

Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository

12-16-2021 2:00 PM

Thomas Reid on Language and Mind

Alastair L.V. Crosby, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Falkenstein, Lorne, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Philosophy

© Alastair L.V. Crosby 2021

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd>



Part of the [History of Philosophy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Crosby, Alastair L.V., "Thomas Reid on Language and Mind" (2021). *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository*. 8314.

<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/8314>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact wlsadmin@uwo.ca.

Abstract

The dissertation concerns Thomas Reid's philosophy of language. In the first three chapters, I discuss his philosophy of language in relation to his developmental psychology. More specifically, I discuss his answers to two questions: (i) what does the ability to understand artificial linguistic signs make possible? and (ii) what makes the ability to understand artificial linguistic signs possible? The focus is on Reid's claim that the mind's ability to understand artificial linguistic signs makes it possible for it to acquire a number of distinct mental abilities, such as to conceive universals, to judge, and to reason. I argue this claim commits him to the further claim that artificial language makes it possible for the mind to acquire moral liberty. The focus is also on Reid's claim that it was possible for humans to first invent artificial linguistic signs, and, subsequently, for children to be taught artificial linguistic signs, only if they possess an innate faculty by the exercise of which they can understand natural linguistic signs that express social operations of the mind. I explain that claim, reconstruct Reid's arguments for it, and argue that the account of artificial linguistic signs presupposed by said arguments is *prima facie* incompatible with his claim that artificial language makes moral liberty possible. In the fourth chapter, I discuss Reid's accounts of perception, memory, and imagination. I argue he holds that we perceive, remember, and imagine before learning artificial language, and, consequently, is committed to the view that such acts do not essentially involve the exercise of those abilities that artificial language makes possible. I argue that it follows from this that Reid's commentators have not fully understood his accounts of the conceptual content in perception, memory, and imagination; the processes through which said acts come to involve distinct conceptual content; and the distinction between acquired perceptions and habitual judgments.

Keywords

Thomas Reid; language; mind; moral liberty; social operations; promising; perception; memory; imagination.

Summary for Lay Audience

Thomas Reid (1710-1796) was a prominent Scottish philosopher. This dissertation is a study of Reid's philosophy of language and his philosophy of mind. This research belongs to a tradition in which historians of philosophy aim to get as clear as possible on details of the views of historical philosophers; the aim is neither to evaluate the truth of said views nor to take stock of their historical significance.

The dissertation focuses on Reid's views on developmental psychology - which is to say, his views on how the mind develops from infancy to maturity. On the reading of Reid defended here, Reid holds that human infants come into the world possessing a set of innate abilities, and that they then interact with their physical and social environment so as to acquire additional abilities. Reid holds, moreover, that one of these innate abilities is the ability to understand natural linguistic signs - i.e., features of the face, modulations of the voice, and bodily gestures - that signify people's thoughts, and, in particular, special sorts of thoughts that Reid calls "social operations of the mind". It is in virtue of this innate ability, he holds, that it was possible for humans to invent artificial languages - i.e., languages such as English, Chinese, Swahili, and so on - and is currently possible for infants to be taught to understand already invented artificial languages. Reid holds, moreover, that it is in virtue of children understanding artificial languages that it is possible for them to acquire the ability to conceive objects as belonging to distinct types, to be rational, and to perform acts for which one can be held morally responsible. The dissertation aims to understand all these views and to draw further consequences from them that concern how to best understand related aspects of Reid's accounts of perception, memory, and imagination.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Summary for Lay Audience.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Preface.....	v
Chapter One: Reid on Linguistic Signs.....	1
Chapter Two: Reid on What Artificial Language Makes Possible.....	9
2.1 Reid on Abstraction and Universals.....	11
2.2 Reid on Judgment, Reasoning, and Rationality.....	21
2.3 Reid on Moral Liberty.....	23
2.4 Manuscripts and Published Texts.....	28
2.5 Reid’s Other Commentators.....	30
Chapter Three: Reid on What Makes Artificial Language Possible.....	33
3.1 Reid on Social Operations of the Mind.....	33
3.2 Reid on Natural Linguistic Signs.....	47
3.3 Reconstructions of Reid’s Arguments.....	60
3.4 Reid’s Other Commentators.....	80
3.5 Problems with Reid’s Arguments.....	84
Chapter Four: Reid on Perception, Memory, and Imagination.....	95
4.1 The Basics of Reid on Perception, Memory, and Imagination.....	95
4.2 Reid on Distinct Conceptual Content.....	103
4.3 Reid’s Other Commentators.....	119
4.4 Reid on Acquired Perception and Habitual Judgment.....	124
4.5 Summary and Conclusions.....	134
Works Cited.....	138
Curriculum Vitae.....	142

Preface

The main topic of this dissertation is Thomas Reid's philosophy of language. This topic has not received much attention in the secondary literature - at least, that is, as compared to topics such as Reid's philosophy of mind and epistemology. Reid's philosophy of language, however, is novel in several respects, requires detailed study to understand, and is deeply intertwined with the rest of his philosophical system: his philosophy of language, then, deserves more attention than it has received. One aim in this dissertation is to partly rectify this situation in the literature, by carrying out a detailed study of several aspects of Reid's philosophy of language; a second aim, moreover, is to use the results of that study to contribute to the more developed literature on his philosophy of mind. Reid's views about language and mind are intertwined such that, by better understanding the former, we can better understand the latter - or so I hope to show in what follows. What follows is a detailed summary of each of the chapters of the dissertation and then an explanation of the project's aims and methods.

In chapter one, I present an overview of the basics of Reid's philosophy of language - and, specifically, of his account of linguistic signs. I first present the basics of Reid's general notion of a sign, before going on to present the basics of Reid's accounts of natural linguistic signs and artificial linguistic signs. In chapter one, I do not aim to defend novel exegetical claims, but instead merely to present those aspects of Reid's account of natural and artificial linguistic signs that need to be understood, if the reader is to both follow and critically engage the discussions that follow in chapters two, three, and four.

In chapters two and three, I discuss Reid's philosophy of language specifically in relation to his developmental psychology. I discuss Reid's answers to two questions: (i) what does the ability to understand artificial linguistic signs make possible? and (ii) what makes the ability to understand artificial linguistic signs possible?

In chapter two, I consider (i). My focus, there, is Reid's claim that the mind's ability to understand artificial linguistic signs makes it possible for it to acquire a number of distinct mental abilities, such as the abilities to conceive and remember universals, to judge, and to reason. Reid makes these claims in manuscripts which have not yet received attention in the literature, and the bulk of the work, in chapter two, consists of presenting a detailed exegesis

of the relevant aspects of those manuscripts. I then go on to argue that those claims, in conjunction with some of Reid's other commitments, commit him to the further claim that artificial language makes it possible for the mind to acquire moral liberty.

In chapter three, I consider (ii). My focus is Reid's claim that it was possible for humans to first invent artificial linguistic signs and, subsequently, for infants to be taught to understand already invented artificial linguistic signs, only if humans possess an innate mental faculty by the exercise of which they understand natural linguistic signs that express what Reid calls "social operations of the mind". To get clear on this key claim - as well as on Reid's arguments for it - I argue for novel solutions to several interrelated exegetical issues that concern the details of Reid's accounts of these social operations and natural linguistic signs. I then go on to reconstruct Reid's arguments for the noted claim, and argue that the account of the invention of artificial linguistic signs presupposed by one of his arguments is *prima facie* incompatible with his claim that artificial language makes moral liberty possible. I consider three ways in which we might be able to absolve Reid of responsibility for these *prima facie* incompatibilities. The first two ways are suggestions for how we might be able to read Reid differently, and I conclude that neither of these suggestions are up to the task. The last way is the suggestion that Reid's commitment to a creationist account of human origins can provide him a way to sidestep these difficulties, and I conclude that although this suggestion might work, Reid himself would be hesitant to embrace it as a complete and satisfactory solution to his problems.

In chapter four, I go on to discuss consequences that my conclusions in part two - namely, the conclusion that Reid holds that artificial language makes conceptions of universals possible - have for how we ought to understand the details of Reid's accounts of perception, memory, and imagination. I argue Reid holds that we perform acts of perception, memory, and imagination before we ever learn artificial language, and, consequently, that he holds that said acts do not essentially involve the exercise of those abilities that artificial language makes possible. I note that Reid's other commentators have not fully appreciated that first point, and then argue that this has led them to misinterpret the details of his accounts of perception, memory, and imagination in several ways: namely, I argue that they have misinterpreted (i) Reid's account of the types of conceptual content essentially involved in original perception, acquired perception, memory, and imagination; (ii) Reid's account of the

processes through which such mental operations come to involve distinct conceptual content; and (iii) Reid's distinction between acquired perceptions and judgments made habitually on the occasion of our original and acquired perceptions.

The aim throughout is exegetical - i.e., to get clear on the details of Reid's claims and arguments. The aim is not, then, to evaluate the truth of his views or to take stock of their historical significance. I discuss objections to Reid's views, but always do so to better understand how he would or could respond to such objections, and thereby to better understand his views themselves. My main method for getting clear on Reid's views involves, first, simply giving close attention to what he says in his texts and manuscripts. Where the meaning of some key passage is either *prima facie* ambiguous or otherwise unclear, I aim to resolve said ambiguity by getting clear on Reid's views on appropriately related topics, and then proceeding to work out what the details of the unclear passage must be - or, at least, what they most likely are - given the working assumption that Reid's views possess an appropriately charitable degree of internal coherence. There is, of course, a risk in adopting such methods that one might cross the line between arriving at an historically accurate understanding of Reid's views and arriving at some ahistorical reconstruction of a "Reidian" view - i.e., of what Reid either could or should have believed, rather than what he did believe. I suggest that it is appropriately charitable, when first setting out, to interpret a philosopher's views as maximally internally coherent. But I also suggest that that principle of charity can be taken too far: if one's aim is to understand what a philosopher thought, one must always remain open to the possibility that at least some of that philosopher's views were in conflict with each other. There are, inevitably, judgment calls that need to be made concerning how to balance the aim of interpreting a philosopher charitably and that of reading their texts in as straightforward a manner as possible. I make such judgments as best I can. To mitigate the possibility of arriving at ahistorical reconstructions of Reid's views, I always ground my claims about what Reid believed on the historical evidence: every claim that I attribute to Reid is either one that he explicitly makes; one entailed or implied by claims that he explicitly makes; one that he must have held implicitly, insofar as his views are to possess an appropriately charitable degree of internal coherence; or one that we have sufficient reason to attribute to him, given what we know about the broader historical context within which he lived, thought, and wrote.

Why address *these* issues all together in a single study? Reid's commentators have written on many issues I address, but they have often failed to fully address them, I suggest, at least in part because they have looked to tackle them piecemeal - i.e., one or two at a time - rather than together in a single study. My project is not, then, one in which I tackle some loosely related set of exegetical issues, but rather one in which I follow lines of thought that run throughout Reid's work, by which I am able to clarify details of claims and arguments that have, until now, been at least partly misunderstood.

Why pursue this detailed sort of historical work? Why not, instead, aim to understand Reid's views in the sense of understanding how they fit within the broader landscape of the history of ideas? Different sorts of projects are worth pursuing for their own sake, and, further, the detailed sort of historical work that I and others pursue is one such project. I suggest, moreover, this detailed historical work often functions as helpful preliminary for those projects that aim to tell broader historical stories and narratives and place philosophers' views within them. Archaeologists often tell the story of the rise and fall of a given civilization and look to understand historical events by placing them within such a narrative. But that sort of historical work can only count as good work, I suggest, insofar as it is informed by the work of those apparent dregs who spend all their time meticulously combing through the seemingly mundane details of the archaeological record. The work that I aim to do is analogous: so count me as one of the apparent dregs.

Chapter One: Reid on Linguistic Signs

In this short chapter, I outline the basics of Reid's account of linguistic signs. I do not aim to defend any novel exegetical claims, but instead to provide readers who lack familiarity with Reid's texts with the background on Reid's account of linguistic signs required for them to follow and critically engage the discussions in parts two, three, and four.¹ In what follows here, I first present Reid's general account of signs, before going on to present his more specific account of linguistic signs.

To begin: what is a Reidian sign? It is a particular sort of object of thought. We can take a first pass at grasping Reid's notion of a sign by considering the following definition: object of thought X is a sign of object of thought Y, for subject Z, just when, if Z conceives X, then Z immediately conceives Y. His signification relation is a three part psychological relation that holds between signs, things they signify, and minds to whom signs signify said things. To clarify, note Reid uses the phrase 'to conceive' as a rough synonym for 'to think about', where 'to think about' is itself used in a very broad sense. An act of conceiving, on his account, does not necessarily involve subsuming the object under a general concept or category - although it may, in some instances, involve something much like that. A Reidian sign, simply put, is a thing that, when thought about, prompts the mind to think about another thing. To be precise, however, this first pass explication of Reid's notion of a sign needs to be refined in several respects; I aim to do so in what immediately follows.

