁴⁵ Imagine three distinct scenarios. In each scenario, there is a twin waiting in a doctor’s office. In each scenario, a doctor comes in and gives the twin a diagnosis. The three diagnoses are indistinguishable from the point of view of the patients: The doctors look the same, move the same, and say exactly the same thing. The three twins, consequently, form the exact same belief in the truth of the diagnosis. The difference between the cases is this: In the first case, the doctor runs the correct tests and straightforwardly reports the results to the patient; in the second case, the doctor runs the exact same tests but then forgets the results on the way back to the office and just makes up the diagnosis on the spot; and, in the third case, there simply is no doctor – it might be that the twin hallucinates that there is a doctor, or that the doctor is a philosophical “zombie” (i.e., a being physically identical to a normal human except possessing no mental states).⁴⁶ In what follows, I will call the first scenario

⁴⁵ Goldberg’s discussion of this example is at Goldberg (2010) pp. 148-153

⁴⁶ For a classic discussion of such Zombies, see Chalmers (1996).

‘the good-doctor case’, call the second ‘the bad-doctor case’, and call the third ‘the no-doctor case’.⁴⁷

When reflecting on these cases, Goldberg intuits that the patient in the good doctor case is more justified in believing the doctor’s diagnosis than either of its twins. Goldberg suggests, further, that other epistemologists do (or at least ought to) share these intuitions. Goldberg takes himself to have motivated anti-individualism, then, in virtue of the supposed fact that such intuitions are inconsistent with a commitment to epistemic individualism. This reasoning, of course, is not unreasonable: Epistemic individualists, after all, are theorists who claim that twins cannot, in principle, be differently justified.

How does the debate play out in the literature? Perhaps unsurprisingly, some theorists do not share Goldberg’s intuitions. Fred Schmidt, e.g., reflects on the same doctor cases and arrives at precisely the opposite conclusion: Schmidt intuits that the patients in the good and bad doctor cases are, in fact, equally justified in believing the diagnosis.⁴⁸ Schmidt then suggests that *his* intuition provides good reason to reject Goldberg’s anti-individualism. When responding to Schmidt’s challenge, moreover, Goldberg notes that Schmidt does not explicitly commit to the claim that the patient in the no-doctor case is equally as justified as the other two. Goldberg then points out that any consistent epistemic individualist is committed to saying that all three twins are equally justified – they are, after all, assumed to be twins – and, consequently, that Schmidt’s hesitation on this point reveals that he harbours anti-individualist intuitions of his own.⁴⁹ The debate

⁴⁷ Goldberg only considers the hallucination version of the no doctor case. This formulation is problematic, however, because it is unreasonable to assume that a person who is hallucinating is an internal duplicate of a person who is not hallucinating. In the “zombie” version of the case, this problem is avoided.

⁴⁸ See discussion in Schmidt (1999).

⁴⁹ Goldberg responds explicitly to Schmidt at Goldberg (2010), pp. 148-153.

gets messy and bogged down in various parochial details. But the overall picture, here, is that there is ultimately no consensus on which set of intuitions – either the individualist intuitions or the anti-individualist intuitions – is correct.

The Assumption and the Problem

The disagreement between Goldberg and traditional process reliabilists is a special case of a more general philosophical problem. The aim, here, is to abstract away from the parochial details of Goldberg's views and arguments in order to characterize the general problem. To begin, let's define another term:

Sensitivity: For any fact P and fact Q, P is sensitive to Q just when, if it were the case that not-Q then it would be the case that not-P.

The dispute between Goldberg and traditional process reliabilists can be characterized in terms of sensitivity. Goldberg's disputed claim is that facts about epistemic justification are – in the case of testimony, at least – sensitive to facts about the reliability properties of cognitive processes in other minds. Goldberg's distinctive claim is that if the cognitive processes involved in the production of an act of testimony were not reliable, then any belief formed on the basis of that testimony would not be justified.

Next, let's abstract away from the details of Goldberg's dispute. To do so, let's frame the dispute not in terms of *facts about the reliability*, but rather merely in terms of *facts*.