First, consider signs in relation to the type/token distinction. All signs, according to Reid, are tokens; more specifically, they are individual substances or parts of such substances. Each sign, however, signifies what it does because it is a token of some type. Signs operate, that is, in accordance with general rules: signs of type X signify things of type Y. Consider the following example: Jane smiles; I perceive her smile and am thus prompted to think of her mental state of happiness. Here, the sign is a part of Jane's face

¹ There is literature that covers the same ground. For reference, note that good discussions of Reid's account of linguistic signs are Henning (1979), Henle (1983), Todd (1987), Somerville (1989), Harre and Robinson (1997), Jacquette (2003), Rysiew (2015), and Powell (2017). I engage the two most recent of these articles - i.e., by Rysiew and Powell - on related topics in part three of the dissertation.

and the thing signified by it is a mental state in her mind. The sign signifies Jane's happiness, moreover, because it is a token of a type - i.e., because it is a smile, rather than some other type of thing. Consider two more examples: a token instance of the word 'dog' and a token instance of the word 'Jane'. The former, according to Reid, is an individual sound that signifies a universal, and the latter is an individual sound that signifies an individual named 'Jane'. Each sign signifies the object that it does, however, because - among other things, of course - it is a token of some type.

Second, note that, in the definition given above, the conception of the sign is said to lead the subject to *immediately* conceive the thing signified. What does 'immediately' mean? It means two distinct things here. It means, first, that there is no mediate sign or thing signified. To clarify: if a sign A signifies an object B, which in turn signifies an object C, Reid would not say that A signifies C; there is no such thing, for Reid, as what one might call "mediate signification" in that first sense. It means, second, that there is no reasoning involved on the part of the subject when making the mental move from conception of the sign to conception of the thing signified. Reasoning, on Reid's account, is a mental act in which one judges that an abstract proposition is true in virtue of having grasped that the truth of some distinct proposition makes the truth of the former proposition evident - i.e., one infers the truth of one proposition from that of another. On Reid's account, understanding a sign does not involve the subject making judgments about the truth of propositions or about the evidential/logical relations that hold between them. The fact that signification is immediate in this second sense means that, on Reid's account, any object of thought can, at least in principle, be a sign that signifies any other.

Third, note Reid often uses 'X signifies Y' in a modified sense. Sometimes Reid uses 'X signifies Y' to say, simply, that a conception of the sign is followed by a conception of the thing signified; sometimes, however, Reid uses it to say a conception of and belief in the existence of the sign is followed by conception of and belief in the existence of the thing signified. The difference, here, is just the addition of the belief component. To clarify, consider two more examples: I hear the word 'dog' and immediately conceive the universal DOG; I perceive a plume of smoke and immediately conceive fire and believe that fire exists. In the former, the conception of the word is followed by a conception of the universal. Universals, according to Reid, do not exist and

are not believed to exist - except by some rather confused philosophers - but universals are nonetheless things conceived. In the latter, the perception of smoke - which involves a conception of smoke and a belief in its existence - is followed by a conception of fire and a belief in its existence. It is usually clear, when one attends to the particular sign and thing signified, as well as to the broader context in which Reid uses the term, whether he means to use 'signify' in this modified sense that includes belief.

Fourth, note Reid uses three terms when talking about what signs do. Sometimes he says that signs *signify*, sometimes that they *suggest*, and sometimes that they *express*. Reid uses the word 'suggest' in his earlier work *Inquiry in the Human Mind* as a rough synonym for 'signify', and uses it most often, there, in the aforementioned modified sense that includes belief. Reid sometimes uses 'express' as a synonym for 'signify' throughout his works in the aforementioned non-modified sense; in most cases, however, he uses it in the modified sense, and, further, uses it specifically to refer to a sign/signified relation between a sign and a mental state or mental act that it signifies. Reid typically says, e.g., that 'dog' *signifies* the universal DOG, and not that it *expresses* that universal; Reid typically says, moreover, that Jane's smile *expresses* her happiness. Reid's use of 'signify', 'suggest', and 'express' throughout his works, however, are not always perfectly consistent. I suggest it is most prudent to interpret Reid's use of these three terms on a case by case basis, rather than by looking to articulate some general rule that purports to perfectly capture or describe his each and every use of those terms. When expounding Reid's views, however, I consistently use 'signify' to refer to the most generic sort of sign/signified relation and 'express' to refer to a sign/signified relation that holds between a sign and a mental state or mental act that is signified by it.

That's all for Reid's general notion of a sign; what, then, is Reid's notion of a linguistic sign? His distinction between signs and linguistic signs concerns what the signs are used to do: linguistic signs are signs that are used by speakers to *communicate* their thoughts - i.e., to make their thoughts known to other people. A language, on Reid's account, is a set of signs that people understand and use to communicate with each other.

Reid identifies two categories of linguistic signs: artificial linguistic signs and natural linguistic signs. He identifies two corresponding types of language: natural language and artificial language. Simply put, natural language consists of natural

linguistic signs and artificial language consists of artificial linguistic signs. These two categories of linguistic signs are, on Reid's account, mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive of the general category of linguistic signs - which is to say that, on Reid's account, each linguistic sign is either natural or artificial, but not both. The distinction between natural and artificial linguistic signs is a metasemantic distinction, in the sense that it concerns who or what makes it the case that the sign means what it does. The meaning of the linguistic sign, moreover, is identified with the object of thought it normally signifies; to fix or determine the meaning of the sign, then, is to fix or determine the normal signification of the sign. Artificial linguistic signs are those linguistic signs "whose meaning is affixed to them by compact or agreement among those who use them" (*IHM* 51), whereas natural linguistic signs are linguistic signs that "previous to all compact or agreement have a meaning which every man understands by the principles of his nature" (*Ibid.*)² These definitions are a bit obscure; in part three, I discuss them in more detail. For now, it is enough to note that, on the reading I defend, the difference between natural and artificial linguistic signs is that the norms that govern the use of artificial signs are determined by users of said signs - i.e., humans - whereas the norms that govern the use of natural signs are determined instead by God. On this reading, moreover, the users of artificial signs fix said norms by agreeing with each other - and thereby taking on obligations to each other - to use said signs in accordance with general rules; in the case of natural linguistic signs, in contrast, God fixes the norms that govern the use of signs by creating us such that, when in normal circumstances and of a sound mind, we just do understand and use signs in accord with general rules.

What sorts of things are linguistic signs and what sorts of things do they signify? Reid writes that natural linguistic signs are "features of the face, gestures of the body, and modulations of the voice" (*Ibid.*). He also writes that natural signs signify the "thoughts and dispositions of the mind" of the speaker (*Ibid.*) A natural linguistic sign, then, is a

² Henceforth, I refer to Reid's works as follows: *Inquiry into the Human Mind* as *IHM*, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* as *EIP*, *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* as *EAP*, *Reid on Logic, Rhetoric and Fine Arts* as *LRF*, *Reid On Practical Ethics* as *OPE*, and *Correspondences of Thomas Reid* as *CTR*. Numbers after the letters refer to page numbers in the cited editions. I refer to manuscripts by catalog numbers - e.g., "MS II//2/vii" - from the *Birkwood Collection* at the University of Aberdeen: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/historic/Thomas_Reid/index.ht

part or movement of a person's body or voice that expresses a mental state or mental operation of that same person. What sorts of things are artificial linguistic signs and what sorts of things do they signify? All that is required for an object of thought to be an artificial sign or to be a thing signified by such a sign, is that people agree that it is to be used as either one or the other. In principle, then, on Reid's account, any public object of thought can be an artificial sign or a thing signified by an artificial sign. Reid holds that, in most cases, artificial linguistic signs are written marks or spoken sounds. But Reid is flexible there: in a manuscript I discuss in part three, e.g., Reid notes that various acts - even, e.g., the act of remaining still or silent - can, in appropriate types of contexts, function as artificial linguistic signs (*OPE* 136). But what do artificial signs typically signify? Each artificial sign signifies either an individual substance or a universal. The artificial signs that signify an individual are called "proper names", whereas the artificial signs that signify a universal are called "general words". On his account, all common nouns, verbs, adjectives, articles, adverbs, prepositions, copulas, as well as the other parts of speech - excepting proper nouns, of course - are general words; as such, they signify universals. A collection of artificial linguistic signs grammatically structured so as to constitute a proper sentence, collectively signifies what we can call a "proposition" - i.e., an abstract object that can be true or false and is composed of the things signified by the individual signs - and may, additionally, express an act of mind directed such a proposition, such as an act of judgment, or any other mental act of the sort that we might today call a "propositional attitude".³

It may be asked: does Reid *really* hold that *all* general words signify universals? It might be argued that that is an implausible view, and, as such, that it should not be attributed to Reid. It might well be an implausible view, but it is quite clear, I argue, that Reid is committed to it. In *EIP* - specifically, in *Essay 5 Chapter ii Of General Conceptions* - Reid aims to convince the reader that we have general conceptions - i.e.,

³ The claim that Reid understands a linguistic complex to signify an abstract proposition might well be so very contemporary so as to raise eyebrows. But it is indeed Reid's view. See *EIP* 408-423. An act of judgment, on his account, is an act of mind that is directed at a proposition, an object of thought that can be true or false. This proposition is not an act or state in the mind, but is rather an extra-mental abstract object that is signified by a verbal proposition - that is, by a complex of linguistic signs.

that we conceive universals. Reid's argument goes as follows: we understand the meanings of general words; to understand the meaning of a general word is to conceive what it signifies; general words signify objects that are general - i.e., they signify universals rather than individual substances and their particular features; thus, we do conceive universals. Reid spends the bulk of the chapter trying to convince the reader that general *terms* signify universals - i.e., general words of the sort that can be used as either the subject or predicate term in a complete sentence, such as 'cat', 'square', or 'brown'. At the end of the chapter, however, Reid writes the following:

“Having shewn that we may have a perfectly clear and distinct conception of the meaning of general terms, we may, I think, take it for granted, that the same may be said of the other general words, such as prepositions, conjunctions, articles. My design at present being only to shew, that we have general conceptions no less clear and distinct than those of individuals, it is sufficient to this purpose, if this appears with regard to the conceptions expressed by general terms” (*EIP* 364)

Here, Reid says we can take it for granted that the other general words signify universals too. He says, however, that arguing for that additional claim would be unnecessary, as the claim he means to establish in the chapter - i.e., that we do conceive universals - has already been established, and so any such further argument would be redundant. One can, of course, contest Reid's claim that we can just take it for granted. But Reid intends that the reader do so, and, thus, it is clear he thinks that the other sorts of general words signify universals. It might be worth asking, here, for clarity's sake, what the universals are that other general words signify. I have tentative suggestions to offer on this point. Reid might hold, e.g., that prepositions - e.g., words such as 'in', 'on', and 'between' - signify abstract relations of the sort that are instantiated between individual substances. Reid might hold, moreover, that the copula - e.g., the word 'is' - signifies, depending on the type of context in which it is used, an identity relation between individuals or a relation of the sort that holds between individual substances and the universals instantiated in them. An example of the former is 'is' in 'Cicero is Tully', whereas an example of the latter is 'is' in 'Jane is happy'. There are other sorts of general words - e.g., conjunctions such as 'and' and 'or' - for which I do not have intuitive suggestions.

What universal, e.g., does ‘or’ signify in the sentence ‘I am happy or you are hungry’? It is not wholly clear what Reid might say. In any case, however, it is clear that Reid is committed to the claim that these general words signify universals.

To further clarify Reid’s views, note that a collection of words, even if each of those words, considered as an individual semantic unit, signifies an object of thought, does not necessarily collectively signify a proposition. When one conceives a proposition, the things signified by the individual words are not conceived in some disordered jumble, but as related to each other in an appropriate sort of way. An account of word meaning alone, then, on a view such as Reid’s, does not constitute a complete account of sentence meaning. Reid does not discuss what in addition to word meaning is required to fully account for sentence meaning. Presumably, I suggest, Reid’s view is one on which the words must be arranged, modified, or inflected in accordance with grammatical rules or conventions, and, further, that it is in virtue of such grammatical rules or conventions that things signified by individual words are conceived as related to each other in such a way as to collectively constitute a proposition.

To further clarify Reid’s views it helps to contrast Reid’s philosophy of the mind with the views of his predecessors and then consider an example. Note Reid’s predecessors held - or, at least, that he took them to have held - that all immediate objects of thought are literally in the mind: e.g., things such as sensations, ideas, mental states, mental acts, and operations. Reid famously rejected that theory: he held that we can think about things that are “out there” in the external world, without first thinking of things in the mind that represent those external things. Consequently, Reid rejected the claim that all linguistic signs immediately signify things in the mind and only mediately signify things in the external world. Reidian linguistic signs are indeed signs used by speakers to communicate their thoughts, but each linguistic sign - when considered as an individual semantic unit - does not necessarily express a thought. Some linguistic signs, of course, express thoughts in the mind of speakers, but others signify the things “out there” that the speakers’ and listeners’ thoughts are about.