It might be helpful, here, to define two more terms:

Epistemic socialism: At least sometimes, concerning distinct subjects S1 and S2, the fact that S1 is justified in believing that P is sensitive to a fact about the mind of S2.

Epistemic anti-socialism: Epistemic socialism is false.

Goldberg is an epistemic socialist: Goldberg holds that, at least sometimes, facts about justification are sensitive to social facts. Traditional process reliabilists such as Goldman, on the other hand, are epistemic anti-socialists.

Next, recall that Goldberg takes himself to be arguing for epistemic anti-individualism. The point to note, however, is that Goldberg's does not directly argue for epistemic anti-individualism, but for epistemic socialism. After all, what Goldberg does is present cases about which one is meant to intuit that facts about justification are sensitive to social facts, which is just to say that Goldberg presents cases about which one is meant to intuit that epistemic socialism is true. So if Goldberg provides good reason to reject epistemic individualism, his argument is premised on the assumption that epistemic socialism entails epistemic anti-individualism.

Goldberg's interlocutors – such as, e.g., Fred Schmidt – accept this assumption that socialism and individualism are straightforwardly inconsistent. It is also agreed that our intuitions about twin cases give reason to reject any theory that conflicts with them. The only point in dispute is which intuitions are the correct ones – i.e., which intuitions are the ones that an un-biased epistemologist ought to have. Their dispute arises because epistemic individualism and socialism are both, to at least some degree, intuitively well-motivated. The philosophical problem – as I frame it, here – is that of figuring out how best to go about resolving this apparent tension that arises between our intuitions and epistemic theories. Insofar as epistemic socialism and individualism are assumed to be straightforwardly inconsistent, the only dialectical option for dealing with this tension is to argue that one of the two sets of intuitions ought to be rejected outright, along with the theory that it motivates. It is no surprise, then, that this is precisely how the debate plays

out in the literature. A socialist such as Goldberg argues that individualist intuitions are mere products of theorists falling into the grip of a false theory, and an individualist like Schmidt argues precisely the same line with respect to socialist intuitions. The debate, then, takes the form of a conflict between two opposing theoretical camps armed with seemingly irreconcilable sets of basic intuitions.

Reid's Point of View

In this section, the aim, first, is to understand epistemic individualism from Reid's point of view. I then go on to discuss and critique the aforementioned assumption and problem. Last, I offer some concluding comments.

Reid and Epistemic Individualism

Twins are defined as individuals that are "internal duplicates" – i.e., individuals that share all of their "internal properties". What exactly epistemic individualism amounts to, then, depends on what it means to say that individuals are internal duplicates. In this section, I figure out what it means to be an internal property from Reid's point of view.

Recall from chapter one that, on Reid's account, an attribute is "in the mind" just when it is predicated of the mind. It might appear, then, that Reid's view, here, is that twins just are individuals that share all attributes. This answer, however, is too simplistic: the term 'internal properties' is clearly meant to pick out some sub-set of the attributes that an individual bears. So I suggest that we need to think a little harder about what the most accurate Reidian analog of "internal property" might be. It is helpful, here, to recall that internal properties, on Goldberg's picture, are an individual's intrinsic properties – i.e., those properties that the individual can bear wholly independent of the way everything

else is. Further, on what might be called the standard contemporary view of intrinsic properties – i.e., that view that, it was supposed, Goldberg accepts – an individual's intrinsic properties are its most fundamental, in the sense that it is in virtue of bearing its intrinsic properties that an individual can bear its non-intrinsic properties. We can say, then, that twins are individuals that share all the attributes that are the most fundamental to the individual in this sense. We can say, further, that epistemic individualism is the claim that individuals that share all of their fundamental attributes cannot, in principle, be differently justified in holding some common belief. So the question is this: What sorts of attributes are the most fundamental to the individual from Reid's point of view?