Let’s consider an example. On Reid’s account, the word ‘dog’ does not express a thought of a dog, a thought of all dogs, or a thought of the corresponding universal: it signifies, rather, that universal itself. I can use ‘dog’ to communicate to another person

my judgment that dogs are furry by uttering several linguistic signs arranged in accordance with grammatical rules - e.g., by uttering a sentence such as “dogs are furry”. The individual artificial signs ‘dogs’, ‘are’, and ‘furry’ signify universals and they collectively signify a proposition - i.e., an abstract object of thought that can be true or false and is composed of those universals. On Reid’s account, a judgment is a mental act that is directed at such a proposition: it is an act of assenting to the truth of a proposition. In our example, what signs express the mental act of judgment? On Reid’s account, it depends on the particular case. If I utter something like “I judge that dogs are furry”, then I use artificial signs to do it. But if I utter just “dogs are furry”, I do not - obviously, at least - use artificial linguistic signs to do it; if artificial signs are not used in this sort of case, Reid would need to say that the judgment is expressed by natural linguistic signs, or, perhaps, that it is instead implicated or implied by facts about the explicit content of the utterance and context in which that utterance is made. Reid’s views on implied or implicit acts of communication are not but a bit obscure; I discuss them in detail in part three, when said views are relevant to the main issues being discussed. For now, though, let’s go on to discuss Reid’s claims about what artificial language makes possible.

Chapter Two: Reid on What Artificial Language Makes Possible

The aim here is to understand Reid's answer to this question: what does artificial language make possible? In particular, it is to understand his claim that the ability to understand artificial linguistic signs makes it possible, for human minds, to acquire a number of other mental abilities - such as, e.g., the abilities to conceive and remember universals, to judge, and to reason. I first present a detailed exegesis of those noted claims, and then go on to argue that those claims, in conjunction with his other views, commit him to the further claim that artificial language makes it possible for humans to acquire epistemic rationality and moral liberty.

The focus here in chapter two is on the content of manuscripts *MS 2131/4/I/29*, *MS 2131/4/I/30* and *MS 2131/4/I/31*, as well as on the contents of those parts of Reid's published texts in which the same - or at least closely related - views are expressed. The noted manuscripts are collections of lecture notes that Reid prepared for a class he taught at the University of Glasgow, and are variously dated between 1765 and 1768. Reid began teaching at University of Glasgow in 1765, shortly after he published his first book *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* in 1764. Reid taught at Glasgow until 1780, when he retired and composed his two major works *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* and *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*, published in 1785 and 1788 respectively. Reid taught two classes while at Glasgow: an introductory public class as well as a senior private class. In the former class, Reid discussed powers of the mind - such as, e.g., the powers of perception, memory, imagination, abstraction, and judgment - as they are exercised in mature human minds. In the latter, Reid discussed a number of other topics, including how the mind develops as a person grows from infancy to maturity. The manuscripts discussed in this section are likely lecture notes that Reid prepared for that senior class.

In these manuscripts, Reid claims that human infants come into the world with a set of innate mental abilities and that they then subsequently interact with their physical and social environments so as to acquire other mental abilities. This interaction is, on Reid's account, required for infants to acquire those other abilities. He draws an analogy

to an oak tree: just as an oak seed requires appropriate exposure to soil, light, and water in order to grow into its mature and most perfect state, so too infants require appropriate exposure to their physical and social environments in order to grow into their mature and most perfect state. Reid discusses three varieties of what he calls “culture”: (i) the culture of nature, (ii) the culture of society, and (iii) the culture of education. The culture of nature consists of the sorts of interactions with its environment that a human can have independent of its interactions with other humans. The culture of society, in contrast, consists of the sorts of interactions a human can have only with other humans, which include, of course, its various linguistic interactions. The culture of education consists of the special sorts of social interactions that a human has when it receives what we might best call “formal instruction” or “formal education”. In these manuscripts, Reid identifies various abilities that a human could or would acquire if they are exposed only to the culture of nature, and he identifies abilities that a human could or would acquire only if additionally exposed to the culture of society.

In chapters two and three of the dissertation, I discuss Reid’s claims that: (a) the ability to understand natural linguistic signs is an innate ability that makes it possible to be exposed to the culture of society in particular sorts of ways, (b) being so exposed to the culture of society is required for people to invent and learn artificial language, and (c) the ability to understand artificial language is required if one is to acquire the abilities to conceive and remember universals, to judge, to reason, as well as to come to possess epistemic rationality and moral liberty. Here in chapter two, I discuss just (c). In chapter three, I discuss (a) and (b). To clarify all three of these claims at the outset, it helps to note that they are not intended as claims about what is possible *in principle*, but rather about what is possible for humans *as a contingent matter of fact*. There could, on Reid’s view, be a sort of being that comes into the world with innate abilities to abstract, to judge, to reason, and the rest, and there could be a sort of being that comes into the world without such abilities but then acquires them without exposure to the culture of society and without first acquiring the ability to understand artificial language: but we are not, on Reid’s view, beings of either of those sorts.

Chapter two has five sections. In section (2.1), I present Reid’s accounts of both abstraction and universals, as well as his reasons for claiming that the ability to

understand artificial language makes it possible for us to conceive and remember universals. In section (2.2), I do the same for his analogous claims about judgment, reasoning, and epistemic rationality. In section (2.3), I go on to argue that the claims discussed in (2.1) and (2.2) commit Reid to an analogous claim about moral liberty. In section (2.4), I go on to argue that, although some of the views I attribute to Reid in sections (2.1), (2.2), and (2.3) might be clearly and fully expressed only in the noted manuscripts or entailed by manuscript claims in conjunction with claims he makes in the later published *Essays*, there is nevertheless sufficient reason to believe Reid continued to hold said views when he wrote the later *Essays* - and, consequently, that I can licitly attribute said views to Reid when I work, in later in sections, to understand views Reid expressed only in the later *Essays*. In section (2.5), I contrast my claims in the preceding sections with similar claims made by Reid's other commentators.

2.1 Reid on Abstraction and Universals

Reid claims that artificial language makes possible conceptions of universals. To begin, let's first get clear on Reid's accounts of abstraction and universals. According to Reid, abstraction is a mental activity in which a mind comes to focus its attention on a feature of an individual substance so as to *distinctly conceive* said feature as a universal. To clarify: to distinctly conceive something is, quite simply, to conceive it as different from - rather than as confused with - other things. When, e.g., one distinctly conceives a feature of an individual as a universal, one conceives it without conceiving it as confused with any individual substance of which it either is or could be a feature or as confused with any distinct features of any real or possible individuals. To grasp Reid's account of universals, it helps to note that Reid writes that Plato's account of universals was correct in every respect but one: whereas Plato believed that universals exist independently of the individuals that participate in them, Reid believes universals exist only when instantiated as features of presently existing individuals. Reid holds that the individual substances we encounter in our experience are imbued with features that they do - or that they at least could - share in common with other individuals, and that although said features cannot exist independently of the individuals in which they are instantiated as token features, we

can nevertheless think about said features as universals - i.e., think of them as abstracted away from any real or possible instantiation relations to any such individual.

There are two excellent discussions of Reid's views on abstraction and universals in the secondary literature: Castagnetto (1992) and Lehrer (1989). Despite their merits, neither attempts to make much sense of Reid's distinction between abstract particulars and universals. The nuances of this distinction are particularly relevant to our discussion in chapter four, and it is worth taking the time, here, to get clear on some of said nuances. Consider the following illustrative passage:

“If any man can doubt whether there be attributes that are really common to many individuals, let him consider whether there be not many men that are above six feet high, and many below it; whether there be not many men that are rich, and many more that are poor; whether there be not many that were born in Britain, and many that were born in France... It is certain therefore, that there are innumerable attributes that are really common to many individuals; and if this be what the schoolmen called *universale a parte rei*, we may affirm with certainty, that there are such universals.

There are some attributes expressed by general words, of which this may seem more doubtful. Such are the qualities inherent in their several subjects. It may be said that every subject hath its own qualities, and that which is the quality of one subject cannot be the quality of another subject. Thus the whiteness of the sheet of paper upon which I write, cannot be the whiteness of another sheet, though both are called white. The weight of one guinea is not the weight of another guinea, though both are said to have the same weight.

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

If it should be asked, how early, or at what stage of life, men begin to form general conceptions? I answer, As soon as a child can say, with understanding,

that he has two brothers or two sisters; as soon as he can use the plural number, he must have general conceptions” (*EIP* 367)

Let’s get clear on the key claim in the passage. First, let’s clear up some terminology. In the passage, Reid refers to *general conceptions* and to *attributes*. As previously noted, Reid often uses ‘conception’ to refer to acts of thinking about objects. The passage, then, might be read as one in which Reid uses ‘general conception’ to refer to thoughts about universals, rather than to universals. Note, however, that Reid takes pains in the quoted section of *EIP* to clarify his use of ‘general conception’ there, noting that he always uses it to refer to the objects conceived - i.e., to universals - rather than to acts of conceiving such objects. Reid also uses ‘attribute’ in the passage. Reid uses ‘attribute’ to refer either to universals or abstract particulars. It is usually quite clear, when one attends to the broader context in which Reid uses the term, whether he intends, there, to refer specifically to an abstract particular or to a universal.

Second, let’s get clear on the key claims in the passage. Reid draws a distinction between abstract particulars and universals: *the whiteness of this sheet* is an object of thought that is abstract but not also general, whereas *whiteness* conceived merely as such is an object of thought that is both abstract and general. The former is but an abstract particular, whereas the latter is a universal. On Reid’s view, to distinctly conceive a feature of an individual as an abstract particular, is to conceive it as distinct from that individual’s other features, but still as a feature of that individual, whereas to distinctly conceive a feature as a universal is to conceive it as wholly abstracted away from not only the individual’s other features but also as abstracted away from that individual itself. For Reid, of course, it is correct to say abstract particulars and universals are the same things; the only difference between an abstract particular and its corresponding universal lies in the way it is conceived: in the former case, it is conceived as a particular feature of a particular individual substance; whereas in the latter, it is conceived as abstracted away from all individuals of which it is or can be a feature.

At the end of the quoted passage, Reid appears to claim, or at least imply, that the ability to conceive universals is first acquired at - or at least by the time - one first learns an artificial language. In the manuscripts, moreover, Reid makes a similar claim, but he

discusses it in more detail and gives some reasons for it. Consider two key passages from the manuscripts:

“Perhaps some may think that the want of Language will be no impediment to the exercise of his rational Powers. Nay perhaps some will [be apt to think]{apprehend}⁴ that he will think more accurately and reason more justly by being free from the incumbrance of Language... I grant that without language a Man might retain in his [Memory]{Imagination} distinct notions of the objects which nature presents to his Senses, So as to know that it is the same Object when it makes its appearance again. This the more sagacious Brutes can do. But as to those Notions which are formed by the Mind itself, by Abstraction and composition; in a word all general notions, I apprehend that without language we [could]{would} never form them or be able to use them in reasoning. A general or Abstract Notion... comprehends onely [sic] certain attributes or Relations of Beings, [which are] {& is} distinguished from other things belonging to the same being by giving a Name to it. The Name we give it, and the known Meaning or definition of that Name serves as a boundary or enclosure to distinguish it, from other attributes or Relations that are not comprehended under that name. Take away the name and the enclosure is removed. Like a Field that has no limits to distinguish it from the contiguous Ground.

Now it is to be observed that there can be no Reasoning, no rational train of thinking without such general and abstract notions. For reasoning must consist of propositions and every proposition must include some general notion. We learn to form such General Notions by learning language, and if we had no Language we should never learn to form them.

I believe every man will find in his Experience, that when he attempts any regular train of thinking, though he does it in Silence and without uttering a Sound, he will find it impossible to go on without conceiving more or less the words by which his thought may be expressed and the more distinctly he cloaths

⁴ When quoting from manuscripts, I use square brackets to indicate text that Reid crossed out, and use curly brackets to indicate text that Reid inserted as either supralinear text or marginalia.

[sic] his thoughts with words, the more accurately he will think; Thought being too subtle and too spiritual a thing to be retained in the memory and imagination without being cloathed [sic] with some sensible Image. This appears to me to be the condition of human Nature in our present State. And I see no reason to think that a Man without Society & consequently without any kind of Language, would ever acquire so much of the exercise of his rational Powers as to be entitled to the denomination of a Rational creature” (*LRF* 40-41)

“A Name given to any Conception limits & terminates it as an Inclosure or fence limits a field so as to distinguish what belongs to it from what does not. And a Conception without a name is like a field that has no distinct boundary... It slides through the mind as a pure spirit might pass through a place without leaving any footsteps or marks by which it may be traced. But by cloathing [sic] our thoughts with words, we connect them with sensible signs by which means they make a stronger impression upon the memory and are more easily retained” (*LRF* 20-21)

Let’s get clear on the key claims in the passages. Reid claims that without *language*, we would be unable to have *general notions* or *general conceptions*. Once again, care must be taken with Reid’s use of ‘conception’, ‘general conception’, and ‘general notion’. These phrases, Reid notes, are ambiguous, as they are sometimes used to refer to acts of thinking and sometimes used to refer to objects that acts of thinking are about. Reid’s key claim in the quoted passages is that, without understanding language, one would be unable to form general conceptions or notions, which is to say one would be unable to conceive things that are general - i.e., universals. (Note Reid also claims in the passage that we would, therefore, be unable to reason; I will consider this other key claim in more detail in the next section.) The term ‘language’ in these passages is used to refer to artificial language - i.e., those linguistic signs that sometimes signify universals. Reid’s key claim in the passage then is that, without understanding artificial signs that signify universals - i.e., those artificial signs that Reid calls “general words” - we would be unable to conceive the features of individuals distinctly as universals. Without understanding such signs, one might be able to attend to individual substances to a degree that is sufficient to conceive them as distinct from other individual substances or to

recognize that they resemble other individuals with whom they have common features, but one could not distinctly conceive as universals those features said individuals have in virtue of which they resemble each other.

How, on Reid's account, does the ability to understand general words help us conceive universals? The texts are a bit obscure on this point, but a straightforward reading can be fleshed out. Recall Reid thinks that artificial linguistic signs are tokens - namely, sensible individuals or parts of individuals. We can, then, on his account, focus our attention on them to a degree that is sufficient to distinctly conceive them. If we understand such signs - i.e., if they signify universals to us when we conceive them - then we can, by attending to the signs, thereby come to attend to, and thus distinctly conceive, the universals they signify to us.

What are Reid's reasons for claiming we cannot think about universals without the help of artificial linguistic signs? It is, after all, one thing to say we can, by thinking of a sign that signifies some object, come to think about that object; but it is another thing to say we *cannot* think about that object *without* first thinking of a sign that signifies it. First, to understand Reid's claim, recall that, on his account, it is a mere contingent fact about our cognitive constitution that we cannot distinctly conceive universals without artificial linguistic signs. Reid's claim, then, is not that it is impossible *in principle* for a being of any sort whatsoever to think about a universal without the help of an artificial sign, but rather that it is impossible for a being with the particular cognitive constitution of a human being to do so. But what are Reid's reasons for this claim? He does not say anything about it in his texts, at least not explicitly. But note that in the quoted passages Reid appeals to introspective experience when he talks about why artificial language is required for reasoning. There, Reid writes:

“I believe every man will find in his Experience, that when he attempts any regular train of thinking, though he does it in Silence and and without uttering a Sound, he will find it impossible to go on without conceiving more or less the words by which his thought may be expressed and the more distinctly he cloaths his thoughts with words, the more accurately he will think” (*LRF* 41)

On Reid's account, laws of nature - including the laws of human psychology - are known by empirical observation: we find that, in observed cases, such and such is the case, and

we consequently take it to be a law of nature that things are thus and so, unless or until further observation shows us otherwise. I suggest, then, Reid takes himself to be *justified* in claiming we cannot conceive universals without understanding artificial signs on the basis of empirical evidence he acquired through introspection. Note that it is a distinct question whether Reid has some *explanation* for why we cannot conceive universals without first understanding artificial signs. What would a Reidian explanation of that fact look like? Reid adopts what can broadly be called a “nomological deductive” model of explanation: on his view, we discover by reasoning inductively from experience general laws of nature, and the most general laws that we discover are assumed - until yet more general laws are discovered - to be brute facts about the way God made the world, and all less general laws and particular events are fully explained by being deduced from those presumed most general laws. Reid might simply take the apparent fact that we cannot conceive universals without artificial signs to be a brute fact about the human cognitive constitution. It is, however, an open question if some further explanation for that fact can be reconstructed from Reid’s texts and thereby plausibly attributed to him. But I have not been able to reconstruct any such further explanation. In what follows, I do not take any stance on whether Reid would, if asked, offer any further explanation.

Now, note that there are any number of objections one might make against Reid’s appeal to introspective experience in justifying the claim that artificial signs are required for us to conceive universals. It might be pointed out, e.g., that Reid could only have directly observed the case of one person - i.e., himself - and, moreover, the case of one person who has been repeatedly exposed to the culture of society and is, presumably, in a well ingrained habit of using artificial linguistic signs when thinking on abstract topics. It might well be argued, then, that it simply does not follow, from those observations alone, that a different person - one who was never exposed to the culture of society and who never learned an artificial language - would be forever unable to conceive universals. Alternatively, it might be argued, against Reid, that one finds by attending to one’s own experience, that one can distinctly conceive universals and reason clearly about them without the help of artificial signs. Reid does not respond to any such objections in his texts. It is an open question whether he could or would respond to them convincingly. But regardless of how one might evaluate the plausibility of Reid’s claims or his reasons

for them, my claim - namely, the claim that Reid believes that we cannot distinctly conceive universals without first understanding artificial linguistic signs that signify them, and, further, that he takes himself to be justified in making that claim by way of an appeal to introspective experience - still stands.

There is a further question to ask here: does Reid think that artificial language is required for us to *remember* or to *recall* a universal - i.e., to think about a universal again after having thought about it on some previous occasion - rather than just that artificial language is required to think about a universal for the first time? In the quoted passages, Reid appears to assert that artificial signs are also required to recall universals - or, at least, to recall them fully distinctly. Reid might well concede that we can think about universals that we have previously conceived without presently conceiving words that signify them, but Reid clearly holds that by presently conceiving words we can conceive said universals more distinctly. Reid gives some reasons for this claim, albeit obscurely, in the previously quoted passage from *LPF* 20-21. Reid writes that thoughts pass through the mind in the manner that a spirit passes through a place - that is, without leaving any "footsteps" behind by which it might "be traced". I suggest that the term 'footsteps', there, when applied to the analogous case of thoughts about universals - is best understood as signifying an alteration produced in the mind by the conception of the universal, an alteration which grounds that mind's ability to think of that same universal later on. I suggest Reid's view is that, when the mind conceives a universal, the alteration does not persist for very long - or, at least, that it tends to diminish over time - and, therefore, that it is only if the mind makes repeated use of artificial signs that it can go on distinctly conceiving universals that it has conceived before. Why does Reid think this? On the interpretation I offer here, his view is once again simply that we find by empirical observation this is the case, that there is no known more general law from which this can be deduced, and, thus, that we can therefore take it to be a brute fact about human nature. Once again, I leave open the possibility Reid has a further explanation to give, but do not attribute any such explanation to him.

Two more clarificatory questions might helpfully be asked here. First, does Reid hold that we can conceive features of individuals as abstract particulars, rather than as universals, without the help of artificial linguistic signs? First, let's clarify the question.

Recall the difference between conceiving a feature of an individual as an abstract particular and conceiving it as a universal. Our question, here, concerns whether artificial language is required just for conceiving features as universals, or additionally required for conceiving features as mere abstract particulars.

Reid states in the previously quoted manuscript passages that we cannot conceive universals without first understanding artificial language, but he does not explicitly say the same about abstract particulars. I suspect that Reid is most plausibly construed as holding that we can conceive abstract particulars without the help of artificial signs, but I am not certain that that is correct. In any case, Reid explicitly claims only that artificial signs are required for conceiving universals, so we should not attribute further claims to him about whether such signs are required for conceiving features as abstract particulars. However, I would still note that this much is quite clear: on Reid's account, even if one could conceive the features of individuals as mere abstract particulars without the help of artificial language, one could not also conceive said particulars as tokens of distinctly conceived universal types. To do so, on his account, would be to conceive an abstract particular in as an instantiation of a distinctly conceived universal, which is impossible if one cannot also conceive said feature as a universal. To clarify, consider Reid's example of the whiteness of a sheet of paper. It is, I suggest, unclear if Reid holds that, without the help of artificial language, one could conceive the whiteness of a sheet of paper as distinct from the sheet's other features, but it is nonetheless clear Reid holds that, even if one could conceive the whiteness of the sheet as such, one could not also conceive it as a token instantiation of the universal WHITE; one might of course recognize that there is some resemblance between one white thing and another white thing, but one could not put one's finger on the fact that they resemble each other because the universal WHITE is instantiated in both of them.

Second, does Reid think one can *indistinctly* conceive a universal without first understanding an artificial sign that signifies it? The answer depends on what it means to say that one indistinctly conceives a universal. There are three things that it could mean, for Reid, to say that one indistinctly conceives a universal. The first thing it could mean, is to conceive a universal as confused with the individual substance of which it is a feature as well as with that substance's other conceived features. This does not require

artificial language. Is this even a conception of a universal? The features of individuals are instantiated universals; if, then, one conceives an individual as confused with some of its features, one can be said to indistinctly conceive universals. The second thing it could mean, is to conceive a feature as distinct from the individual but as a feature of it, and also as distinct from that individual's other features - i.e., to conceive it as an abstract particular. As noted, it is unclear whether Reid thinks this is possible. The third thing it could mean, is to conceive a universal as abstracted away from all individual substances and particular features of such substances, but nevertheless as confused with some other universal. To be clear: This is a case in which a person indistinctly conceives a universal, which is different than conceiving indistinct universals. The universals are what they are and are distinct from each other; it is just that we may fail to grasp distinctions that exist between them. To clarify this third sort of case, let's consider an example. When my niece Mary was just four years old, she could correctly distinguish yellow/orange objects from objects of other colours - such as, e.g., green or blue objects - but she could not correctly distinguish yellow objects from orange objects. She would describe both yellow objects and orange objects as "orange". Reid would say Mary was able to conceive a complex universal of the form *A or B* - i.e., the complex universal that is signified to mature English language users by the phrase 'orange or yellow' - but that she was unable to distinctly conceive the simpler universals of which that more complex universal is composed. Mary could not, that is, distinctly conceive the universals that are signified to us by the word 'yellow' and the word 'orange'. Does Reid hold that it was possible for Mary to conceive that complex universal as a single confused whole without understanding any artificial language? No, he does not. On Reid's account, Mary could distinguish yellow/orange objects from other sorts of objects, because she understood some of the relevant artificial signs to some extent, even if she did not yet fully understand them. On Reid's account, one fully understands an artificial sign when it signifies to you the universal it ought to signify, where the universal it ought to signify is determined by the norms that govern the use of that sign in one's linguistic community. It was a norm in Mary's community that 'orange' and 'yellow' signify distinct universals. She did not fully understand those terms, and, consequently, did not yet recognize that tokens of yellow and orange are tokens of distinct universal types - i.e., she did not yet

recognize that token instances of yellow and orange are instantiations of distinct universals.

There are two other questions the reader might have. How, on Reid's account, do children first learn to understand the artificial linguistic signs used by the members of their communities and thereby first come to conceive universals? And how, on Reid's account, were artificial linguistic signs first invented by early human societies? I answer these questions in part three. Before doing so, however, I first complete this discussion of Reid's claims about what artificial language makes possible.

2.2 Reid on Judgment, Reasoning, and Rationality

Reid claims that the ability to understand artificial language makes both judgment and reasoning possible. Recall the following passage:

“Now it is to be observed, that there can be no Reasoning, no rational train of thinking without such general and abstract notions. For reasoning must consist of propositions and every proposition must include some general Notion. We learn to form such General Notions by learning Language and if we had no Language we should never learn to form them” (*LRF* 41)

What are Reid's reasons for claiming artificial language makes judgment and reasoning possible? First, let's recall Reid's accounts of propositions and judgments. A proposition is a complex and abstract object of thought that can be true or false and is composed of universals. A judgment is an act of the mind directed at a proposition, and, specifically, an act of assenting to the truth of a proposition. Why does Reid think artificial language is required for acts of judgment? One can assent to the truth of a proposition only if one can conceive it, which is possible only if one can conceive the universals of which the proposition is composed. Reid holds, of course, that artificial language is required for conceiving universals; and, consequently, he holds that artificial language is required for judgment. Second, recall Reid's account of reasoning: reasoning involves judging that a proposition is true in virtue of inferring its truth from that of another proposition. Why is artificial language required for reasoning? The point is just that one must conceive the propositions in order to infer the truth of the one from that of the other. On Reid's

account, artificial language makes conceptions of propositions possible; thus, he is committed to holding that artificial language makes reasoning possible.