To begin, recall Reid's account of attributes, and, in particular, the attributes of the mind. (After all, the sort of twins with which we are concerned here are persons that think and form beliefs, not mere lumps of clay.) On Reid's account, the mind's attributes are its various acts, and such acts can be either extrinsic acts or intrinsic acts. The point to note, then, is that the mind's intrinsic and extrinsic attributes are, on Reid's account, equally fundamental to the individual in every important sense. The difference between the mind's intrinsic and extrinsic attributes is exactly like the difference between that act in which I scratch my back and that act in which I scratch yours. There is no good reason, here, to say that one sort of scratching act is more fundamental to the individual who performs it than the other, and there is, likewise, is no good reason to say that the mind's intrinsic acts are any more fundamental than are its extrinsic acts. To perform an extrinsic act is not, on Reid's account, to perform some intrinsic attribute just when another individual happens to exist in a particular way: that is, an extrinsic act is not an intrinsic act that is modified by some relational property. The mind's extrinsic acts, after all, are

simple and primary attributes in the very same sense as the mind's intrinsic acts. It is simply arbitrary, then, on Reid's account, to suggest that the mind's intrinsic acts are more fundamental than extrinsic acts: it is like saying that eye colour is somehow more fundamental than skin colour.

What attributes, on Reid's account, do twins not need to share? Mere relations, recall, are the attributes that an individual bears in virtue of the fact that it bears its various non-relational attributes, just when, that is, another individual happens to bear certain non-relational attributes as well. To be a subject of a mere relation, then, is to bear some particular intrinsic and / or extrinsic attribute just when the external world happens to be a certain way. The mind's mere relational attributes, then, are less fundamental than its intrinsic and extrinsic attributes. And so it makes sense, on Reid's account, to say that twins need not share all such mere relations.

Note, however, for clarity's sake, that Reid is committed to saying twins may sometimes need to share some mere relations. Extrinsic acts necessarily suppose that external objects exist, and, what's more, that such objects exist in particular ways. Insofar as a mind performs an extrinsic act, then, the mind must stand in some relation with that object with which it engages. Insofar, then, as twins happen to share some extrinsic attribute, they must share certain relations to those objects necessarily supposed by their extrinsic acts. If I ask a question, e.g., then there must exist another person who exercises his / her intelligence in a particular way. This other person and I are both similar in that we both exercise our intelligence: that is, we stand in some relation. Questions are simple, primary, extrinsic acts, and so it follows, if I ask a question, that

any twin of mine must also ask a question, and, consequently, that any twin of mine must bear some shared relation with some relevantly similar intelligent being.⁵⁰

Critique of the Contemporary Debate

In this section, I show that Reid is an epistemic socialist, and that in fact this does not entail that he is also an epistemic anti-individualist. Then, in light of this fact, I comment on the state of the aforementioned debate between epistemic individualists and socialists.

To begin, note that Reid is committed to the claim that if an individual bears an extrinsic attribute, then facts about that individual are sensitive to facts about the external world. If e.g., Bill perceives an object, then the fact that Bill perceives the object is sensitive to the fact that the object exists: if it were the case that the object did not exist, then it would not be the case the Bill perceives it.

Second, recall that Reid is committed to the claim that twins share all extrinsic acts. More importantly, however, note that it follows, here, that Reid is committed to the claim that facts about twins are jointly sensitive to facts about the external world.

Third, recall that the social operations are extrinsic acts. It follows, then, from the fact that an individual performs a social operation, that all of that individual's twins must also perform that social operation. If, e.g., I ask a question, then any twin of mine must ask a question. The social operations, like all the mind's extrinsic attributes, are sensitive to

⁵⁰ Perhaps the best thing to call these shared relations is "necessary non-essential attributes". The idea, here, is that twins must share all their "essential attributes" – i.e., their intrinsic and extrinsic attributes – as a matter of definition, simply because the notion of a 'twin' is defined as an individual that share all the same internal (i.e., fundamental) attributes. The idea, further, is that twins must share all their "necessary but non-essential attributes" not as a matter of definition, but rather in virtue of what was, in the first chapter, termed "metaphysical necessity". But to avoid any mis-reading note that 'essential' is used quite loosely. The essence of an individual is distinct from that of its attributes, and so it makes no sense to say that one sort of attribute is more essential than another. Just note, then, that I use the term 'essential', here, merely in order to capture that clear sense in which primary attributes are, on Reid's point of view, more fundamental its necessary relations.

facts about the external world. And what distinguishes the social operations from other extrinsic acts, moreover, is precisely that they are sensitive to social facts – i.e., that they are sensitive to facts about other minds. So it follows, here, that Reid is committed to the claim that twins that share social operations are jointly sensitive to social facts.