Reid does not explicitly claim that artificial language makes epistemic rationality possible. Why do I attribute this additional claim to Reid? There are two reasons. These reasons draw on both the manuscript claim that artificial language makes conceptions of universals and propositions possible as well as on further claims that Reid makes in his published texts. First, in Reid's published *Essays*, e.g., he holds that judgment is required for epistemic rationality. Knowledge, on Reid's account, involves recognizing a proposition is evident and consequently judging it to be true. Artificial language makes conceptions of propositions possible; consequently, it makes epistemic rationality possible. Second, Reid holds that we possess epistemic rationality only if we possess a sufficiently rich set of beliefs, which collectively constitute the background against which we evaluate the evidentness of non-self-evident propositions. Some background beliefs are in self-evident propositions, whereas others are in non-self-evident propositions. With respect to the former propositions, we recognize the evidentness of the propositions by exercising our faculty of common sense - i.e., we grasp its evidentness by the light of nature, as it were - and consequently judge them to be true. Our common sense can do that work for us, however, only if we can conceive the proposition in question. With respect to the latter propositions, Reid holds that we initially acquire such beliefs, in part, in childhood, by credulously accepting testimony from members of our community. The idea is that people tell children things, children believe what they are told, and the beliefs they thus acquire partly constitute their initial sets of background beliefs. When a child reaches maturity, they can exercise their rationality to question and subsequently revise their non-self-evident background beliefs. But that exercise of rationality is possible for the child only if they already possess a sufficiently rich set of background beliefs. How does this relate to the claim about artificial language? Simply put, on Reid's account, the ability to understand artificial linguistic signs by which the testimonies of other people are expressed, is required for the child to receive said testimonies, and, thus, required for the child to first come to acquire a set of background beliefs that is sufficiently rich for it to possess epistemic rationality.

2.3 Reid on Moral Liberty

What is moral liberty? A subject possesses moral liberty if and only if it is capable of performing actions in such a way as to be morally responsible for having done so. Reid does not explicitly claim that artificial language makes moral liberty possible. In what follows, I argue that his claims about artificial language and moral liberty jointly commit him to that claim. There are passages in which Reid makes claims similar to the claim I attribute to him here. Consider, e.g., the following passage:

“3. The Solitary Man could have no Religion. Whether his Fear might lead him to some superstitious Dread of unknown Powers I cannot say; but there is no reason to think that he could form any rational Notion of a Diety.

4 As little could there be any Exercise of his Moral Powers or any Notion of Duty. {All Notion of} the duty we owe to the Supreme Being, supposes that we have a Notion and Belief of a Supreme Being. And all Notion of Duty towards men supposes some Knowledge of them & intercourse with [them]. The Wild Man has neither” (*LRF* 41)

Consider another example:

“I am very apt to think, that, if a man could be reared from infancy, without any society of his fellow, creatures, he would hardly ever shew any sign, either of moral judgment, or of the power of reasoning” (*EAP* 279)

The claims come close to the claim that artificial language makes moral liberty possible. Strictly speaking, however, the claim in the first passage is that the culture of society is needed for one to acquire one’s “moral powers” quite broadly, and, more specifically, to acquire one’s rational notions of duty and of God. The claim, then, is not precisely the claim that *artificial language* is required for moral liberty. Further, strictly speaking, the claim in the second quoted passage is that moral judgment - i.e., the ability to judge that an act is either right or wrong - is possible only if one is exposed to the culture of society, which is, once again, not exactly the claim that *artificial language* is required for moral liberty. Familiarity with the details of Reid’s views on agency and moral responsibility,

however, allows us to see clearly that Reid is committed to the related but distinct claim that I wish to attribute to him.

First, what are Reid's views on agency and moral responsibility? Note that Reid believes in *agent causation*: Reid holds that only agents - i.e., minds with particular powers - are genuine efficient causes. Reid holds that agents are efficient causes just when they exercise their active powers to thereby perform their voluntary actions. What is involved in exerting active power? Consider the following passages:

“...if we had not will, and that degree of understanding which will necessarily implies, we could exert no active power, and consequently have none: For power which cannot be exerted is no power” (*EAP* 29)

“...to constitute the relation between me and my action, my conception of the action, and will to do it, are essential. For what I never conceived, nor willed, I never did” (*EAP* 33)

“In the strict philosophical sense, nothing can be called the action of a man, but what he previously conceived and willed or determined to do” (*EAP* 74)

To exert active power, an agent must will to perform an action. An act of will is a mental act that is directed at one of the mind's other acts. That other act is the act that is willed, and the act of will is what makes that other act a *voluntary* action. The point to take away from the quoted passages, moreover, is that Reid rejects blind agency: he thinks that acts of will require understanding - i.e., that one must conceive what one wills prior to willing it. One must first conceive of the action willed, and only then is it possible to exert active power to thereby bring that action into effect.

Our question is this: what degree of understanding is required, on Reid's view, if one is to will an act in such a way that one can be held morally responsible for doing so? Reid has much to say on this topic. Consider several choice passages:

“Two things are implied in the notion of a moral and accountable being; understanding and active power.

First, he must understand the law to which he is bound, and his obligation to obey it...

Brute animals are incapable of moral obligation, because they have not the degree of understanding which it implies. They have not the conception of a rule of conduct, and of obligation to obey it, and therefore, though they may be noxious, they cannot be criminal.

Man, by his rational nature, is capable both of understanding the law that is prescribed to him, and of perceiving its obligation” (*EAP* 236)

“The brutes are stimulated to various actions by their instincts, by their appetites, by their passions. But they seem to be necessarily determined by the strongest impulse, without any capacity for self-government. Therefore we do not blame them for what they do; nor have we any reason to think that they blame themselves. They may be trained up by discipline, but cannot be governed by law. There is no evidence that they have a conception of a law, or of its obligation.

Man is capable of acting from motives of a higher nature. He perceives a dignity and worth in one course of conduct, a demerit and turpitude in another...” (*EAP* 23)

“A man who seriously charged a brute with a crime, would be laughed at. They may do actions hurtful to themselves, or to man. They may have qualities, or acquire habits, that lead to such actions; and this is all we mean when we call them vicious. But they cannot be immoral; nor can they be virtuous. They are not capable of self-government; and when they act according to the passion or habit which is strongest at the time, they act according to the nature that God has given them, and no more can be required of them.

They cannot lay down a rule to themselves, which they are not to transgress, though prompted by appetite, or ruffled by passion. We see no reason to think that they can form the conception of a general rule, or of obligation to adhere to it...” (*EAP* 190)

“The liberty of a moral agent implies, not only a conception of what he wills, but some degree of practical judgment or reason...

What kind, or what degree of liberty belongs to brute animals, or to our own species, before any use of reason, I do not know. We acknowledge that they have not the power of self-government. Such of their actions as may be called voluntary, seem to be invariably determined by the passion or appetite, or affection or habit which is strongest at the time...

But of civil or moral government, which are addressed to the rational powers, and require a conception of law and an intentional obedience, they are, in the judgment of all mankind, incapable" (*EAP* 196)

For an agent to possess moral liberty just is for that agent to be able to perform an action in such a way that they can be held morally responsible for it. These passages show that, according to Reid, moral liberty requires that the agent can conceive a general law or rule, can recognize that they are obligated to act in accord with that law or rule, and can consequently exert their will so as to act in accord with that law or rule. Why, then, do I claim Reid is committed to the view that artificial language makes moral liberty possible? Reid holds that the ability to understand an artificial language is required if one is to conceive any *general* rule that one is to be obligated to follow. Conceiving a rule of that sort, after all, involves conceiving at least one or more universals. Reid holds that artificial language makes it possible for us to conceive universals, and, thus, holds that it makes it possible for us to possess moral liberty.

There is an important corollary to Reid's claim that artificial language makes moral liberty possible: on his account, the ability to understand artificial language makes it possible to be the efficient cause of any regular or rational pattern of behaviour. To understand this claim, as well as to understand why Reid is committed to it, we need to know a little about Reid's account of the motives of our actions. We have, Reid holds, three sorts of motives for the things we do: mechanical principles of action, animal principles of action, and rational principles of action. The mechanical principles include our innate instincts and acquired habits. The animal principles include our motivational mental states such as appetites, desires, and feelings. On Reid's account, both humans and non-human animals act from mechanical and animal principles, but only humans act from rational principles. There are two rational principles of action, both of which are possible only for beings that have general conceptions. The first rational principle is

one's regard for one's good upon the whole. When one acts from this rational principle, one understands that performing an action would be for one's overall benefit and is thereby moved to perform it. The notion of one's good upon the whole, Reid holds, is one of the most abstract general conceptions of which the mind is capable. On his account, then, that notion is possible only for one who understands artificial signs. The second rational principle is one's regard for one's moral duty. When one acts from this second rational principle, one conceives a general rule, recognizes that one has an obligation to obey it, and is then moved to act in accord with that rule by the fact that one has said obligation - one acts, that is, in such a way that presupposes moral liberty. On Reid's account, the ability to understand artificial language makes it possible to act from the second rational principle, because it makes it possible to conceive general rules. The ability to understand artificial language, then, makes it possible for us humans to be motivated by either of the two rational principles of action.

What, then, is the important corollary? It is this: the ability to understand artificial language makes it possible for a human to be the efficient cause of any regular or rational pattern of behaviour. To see why this follows, note that, on Reid's account, only some principles of action can motivate a regular or rational pattern of behaviour - such as, e.g., repeatedly acting in accord with a general rule. Reid holds that the mechanical principles can do so, when one is innately constituted such that one's instincts lead one to respond in regular ways to types of situations in which one repeatedly finds oneself, or when one has acquired an habit of doing so by way of being trained to do so by a rational being who is capable of conceiving the pattern of behaviour. When acting from mechanical principles, however, one does not act voluntarily, and, thus, one is not the efficient cause of one's actions. The animal principles of action, in contrast, can motivate voluntary actions, but they cannot, on Reid's account, motivate regular or rational patterns of behaviour. It is only the rational principles of action, then, on his account, that not only motivate regular patterns of behaviour, but also motivate voluntary actions. It follows that, on his account, the ability to understand artificial language makes it possible for a human being to be the efficient cause of a regular or rational pattern of behaviour. An animal or human infant can repeatedly act in accord with a general rule, but it is only a mature human - or else a being with broadly equivalent rational, active, and moral powers

- that can be the genuine efficient cause of their doing so. This corollary becomes quite important in part three, when we come to discuss in more detail Reid's metasemantics of artificial linguistic signs.

2.4 Manuscripts and Published Texts

Did Reid continue to hold the views he expressed in the manuscripts when he composed the later *Essays*? These manuscripts were composed in the late 1760s, so it is possible that Reid gave up the relevant claims by the time he wrote the *Essays* in the 1780s. In what follows, I argue we have sufficient reason to think Reid did not give those claims up. First, note that there are contextualist considerations that support the claim that the fact that a view is expressed only in the manuscripts does not provide reason to think Reid gave the view up when he wrote the *Essays*. There are many topics discussed in Reid's manuscripts that are not discussed in the *Essays*. Such topics include, e.g., economics, politics, practical ethics, as well as many others. If we take the fact that Reid did not express his views on those topics in detail in the *Essays* as sufficient reason to conclude he gave those views up, we must conclude Reid gave up his views on many if not most of the topics he taught in the aforementioned private class, as well as many views that he expressed in papers he presented to philosophical societies throughout his career. Doing so would be highly unreasonable, as there is no reason to think Reid intended the *Essays* to contain all his views; there is, in fact, reason to think Reid intended the *Essays* to be partial expressions of his views. From Reid's letters, we learn that, in 1784, he thought his health was failing, and he published *EIP* and *EAP* as separate volumes in 1785 and 1788 because he doubted that he would finish *EAP* in time and consequently sent *EIP* essays to print early to make sure he got something published (see *CTR* 163). The collections of *Essays*, then, should not be read as if Reid intended them to be statements of all his mature views, but rather as the most complete statement of his views that he thought he could manage in the limited time he thought he had. In light of such considerations, it is unreasonable to conclude from the fact that a view Reid expressed in manuscripts is not expressed in *EIP* or *EAP*, that he rejected that view by the time he wrote the *Essays*.

Which manuscript views are expressed in the *Essays* and which are not? This is a hard question to answer definitively, as many claims in the *Essays* read as statements of the manuscript views, but are - arguably, at least - expressed unclearly or only partially. Consider several examples:

“It may be observed, that every individual object that falls within our view has various attributes; and it is by them that it becomes useful or hurtful to us... and it is only by attention to their attributes that we can make them subservient to our ends; and therefore we give names to such attributes” (EIP 355)

“If it should be asked, how early, or at what period of life, men begin to form general conceptions? I answer, As soon as a child can say, with understanding, that he has two brothers or two sisters; as soon as he can use the plural number, he must have general conceptions” (EIP 367)

“The labour of forming abstract notions, is the labour of learning to speak, and to understand what is spoken. As the words of every language, excepting a few proper names, are general words, the minds are furnished with general conceptions, in proportion as they learn the meanings of general words” (EIP 398)

“No man can pursue a train of thought or reasoning without the use of language... the sign is so associated with the thing signified, that the last can hardly present itself to the imagination, without drawing the other along with it” (EIP 538)

Do these passages express the claim that artificial language is needed for us to conceive universals, to judge, and to reason? I suggest that they do - especially the passage from EIP 398. One might argue, however, that these passages, as well as the many others like them, are either vague or lacking in key details. What do I make of such an argument? First, I disagree and suggest that one would need to read the passages quite unnaturally if one was to maintain that they do not contain the relevant views. Second, however, I can concede just for the sake of argument that the passages are vague or lacking details and still make my point. Passages in EIP and EAP in which Reid imperfectly expresses the manuscript views are evidence that he continued to hold said views when he wrote the

Essays, because the interpretive hypothesis that Reid continued to hold the views when writing the *Essays* allows us to make better sense of those passages in the *Essays*. It is unclear, e.g., why Reid notes that giving names to attributes is part of the process of abstraction. Reid makes the point that giving names to attributes is involved in that process a number of times in the *Essays* - on each occasion, in fact, in which he explicitly outlines that process - but he does not make it clear in the text itself why he does so. What does giving the attribute or feature a name have to do with it? Reid does not tell us in *EIP*. But the manuscript claims help us make sense of his likely reasons. The fact that the manuscript claims help us make sense of the *Essays* gives us reason to think the manuscript views were working in the background, as it were, when Reid wrote the *Essays*. We have, then, reason to attribute the relevant manuscript views to Reid at the time that he wrote the later *Essays*.

2.5 Reid's Other Commentators

There are two discussions in the literature that address the issues discussed in previous sections at notable length: Gallie (1998) and Copenhaver (2020). Gallie does not discuss the noted manuscripts, but he does discuss the parts of Reid's published texts that cover the same or at least analogous topics. Copenhaver discusses the manuscripts. In what follows, I outline these two author's main points - or, at least, the points they make that are most relevant to my discussions in preceding sections - and then compare and contrast their points with my own. Doing so serves to reemphasize the key points to note going forward, as well as to make clear the novelty of my conclusions.

Gallie discusses Reid's account of artificial language and the role understanding artificial language plays in our conceiving universals. Gallie notes that Reid holds that, when we first set out in the world as mere infants, we indistinctly conceive features of individuals, and that this brute acquaintance with such features is, in part, what makes it possible for us to come to learn artificial language. Gallie claims, however, that "Reid's account of the formation of... general conceptions is essentially non-linguistic" (Gallie 1998, 50). On Gallie's reading, Reid holds that we are acquainted with individuals that have common features, that we can attend to said features, and that we can thereby come to distinctly conceive said features as universals, without any help from artificial

linguistic signs. However, he goes on to write that, according to Reid, “the common meaning [of artificial linguistic signs] is the standard by which such conceptions are formed, and they are said to be true or false as they agree or disagree with [the conceptions normally signified by the signs]... Reid’s position is that you cannot possess [true] general conceptions without having had transactions with linguistically meaningful items such as general terms. This is a thesis about possession of general conceptions and is not, on the face of it, a thesis about their formation” (Ibid.) On his reading, then, Reid holds that we can conceive of universals without assistance from artificial signs, but that only insofar as we conceive of universals via understanding artificial signs that those conceptions can be meaningfully said to be true or false.

Gallie is at least partly incorrect. Reid is clear that the process through which we conceive universals involves linguistic signs. There is, however, a point on which I partly agree with Gallie: Gallie claims Reid holds that artificial language is required for our conceptions of universals to be true or false. I agree, but I would modify this claim just slightly. On Reid’s account, a conception considered merely as such cannot be true or false: on his account, rather, only sentences, propositions, beliefs, and judgments can, strictly speaking, be true or false. However, Reid does hold one can *correctly* understand an artificial sign, only insofar as that sign signifies to you the universal that it ought to signify, where the fact of what it ought to signify is determined by the rules or norms that govern the use of the sign in one’s linguistic community. Reid holds, then, that you can be said to correctly - and so, in a sense, to truly - conceive a universal, only if the sign that signifies the universal to you ought to signify that universal, where the fact of what it ought to signify to you is determined by the normal use of that sign within your linguistic community. Absent any public standard, no such conception could be said to be correct or incorrect, but would, instead, merely be the conception of the universal that it happens to be. On that point, Gallie and I are in rough agreement. The key point to note, however, is the point of contrast: Reid thinks conceptions of universals are possible, for us, only if we understand artificial linguistic signs.

Unlike Gallie, Copenhaver notes Reid holds that artificial linguistic signs play a necessary role in the process through which we come to conceive universals. One point she makes which I did not, moreover, is that Reid holds that children’s thoughts first

come to follow regular or rational patterns in consequence of their instinctually imitating the thoughts and behaviours of the members of their community that are revealed to them through said members' use of linguistic signs. Copenhaver is correct on this point. Note, however, the point I make - i.e., that Reid thinks artificial language makes it possible for one to be the efficient cause of a regular pattern of thought or behaviour, including linguistic behaviour - is a distinct point. Her point concerns Reid's account of how a person's thoughts and actions first come to acquire the character of the thoughts and actions of a being who acts from rational principles, but with respect to cases in which that person may not actually act from such principles: on Reid's account, if one merely instinctually imitates the behaviour of other people and thereby acquires habits in virtue of which one behaves in rational ways, one is motivated by mechanical principles of action and is not acting voluntarily, and one is not, therefore, the efficient cause of that behaviour. The point that I make, in contrast, concerns Reid's account of what is required if one is to be an agent who possesses moral liberty and is the efficient cause of any regular or rational pattern of thought or behaviour. As I noted previously, this point will be important when we come, in part three, to discuss Reid's account of the metasemantics of artificial linguistic signs.

Chapter Three: Reid on What Makes Artificial Language Possible

In part (3), I now consider Reid's answer to this question: what makes artificial language possible? More precisely, I consider Reid's answer to two distinct questions: (i) what made it possible for humans to first invent artificial signs? (ii) what makes it possible for a human infant to be taught to understand previously invented artificial signs? My focus, moreover, is Reid's common answer to both questions: namely, that we must possess a natural language with which we can express social operations of the mind. In sections (3.1) and (3.2), I aim quite simply to understand that key claim. In (3.1) I discuss in detail Reid's account of social operations of the mind, and then, in (3.2), I do the same with respect to his account of natural linguistic signs - and, specifically, his account of natural linguistic signs that can be used to express social operations. I argue for several novel claims on these topics. I argue Reid is committed to holding that social operations are remote - rather than immediate - operations of the mind of which the mind is not conscious. I argue Reid holds that the natural linguistic signs that express social operations are signs that, as Reid puts it, signify their objects "by a natural kind of magic". In (3.3), I discuss Reid's arguments for the key claim. First, I present novel reconstructions of his arguments. Then, I critically engage the secondary literature on the first of his two arguments. Last, I argue that the presuppositions of that first argument are *prima facie* incompatible with some of Reid's other commitments. I then consider three ways in which we might be able to absolve Reid of these problems. I conclude that none of these three ways is wholly satisfactory, and, consequently, that Reid's views are quite possibly incompatible with each other

3.1 Reid on Social Operations of the Mind

What are social operations? Reid's examples of social operations include the acts of promising, testifying, commanding, requesting, agreeing, as well many others.⁵ Reid

⁵ Reid's examples invite comparisons between Reid's account of social operations and speech act theories offered by 20th century philosophers. There are indeed striking comparisons and contrasts to note between Reid's account of social operations and accounts of speech acts given in Austin (1962), Searle (1969), Bach and Harnish (1979), and other works. However, I do not

contrasts social operations with solitary operations. His examples of solitary operations include sensations, perceptions, memories, imaginings, judgments, desires, as well as many other more typical mental states and acts. My aim here in (3.1) is to understand Reid's account of the social operations of the mind. A number of publications have shared this same aim.⁶ Indeed, I myself made a preliminary attempt at doing so in my MA thesis.⁷ The discussion that follows, however, is more comprehensive and detailed than any such previous discussions, and my key exegetical claims are novel. In what follows, I first identify and explain four claims that Reid makes about social operations, and discuss his likely reasons for making said claims. The four claims are: all social operations (i) are operations of the mind, (ii) cannot exist unless expressed by sensible signs and thereby made known to another intelligent being, (iii) cannot exist unless performed with both understanding and will, (iv) are as simple as and cannot be identified with mere solitary operations. I then go on to argue that Reid is committed to a fifth claim: all social operations are remote operations of which the mind is not conscious. I also note that Reid makes a sixth claim: at least some - but perhaps not all - social operations can be expressed by natural linguistic signs. I discuss this sixth claim in detail in section (3.2).

To begin, consider (i): social operations are operations of the mind. What does this mean? Note Reid is a substance dualist, and one of the essential differences between mind and matter, on his account, is that minds are active things whereas bodies are passive things. The features of bodies are their properties and relations, whereas the features of minds are their powers and operations. Powers just are the mind's abilities to perform acts, and operations just are the mind's acts - i.e., they are exertions of its

look to discuss any such comparisons and contrasts in what follows, but instead look to discuss and understand Reid's view on its own terms.

⁶ Notable publications on Reid's account of the social operations include: Ardal (1984), Lehrer (1989), Coady (1989), Schuhmann and Smith (1990), Coady (2004), Huston (2006), Yaffe (2007), Pouivent (2012), Rysiew (2015), and Copenahver (2020). I briefly discuss several of these publications later in this section. For the most part, however, I aim just to present Reid's account as I understand it, and I do not take time to critically engage Reid's other commentators. One should note, however, that the first four claims I attribute to Reid have been discussed in one form or another in the literature. The novelty of my work consists in working out the details of those claims and Reid's reasons for them, as well as in attributing the fifth noted claim to Reid.

⁷ Crosby (2015).

powers. On Reid's view, all acts are operations of minds, rather than properties of bodies; it is simply incoherent, on his account, to say that a body - i.e., a passive thing - can be the subject of an action. Since social operations - e.g., acts of promising, commanding, and testifying - are clearly acts, it follows, for Reid, given his metaphysical commitments, that they are operations of the mind. Does this mean that social operations are *in* the mind in the same sense that sensations, judgments, desires, and the other solitary operations are *in* the mind? Yes, it does. But note that Reid does not think operations - social or solitary - are *in* the mind in the sense, e.g., that water is *in* a bucket. He does not think that there is some odd metaphysical space "filled" with the entities that we refer to with words like 'sensation' and 'desire'. Reid holds, rather, that operations are in the mind only in the more basic sense that the mind is their metaphysical subject - i.e., that it is the mind, rather than some other sort of substance, that is the thing that engages in the activities that are operations.

Next, consider claim (ii): social operations cannot exist unless they are expressed by sensible signs and thereby made known to other intelligent beings. Note the following key passages:

"Some operations of our minds, from their very nature, are social, others are solitary. By the first, I understand such operations as necessarily suppose an intercourse with some other intelligent being" (*EIP* 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* 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* 330)

Solitary operations are mental acts that can be performed without being made known to others; social operations, in contrast, cannot be so performed, but must be expressed by sensible signs and thereby made known to others in order to exist. Solitary operations *can* be expressed by such signs and thereby made known to others; whereas social operations *must* be so expressed and made known.

To clarify, note the distinction between a condition that *must* be satisfied for an act to be performed and a condition that *ought* to be satisfied when an act is performed. To hit a baseball with a baseball bat, e.g., the bat *must* contact the ball. When one promises, in contrast, one of course *ought* to intend to keep the promise, but it is possible to make a promise even if one does not intend to keep it. The claim that social operations cannot exist unless expressed by sensible signs and made known to another person is a claim of the former sort: the claim is that the social operations *must* be expressed and made known in order to be performed; the claim is not merely that the social operations *ought* to be - or even just *ought* to be intended to be - expressed and made known. One can utter words in solitude, and one can intend to perform a social operation in another's presence and fail to be understood; but one performs a social operation only if that operation is actually expressed and made known to another person.