Fourth, recall that both testimony and its reciprocal operation are social operations. It follows, then, from the fact that an individual receives testimony, that its twins must also receive testimony. Since the fact that an individual receives testimony is sensitive to the social fact that another individual gives testimony, it follows, on Reid's account, that facts about twins' testimony are sensitive to social facts about testimony.

Finally, recall that the fact that someone testifies to P constitutes one's evidence for P, and recall that, on Reid's account of justification, to say a belief is justified is just to say that the strength of the belief is appropriate given the strength of the available evidence. It follows, then, that Reid is committed to the claim that facts about epistemic justification are sensitive to facts about evidence. If, e.g., it were the case that one's evidence didn't exist, then it would not be the case that the belief is equally justified. The point to note, then, is that Reid is committed to the claim that facts about justification – in the case of testimonially grounded belief, at least – are sensitive to social facts about the existence / non-existence of testimony. This means that Reid is an epistemic socialist: that is, Reid holds that facts about justification are sometimes sensitive to social facts.

The important point, however, is that it does not follow from the fact that Reid is committed to epistemic socialism that he is thereby committed to epistemic anti-individualism. To understand why this is the case, let's reconsider the doctor cases. In the no-doctor case, recall, no act of testimony exists – there is no mind that performs it -- and

so it follows that the twin in the no-doctor case is not acquainted with an act of testimony. The twins in good and bad doctor cases, however, are acquainted with testimony, and so the twin in the no-doctor case is clearly not acquainted with the same evidence as the others. It makes good sense, then, on Reid's account, to say that the patient in the no-doctor case is differently justified than the other patients – and what's more, it makes good sense to say the patient is differently justified in virtue of a difference in the social facts.

Why does this not entail that Reid is an epistemic anti-individualist? In the no-doctor case, no act of testimony is performed, and so it follows that the patient does not perform an act of receiving testimony – it is, after all, a necessary condition for the possibility of receiving testimony that there exists some other individual that gives it. The patients in the good and bad doctor cases, on the other hand, do receive testimony, and so it follows, on Reid's account, the patient in the no-doctor case is not a twin of the other two. Thus, Reid's commitment to the claim that the patients are differently justified – and, what's more, differently justified in virtue of a difference in the social facts – is consistent with epistemic individualism. Reid, then, can make a socialist claim without thereby having to accept anti-individualism. What this shows is that epistemic individualism and epistemic socialism are not straightforwardly inconsistent.

What have I argued? I have argued that epistemic individualism and socialism are not straightforwardly inconsistent. Note, however, that I have not thereby argued that all and any individualist and socialist claims may be reconciled within a single coherent world view. What Reid's account reveals, rather, is that the mere fact that one makes a socialist claim does not, all by itself, compel one to reject epistemic individualism. If one were to

intuit, e.g., that some fact about epistemic justification in a particular case is sensitive to some social fact, one might thereby be compelled reject individualism, but only if one is committed to the claim that the believer's fundamental attributes, in that case, are not also sensitive to that social fact. What Reid's account reveals, then, is that, if one is to argue against epistemic individualism by arguing for epistemic socialism, one must motivate not only socialist claims, but also claims about which facts (if any) are the facts that twins are jointly sensitive to: that is, in addition to motivating epistemic socialism, one needs to motivate some heady metaphysical thesis about the nature of mind and its interaction with objects in the external world.

With these points in mind, recall that the philosophical problem discussed in section one is one of figuring out how best to go about resolving the apparent tension between our socialist and individualist intuitions. Insofar as these two views are assumed to be straightforwardly inconsistent, the debate can be about nothing more than which set of intuitions ought to be wholly rejected. What Reid's point of view reveals, then, is that there is a dialectical option that contemporary theorists ignore. Instead of merely arguing about which intuitions ought to be rejected, theorists might also look to modify their metaphysics of the mind such that their epistemic theory can better accord with the most commonly and strongly held intuitions of both the individual and social variety.

Recognition of this other dialectical possibility, by itself, constitutes progress on the philosophical problem. When recognized, the debate is no longer conceived to be nothing more than a conflict between opposing theoretical camps motivated by irreconcilable sets of basic intuitions. Insofar as the debate is nothing more than conflict of that sort, after all, prospects for achieving any kind of consensus are dim.

Concluding Comments

From Reid's point of view, epistemic individualism is reconceived. It is this reconceived version of individualism, moreover, that, I have argued, is consistent with epistemic socialism. It might be objected, then, that I have not succeeded in showing that Goldberg's version of epistemic individualism is consistent with epistemic socialism, and, thus, that I have succeeded in showing that the assumption made by contemporary theorists is false. This is correct: I have not argued that epistemic individualism – as Goldberg conceives it – is consistent with epistemic socialism. If twins are individuals that share all and only intrinsic attributes, then it is true, almost by definition, that twins are never jointly sensitive to social facts. It is important to note, however, that this does not undermine my general point. The point I mean to make is just that it is possible change one's conception of epistemic individualism such that one's prospects for making progress on the philosophical problem can be improved. Of course, it might be objected, further, that what I have pointed out is not a way to solve the very problem that confronts contemporary theorists, but rather a way to solve a slightly different problem. But this is not quite correct. What I mean to point out – if not a way to solve the very problem that confronts contemporary theorists -- is a way to simply avoid that problem altogether. What our consideration of Reid's point of view reveals is that the philosophical problem confronts contemporary theorists *in way it does* in virtue of the fact that contemporary theorists accept a particular metaphysical picture of the nature of mind and its interaction with the external world. What I have shown is that their problem can be avoided, in its current form, if contemporary theorists simply look to change that picture.

I take it to be rather obvious that through studying the history of philosophy one can come to understand philosophical problems from different points of view. What I take to be not so obvious, however, is the point that this ability to see philosophical problems from a different point of view can be of value to those working on contemporary theory. The point is that, by understanding a problem from a different point of view, theorists can come to see that seemingly contradictory positions can be rendered consistent, and so thereby come to see novel solutions to their problems. In a sense, the aim of this chapter is, in part, just to illustrate this point about how the study of the history of philosophy can help theorists make progress on contemporary philosophical problems.

The study of Reid's thought is well suited to engaging in this sort of historical critique of contemporary philosophical problems. Why do I think this? The work of David Hume casts a long shadow in Anglo-American philosophy. I think that it is, then, due in part to the historical fact Reid's work is largely a direct response to – and, quite often, a clear rejection of – the work of Hume and similar early modern thinkers, that it is quite common to find parallels and analogs between Reid's ideas and the ideas of those contemporary theorists that seek to reject certain sorts of traditional views. The important and useful fact, however, is that Reid is not merely a contemporary thinker that happened to live in an earlier time. Reid has a very different way of looking at things than do most contemporary theorists – even those who seek to reject and/or undermine more traditional theories – and it is precisely in virtue of such differences that appreciating Reid's views can help one to conceive contemporary problems from a different point of view. It is, e.g., in virtue of the fact that we understood and appreciated Reid's claim that the social operations are both *simple* and *extrinsic* attributes, that the critique of the debate between

individualists and socialists in the present chapter was possible. If, e.g., one were to think that Reid conceives of the mind's extrinsic attributes as modifications of simpler intrinsic attributes, then one would think that the mind's extrinsic attributes are not, on Reid's account, properly counted among the mind's most fundamental attributes, and one would not, then, come to see that, from Reid's point of view, epistemic individualism can be rendered consistent with epistemic socialism.

Chapter 4: Brief Concluding Summary

In this previous chapter, I briefly summarize the results of the preceding chapters, indicating what I take to be the important points of note, and then, to close, I identify one possible way to extend of the current research project.