There is an ambiguity in Reid's claim. What is the modality? Is it nomological necessity, or some stronger logical/metaphysical sort of necessity? Put differently, the question is: is it a mere contingent fact about humans that they cannot perform a social operation unless the operation is expressed and made known to another, or is this a fact that holds about the social operations regardless of contingent facts about the agent who performs them or the world in which they are performed? On my suggested reading, it is a matter of nomological necessity that social operations cannot exist unless expressed by sensible signs, but logical/metaphysical necessity that they cannot exist unless made known to another intelligent being. There is some evidence that supports this reading. Recall the first two quoted passages:

“Some operations of our minds, from their very nature, are social, others are solitary. By the first, I understand such operations as necessarily suppose an intercourse with some other intelligent being” (*EIP* 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* 330)

The phrases we need to understand are ‘necessarily suppose’ and ‘necessarily imply’. Consider the following passage:

“I take it for granted 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, what 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 anything else, are called substances” (*EIP* 43)

In this passage, Reid claims that attributes - i.e., universals - necessarily suppose a subject, in the sense that they cannot exist unless instantiated as features of existing individuals. What is the modality of that claim? It is not, on Reid’s account, a mere contingent fact about attributes that they cannot exist unless they are instantiated in an existing substance; it is a fact that holds, rather, of anything that can rightly be called an attribute. Moreover, Reid uses ‘X necessarily supposes Y’ and ‘X necessarily implies Y’ consistently throughout his works to make claims that appear to involve logical/metaphysical necessity rather than mere nomological necessity. If, then, we are to read Reid as using ‘necessarily suppose’ and ‘necessarily implies’ in this sense when he makes the noted claim about the social operations, it follows that the necessity involved in that claim is not nomological necessity. It is best to conclude Reid uses technical terms consistently, unless we have good reason to conclude otherwise.

What about Reid’s claim that social operations must be expressed by sensible linguistic signs in order to exist? I suggest the necessity here is nomological necessity. There are two reasons to believe this is correct. First, note Reid does not use ‘necessarily suppose’ and ‘necessarily imply’ when speaking of the need for social operations to be expressed by sensible signs; he only uses those phrases when speaking about the need for social operations to be made known. We do not, then, have the same textual reasons to

conclude that the necessity of the expression is metaphysical/logical necessity. Second, it is not in the spirit of Reid's philosophy, nor is it in accord with the views one would expect of a religious philosopher of Reid's time, to claim it is a logically/metaphysically necessary truth that it is possible to communicate only through a medium of sensible linguistic signs. Reid would, presumably, be open to the possibility that other beings - such as, e.g., angels or God - could perform social operations without recourse to the use of sensible signs; it would be quite odd for a devout 18th century man to believe that God *needs* sensible signs to communicate.

To clarify what has been said so far, let's consider an example. Recall that, on Reid's account of linguistic signs, some such signs signify objects that speakers' thoughts are about - such as, e.g., individual substances or universals - whereas other linguistic signs express mental acts that speakers perform that are directed at such objects of thought. Signs that express social operations are signs that express mental acts. If, e.g., I were to say "I promise that I will pick you up at the airport", some linguistic signs used - namely, 'I will pick you up at the airport' - would be used to signify an abstract proposition about the future, whereas the other linguistic signs would be used to express the social operation of promising. The act of promising is indeed part of the meaning of the sentence - i.e., it is part of what is expressed or signified by the words in sentence - but not part of what one might call the "propositional content" of the sentence. When I say "I hereby promise to pick you up at the airport", I am not making an assertion about what I am doing, but expressing to another - and thereby performing - a social operation that is directed at that propositional content.

Next, consider (iii): social operations must be performed with understanding and will. Note the following passage:

"They [i.e., the social operations] suppose understanding and will" (*EIP* 68)

To explain: recall Reid rejects blind agency, which is to say that he holds that an act of will is possible only if one understands what one wills prior to willing it. On Reid's account, social operations are exertions of active power, and, as such, must be performed with understanding and will. Consider the example of promising: Reid's claim is that I

can perform the act of promising to pick you up at the airport only if I already understand what it is to pick you up at the airport and what it is to promise.

Why does Reid believe social operations suppose understanding and will? To understand Reid's reasons, I suggest that it helps to consider his comments on the two types of social operations that he discusses in any detail - i.e., promising and testifying. On Reid's account, to perform a promise is to perform an act in which one takes upon oneself a *prima facie* obligation to do what one promises to do. A promise, then, is an act for which one can be held morally responsible for having performed. Reid's comments on testimony are analogous, insofar as he insists testimony has a moral dimension: to give a false testimony, Reid writes, is to lie, which is to do something wrong. He is quite explicit about this key point:

“In all testimony, in all promises... there is necessarily implied a moral obligation” (*EAP* 171)

On Reid's account, then, social operations of promising and giving testimony are acts for which one can be held morally responsible, and, as such, they are acts that require not only understanding and will but also *moral liberty*. Recall our discussion about moral liberty in part two. On Reid's view, promising and testimony are social operations that one can perform only if one is capable of conceiving a general rule and of recognizing that one has an obligation to follow that general rule. What is the rule in these cases? It is not clear. In the case of promising, the rule might be “one ought to keep one's promises”; in the case of testimony, moreover, it might be “one ought to testify only to what one knows to be true”. Of course, one might fail to be moved by one's duty and thereby fail act in accord with such rules - one might, that is, either knowingly give false testimony or promise to do what one has no intention to do - but one cannot perform these social operations unless one is capable of conceiving general rules and of recognizing that one has some obligation to follow them.

Consider claim (iv): social operations are just as simple as/cannot be reduced to solitary operations. Consider the following key passages:

“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 composition of these.

Testimony is neither simple apprehension, nor judgment, nor reasoning. The same may be said of a promise, or of a contract” (*EIP* 68-69)

“I take it to be the common opinion of Philosophers, That the social operations of the human mind are not specifically different than 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 of the solitary: And that an attempt to do this, would prove as ineffectual as the attempts that have been made to resolve all our social affections into the selfish. The social operations appear to be as simple in their nature as the solitary” (*EAP* 330-331)

The claim is that social operations are distinct from the solitary, in the sense that social operations are not individual solitary operations or complex sets of such operations that happen to be expressed by sensible signs in some appropriate context; they are, rather, a wholly distinct class of acts. This claim has been aptly discussed in Houston (2004), with respect to Reid’s distinction between testimony and expressions of judgment. Houston does not, however, quite succeed in making sense of Reid’s reasons for drawing that distinction. To do so, I suggest we consider once again the examples of promising and testimony. With respect to both, Reid argues that the social operation is not merely an act of expressing a solitary operation in an appropriate sort of context. Reid argues, e.g., that the act of giving testimony is distinct from that of expressing one’s judgment; Reid argues, e.g., that promising to do something is distinct from expressing one’s intention to do something. Importantly, moreover, with respect to both operations, Reid argues by claiming that social operations have normative consequences that any mere expression of the solitary operation cannot have. Reid writes, e.g., that

“Every man knows that there may be a fraudulent promise, made without intention of performing. But the intention to perform the promise, or not to perform it, whether the intention be known to the other party or not, makes no part of the promise, it is a solitary act of mind, and can neither constitute nor dissolve an obligation” (*EAP* 342)

If I promise to pick you up at the airport, I have taken on an obligation to do so. In contrast, if I just express my intention to pick you up, I have not - necessarily, at least - taken on any such obligation. The same point, Reid's claims, holds about testimony and expressions of judgment. With the latter, if what I say is false, I might merely have made a mistake; whereas with the former, if what I say is false, then I have not merely made a mistake, but I have lied - or, at least, I have testified to something of which I was not justifiably certain - and am morally blameworthy for having done so in a way I am not morally blameworthy for having made a mere mistake. My suggestion is Reid's claim that the social operations - or, at least, the social operations of testifying and promising - are not reducible to mere sets of solitary operations is, at least in part, grounded in the fact that he doubts that any expression of a solitary operation or set of solitary operations could have the normative consequences that necessarily follow from performances of the mentioned social operations.

To clarify, consider an objection. Note there are some cases in which one says "I intend to pick you up at the airport" or perhaps just "I will pick you up at the airport" in which one can plausibly be said to have taken on an obligation to pick up a person at the airport. Reid need not and does not deny this. Reid discusses this sort of case with respect to the distinction between acts of testimony and expressions of judgment. In the first chapter of the essay on judgment in *EIP*, he notes that, sometimes, a sentence that we normally use to just express judgment is used to testify. One might, that is, give testimony by saying "The man drank the coffee" rather than the more explicit "I testify that the man drank the coffee". How can Reid make sense of these sorts of cases? He has three options available to him. First, Reid can say that, in some such cases, there exists an artificial convention in virtue of which, in the type of context in which the utterance is made, signs that are normally used to express the solitary operation are used to express the social operation. In such a case, artificial signs are used to express the act of testimony. Second, Reid can say that, in some such cases, natural rather than artificial linguistic signs are used to express the social operation. Third, Reid can say that, in some such cases, the social operation is not expressed by linguistic signs, but is performed by being implied or implicated. What does that mean? Roughly put, the social operation is not expressed by any linguistic sign, but the people who understand the signs used to

signify or express other things and acts are able reason, from facts about what was literally said and the particular context in which it was said, to the conclusion that the speaker intended to perform the social operation in question. This option is potentially problematic for Reid, of course, as it appears to conflict with his claim social operations cannot exist unless they are expressed by sensible linguistic signs. How exactly does Reid deal with the considered case of judgment and testimony? Reid writes that a person is usually able to “tell from the matter and circumstances” that the speaker intended to give her testimony rather than to express her judgment (*EIP* 407). The word ‘tell’ is not a Reidian technical term: it is a bit unclear, then, from that passage alone, which option Reid meant to take. I discuss Reid’s views on implied meaning in more detail in section (3.3), when I come to discuss his argument for the claim that artificial language could have been first invented, only if we shared a natural language with which we could express the social operations. I leave further discussion of this issue until then.

To clarify what has been said so far, it helps to take a detour into the literature on Reid’s account of social operations. In particular, it helps to note Reid’s commentators are often confused by the fact Reid claims that social operations (a) are operations of the mind, (b) cannot exist unless expressed by signs and thereby made known to others, and (c) are not solitary operations expressed in some appropriate context. These three claims appear to be in tension: how, one might ask, can the existence of something in my head depend on the way things stand out there in the external world? His commentators do not always frame their confusion in the exact terms in which I frame it here; but they are, I suggest, quite often confused on that very point. Perhaps they have good reasons to be. Schumann and Smith (1990) express their confusion, writing it is unclear what exactly Reid means when he says social operations are operations of the mind. Coady (2004) expresses that same confusion. Some commentators not only express their confusion, but attempt to make sense of how Reid’s claims might be reconciled. Yaffe (2007) attempts to make sense of just the first two claims. He says that social operations are solitary operations that, when expressed in some appropriate context, are somehow transformed into social operations. The view Yaffe attributes to Reid there - insofar as that view is at all clear - is that the social operations just are solitary operations expressed in some context in which they stand in some appropriate sort of relation to the external world and

other intelligent beings. Note, however, that Yaffe makes sense of the conjunction of the first two mentioned claims, but only at the expense of ignoring the third: contrary to Yaffe's suggestion here, Reid does not hold that social operations are merely solitary operations expressed in some appropriate context. Pouivent (2007) attempts to make sense of all three claims. To do so, he suggests that Reid's distinction between the solitary and social operations reflects a deeper distinction between what Pouivent calls the primary and secondary natures of the mind. Pouivent is perhaps onto something here; it is, however, a little unclear what exactly he means by 'primary and secondary natures of the mind', and, more importantly, it is unclear whether the distinction is one that can be plausibly attributed to Reid.

To make sense of Reid's views, I suggest that part of what is required is that we recognize that Reid is making a radical break with a common picture of the mind on which the mind can be exhaustively described by describing its intrinsic features - i.e., the powers and thoughts that it can have independently of the way everything else is - and by describing the relations that it bears to other individuals in virtue of that fact that it has said intrinsic features and other individuals happen to have their own sets of intrinsic features. I suggest that the Reidian mind is best understood, rather, as a substance that possesses irreducibly extrinsic features. Why suggest this? There are a number of reasons. The suggestion not only fits with Reid's direct realist theories of perception and memory, but also with several comments Reid makes about how the mind relates to the world. In some manuscripts titled by Reid's editors "Lectures on the Nature and Duration of the Soul", e.g., Reid writes that

"The Soul has no place otherwise it must have figure & Extension. Yet there is a certain sphere in which its perceptions are limited so as to extend no further... We cannot move any body but by Means of our own nor our own but by Means of Muscles Nerves &c The Space within which its agency [is limited] & its power of perceiving external things {is limited} may be called its place" (*EIP* 619-620)

The Reidian picture is not one in which the mind's operations are literally inside the head. The Reidian mind does not perform acts all alone inside some private Cartesian theatre, but rather "out there" in the external world. Given his metaphysics, then, Reid's

claim that the social operations are acts which are, simply put, ways in which the mind acts so as to directly engage with other minds, is not that odd.

However, to make further sense of Reid's views, I suggest we should understand Reid's account of the social operations as one on which a special relation holds between social operations and the signs that express them, a relation that does not also hold between solitary operations and the signs that express them. This relation, I suggest, also helps us to make sense of Reid's reasons for claiming that social operations cannot exist unless expressed by sensible linguistic signs.

To understand this relation, consider claim (v): social operations are remote rather than immediate operations of the mind. Reid does not explicitly make this claim. In what follows, I explain this claim and then give my reasons for attributing it to Reid. Consider the following passage:

“The effects of human power are either immediate, or they are remote.