In chapter one, I developed and motivated an original interpretation of Reid's general account of the social operations, and, additionally, critiqued the other interpretations of that account to be found in the secondary literature. I argued that my interpretation is better than the others in virtue of the fact that my interpretation alone can make sense of Reid's claim that the social operations are both simple and necessarily suppose social intercourse with other intelligent beings. I was able to make sense of Reid's claim in virtue of the fact that I better appreciate Reid's views on the nature of the mind, its extrinsic operations, and its relation to the external world, than do his other interpreters. If one were to incorrectly assume, e.g., that Reid holds the common view that the mind's operations exist in some "inner" space wholly isolated from the external world, it would then be very difficult – if not impossible – to make sense of Reid's claim that the social operations are simple and yet necessarily suppose the existence of objects in the external world. This is, e.g., the precise mistake that Yaffe makes. In order to make some sense of Reid's claim that the social operations necessarily suppose social intercourse, Yaffe is led to postulate that Reid conceives the social operations as complex attributes partially composed of some characteristic secondary relational property. If Yaffe appreciated Reid's view that the mind's operations are not things located within the walls of one's head, Yaffe would not have been led to think that the social operations must be complex.

It is in virtue of understanding that the mind's extrinsic operations, on Reid's account, are best conceived to be acts in which the mind "reaches out" and makes direct cognitive contact with external objects, then, that I was able to better understand how it is that, on Reid's account, an extrinsic operation of the mind can be simple.

In chapter two, I developed and argued for an original interpretation of Reid's account of testimony and its epistemology, and, in doing so, I critiqued C.A.J Coady's discussion of that account. I was successful in achieving my aims, once again, because I cultivated a deeper appreciation of Reid's relevant background views than his other interpreters. The only point I wish to note in particular, here, is that the relevant background views, in chapter two, included not only Reid's views on testimony in the *IHM* and his general picture of evidence and knowledge, but also his general account of the social operations. If one were to assume, e.g., that the only difference between the solitary and social operations, on Reid's account, is that the social operations are expressed in the presence of another intelligent being, whereas the solitary operations are not, then it would be quite difficult – if not in fact impossible – to explain why it is that Reid draws his distinction between testimony and the mere expression of judgment. The point I mean to make is just that, if one were to adopt one of the other interpretations of Reid's general account of the social operations, then it would be difficult to make sense of Reid's distinction.

In chapter three, I showed that when the conflict between epistemic individualists and socialists is understood from Reid's point of view, the positions are seen to be consistent, contrary to what is commonly assumed. I then pointed out how this fact reveals that there is an unexplored possibility for making progress in the debate between the proponents of those two sorts views: Instead of merely arguing about whether it is the individualist or

the socialist intuitions that ought to be wholly rejected, contemporary theorists might also look to modify their metaphysics such that their epistemology might better accord with the most commonly and strongly held intuitions of both sorts.

What are some possible extensions of the current project? The immediate possibility is that I could look to do some interpretive work on Reid's account of some of the other social operations. In the *EAP*, e.g., Reid engages in a sustained and fairly substantial discussion of the social operation of promising, as well as the normative dimensions of the practice of giving and receiving promises.⁵¹ Reid is concerned, there, not only with developing his own positive account, but also with attacking David Hume's discussion of promising in the *Essay Concerning Principles of Morals*. There is a well developed body of secondary literature on this topic, including the discussions of Arsdal (1986), Lehrer (1989) and Yaffe (2007). Of course, I already critiqued those discussions in chapter one, but my critique was focussed on their respective interpretations of Reid's general account of the social operations, not on their respective interpretations of Reid's more particular account of the act of promising and his critique of Hume. The thought, then, is that I could, first, look to develop an original interpretation of Reid's positive account of promising and contracting informed by my original interpretation of Reid's general account of the social operations, and then, second, I could look to interpret Reid's critique of Hume's account, and then, third, I could look to critique the discussions of Arsdal, Lehrer, and Yaffe on both those topics. And, of course, the last stage of such a project could be to look to critique some debates that arise in the contemporary literature on promising, by considering the relevant issues from Reid's point of view.

⁵¹ *EAP*, pp. 327-344

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