The immediate effects, I think, are reducible to two heads. We can give certain motions to our own bodies, or certain directions to our own thoughts.

Whatever we can do beyond this, must be done by one of these two means, or both” (*EAP* 39)

First, note that the “human power” mentioned in the first quotation is our ability to exert our will, and that the effects of that exertion of power are the acts that we perform when we exercise our will, as well as any intended further effects of those acts. Now ask: What is the relation between the mind's immediate acts and remote acts? Simply put, remote acts are acts we perform by means of performing immediate acts. Consider examples: I move my finger; I pull a trigger on a gun; I shoot somebody; I kill somebody. Suppose that first act is the immediate act. If I perform that act, and, in doing so, I both will to and succeed in performing any one of the other acts, then those other acts are remote acts I perform by means of that immediate act. I suggest we can use the distinction between immediate and remote acts to make better sense of Reid's account of social operations and the linguistic signs that express them. I suggest he holds that, when one performs a social operation, one performs both an immediate and a remote act: the immediate act is that of producing the linguistic sign that expresses the social operation, and the remote act is the social operation. On this reading, e.g., Reid would say that it is by performing

the act of uttering the sentence “I promise to pick you up at the airport” that I perform the act of promising to pick you up. What is the nature, then, of the special relation that holds between linguistic signs and social operations? The sign is a tool that is used to perform the social operation. The sign can be so used, moreover, just because it is a sign of that operation: it is because the sign signifies the social operation that it is possible to use the sign to make that operation known to another intelligent being, and, in doing so, to perform it. What is the difference between the relation between linguistic signs and social operations and the relation between linguistic signs and solitary operations? Linguistic signs can be used to express the solitary operations, of course, but a solitary operation, in contrast to a social operation, is not a remote act performed by means of the immediate act of producing the sign that expresses it.

Why do I attribute claim (v) to Reid? I believe doing so is required if Reid’s account of the social operations is to be compatible with his other commitments. To be clear: I do not think there is a problem for Reid in claiming that the mind directly engages with things in the external world; the claim that social operations are remote acts does not conflict or importantly modify that earlier claim. The point to note, however, is that a potential problem for Reid’s account of social operations arises when we note Reid appears to hold that one is conscious of all of the operations of one’s own mind, and, further, that one can know by attending to said operations when they are presented to one via consciousness that they exist. To clarify: on Reid’s account, an act of consciousness is an intentional mental act that takes as its object a presently existing operation of one’s own mind, and, further, an act that essentially involves not only a conception of that presently existing operation but also a firm, involuntary, and justified belief in that operation’s present existence. To see the problem that arises for Reid here, imagine a case in which I utter words, and, in doing so, intend to perform a social operation. Imagine, further, I am unable to discern whether the person I mean to be talking to understands me, because they do not react to my utterance in any way that is discernible to me. On Reid’s account, I perform the social operation only if the other person actually understands me. It is reasonable to think, then, that in our considered case I have no way of knowing I performed the social operation. It is reasonable to think, moreover, that I would not even believe that I performed the operation. But if I am conscious of all the present operations

of my mind and can know that said operations exist by attending to them when they are presented via consciousness, and if the social operations are indeed operations of the mind, then it seems that I can know by consciousness alone, in the considered sort of case, that I performed the social operation. If I can know I performed the social operation, then I can, presumably, reason from that knowledge, in conjunction with my knowledge that the social operations exist only if actually made known to another person, to the conclusion that I made the operation known to the other person. I can, then, reason from facts about my mind that are known to me solely via consciousness, to conclusions about what happened in another person's mind. But that is absurd. Note we can modify the example to make the view even more absurd. Suppose that I attempt to make a promise to you with written instead of spoken signs - suppose, e.g., I write a letter and then send it to you. Can I, by consciousness and reasoning alone, know that you received my letter, read it, and understood it? Surely not.

How does the claim that Reid thinks the social operations are remote rather than immediate operations of the mind help? It does so only if we additionally suppose that Reid holds we are conscious of our immediate operations but not our remote operations. If Reid holds this view, he can deny the absurd claim that one can know via consciousness and reasoning alone that another person has understood what one has said. There is, of course, the possibility Reid holds that social operations are known to us via consciousness, and, consequently, that Reid is committed to the noted absurd claims. But it is, I argue, appropriately charitable to attribute to Reid the claim that social operations are remote operations of which we are, strictly speaking, not conscious. To clarify: on this reading, Reid holds that we do *conceive* the social operations; we conceive social operations whenever we perform them or even try to perform them, and we conceive social operations whenever we are on the receiving end of a performance of one of them by another person. My claim here is just that Reid holds that one is not *conscious* of the social operations when one performs them.

Reid makes a sixth claim about the social operations: at least some of the social operations are expressed not only by artificial linguistic signs, but also natural linguistic signs. I discuss this claim in detail in the next section.

3.2 Reid on Natural Linguistic Signs

In this section, I discuss Reid's account of natural linguistic signs. First, I briefly review the basics. Second, I explain the sense in which Reid is rightly understood as a concept empiricist, in order to frame the key exegetical issue addressed in the section and to head off some confusions that might otherwise arise later on in the discussion. Third, I discuss the literature on that exegetical issue and argue for a novel solution to it. I discuss this issue because doing so helps us better understand the claim that social operations can be expressed by natural linguistic signs, which, in turn, helps us to understand the arguments that are discussed in section (3.3).

What are the basics of Reid's account of natural linguistic signs? Recall natural linguistic signs are "modulations of the voice, gestures, and features [of the face]" (*IHM* 52). Recall natural linguistic signs express token operations in the mind of the person whose body manifests the sign; Jane's smile, e.g., expresses her happiness. Recall, moreover, that natural linguistic signs normally prompt both a conception of and belief in the existence of the things signified; in the normal case, Jane's smile not only prompts one to conceive of Jane's happiness, but also to believe that it exists. Recall, moreover, that natural linguistic signs express the things that they do because we are innately constituted by God such that, when we are of a sound mind, the signs express to us an operation of the appropriate type: our mind is wired up such that it possesses an innate disposition to go from thought of sign to thought of thing signified. This disposition is not a habit that is learned or acquired in the way that a disposition to go from a conception of smoke to a conception of fire is learned or acquired - i.e., we do not observe the repeated conjunction of smiles and happiness and thus acquire some habit of conceiving the one on the occasion of conceiving the other.

Reid is a concept empiricist. What does that mean? Note Reid writes that

"Fancy may combine things that never were combined in reality. It may enlarge or diminish, multiply or divide, compound and fashion, the objects which nature presents; but it cannot, by the utmost effort of that creative power which we ascribe to it, bring any one simple ingredient into its productions, which nature has not framed, and brought to our knowledge by some other faculty.

This Mr LOCKE has expressed as beautifully as justly...

...Mr Hume, indeed, after acknowledging the truth of the principle in general, mentions what he thinks a single exception to it. That a man, who had seen all the shades of a particular colour except one, might frame in his mind a conception of that shade which he never saw. I think this is not an exception; because a particular shade of a colour differs not specifically, but only in degree, from other shades of the same colour”
(*EIP* 309)

Reid says that he accepts the broad principle endorsed before him by Locke and - with one famous exception - by Hume. Reid’s view is just this: all the things we can conceive or imagine are either simples, or complexes composed of such simples, that were first conceived by us via the exercise of some faculty other than that of bare conception or imagination. What might these other faculties be? Well, there is the faculty of perception, e.g., by which we first conceive material objects and their features. And there is the faculty of consciousness, e.g., by which we first conceive many operations of our minds, such as sensations, desires, judgments, and so on. Why is Reid’s concept empiricism relevant here? The exegetical issue concerns Reid’s account of the source of our first conceptions of social operations. I argue, in what follows, Reid holds that the source of such first conceptions is not perception or consciousness, but rather the natural language faculty - i.e., the innate faculty by the exercise of which we can understand the natural linguistic signs that express said operations.

The exegetical issue that I address in this section, however, specifically concerns how to understand a taxonomy of natural signs that Reid presents in *IHM*. Consider the passage in which he presents that taxonomy:

“...there are different orders of natural signs, and to point out the different classes into which they can be distinguished, that we may more distinctly conceive the relations between our sensations and the things they suggest, and what we mean by calling sensations signs of external things.

The first class of natural signs comprehends those whose connection with the thing signified is established by nature, but discovered only by experience... What we commonly call natural causes might, with more propriety, be called natural signs, and what we call effects, the things signified. The causes have no proper efficiency or causality, as far as we know; and all we can certainly affirm

is, that nature hath established a constant conjunction between them and the things called their effects; and hath given to mankind a disposition to observe these connections, to confide in their continuance, and to make use of them for the improvement of our knowledge, and increase of our power.

A second class is that wherein the connection between the sign and thing signified is not only established by nature, but discovered to us by a natural principle, without reasoning or experience. Of this kind are the natural signs of human thoughts, purposes, and desires, which have been already mentioned as the natural language of mankind...

A third class of natural signs comprehends those which, though we never before had any notion or conception of the thing signified, do suggest it, or conjure it up, as it were, by a natural kind of magic, and at once give us a conception and create a belief of it. I shewed formerly, that our sensations suggest to us a sentient being to which they belong - a being which hath a permanent existence, although the sensations are transient and of short duration... The first conception of it... is suggested to every thinking being, we do not know how...

The notion of hardness, and the belief of it, is first got by means of that particular sensation which, as far back as we can remember, does invariably suggest it; and, if we had never had such a feeling, we should never have had any notion of hardness. I think it is evident, that we cannot, by reasoning from our sensations, collect the existence of bodies at all, far less any of their qualities”
(*IHM* 59-60)

Reid identifies three classes of natural signs. The first includes natural events/objects that signify other events/objects. Smoke, e.g., is a first class natural sign of fire. The second includes our natural linguistic signs. The third class includes operations of the mind that signify the mind that is their metaphysical subject, and it also includes the sensations involved in sense perception that signify features of the objects perceived. Reid identifies some marks of the second and third classes which serve to distinguish the signs in those classes from the signs in the other classes. The second class signs are distinguished from the first class signs, he writes, by the fact that we learn of the connection between first class signs and the objects they signify from past experience, whereas the connections

between second class signs and the objects they signify are known to us by a natural principle. This is just the point explained above: unlike smoke and fire, smiles do not signify happiness to us in virtue of our having experienced the repeated conjunction of token smiles and token happy feelings. Third class signs, Reid holds, are distinguished from first class signs in that same way, and he writes, further, that they are distinguished by the fact that they signify their objects even if the mind has never before conceived a token of the type of thing signified. Reid puts the key point like this: third class signs signify their objects *by a natural kind of magic*. Note it is natural to infer that Reid thinks the second class natural signs do not also signify by a natural kind of magic. Why is this natural? It is natural to infer from the fact Reid says that a feature is characteristic of the third class signs, that he does not think second class signs have that same feature. If we make that natural inference, we conclude Reid thinks our first conceptions of operations expressed by natural linguistic signs do not come from understanding signs, but instead from some other source.

I call the reading on which Reid holds that natural linguistic signs do not signify by a natural kind of magic the “prima facie reading” of the taxonomy. The problem addressed in this section is just that of answering this question: is the prima facie reading correct? I argue that the answer is “no”.

The problem is noted in Van Cleve (2015). Van Cleve claims that the taxonomy in *IHM* is ambiguous on whether natural linguistic signs signify by a natural kind of magic. He makes a good point: Reid does not explicitly claim second class signs do not signify by a natural kind of magic, even if it is natural for us to take that claim to be implied. Van Cleve suggests we have two interpretive options available: we either conclude that Reid holds signs of natural language do signify by a natural kind of magic, or that Reid holds that first conceptions of operations of the mind are acquired from another source - namely, by our being conscious of them when we first perform them. The interpretive options, however, appear to be at least four: either (i) Reid thinks all natural linguistic signs signify by a natural kind of magic, (ii) thinks that none of them signify by a natural kind of magic, (iii) has no firm or clear commitments on this issue, or (iv) has more nuanced commitments, and left the passage ambiguous for some good reason. In what follows, I argue for option (iv): I argue Reid thinks that the natural

linguistic signs that signify social operations signify by a natural kind of magic, and is likely undecided on the question of whether natural linguistic signs that signify solitary operations signify by a natural kind of magic. I argue, further, that Reid would not think it helpful to clarify his views in the passage quoted from *IHM*, and, consequently, it is plausible that he meant to leave the taxonomy ambiguous.

Van Cleve does not defend an interpretive option, but merely notes the ambiguity of the quoted passage from *IHM*. Lehrer (1989) argues for the prima facie reading. To do so, Lehrer offers us an account of the type of reason that Reid would need to have, if Reid were to take himself to be justified in claiming that natural linguistic signs signify by a natural kind of magic. Lehrer then argues, further, that Reid does not have that type of reason. What is that type of reason? Lehrer argues Reid takes himself to be justified in claiming that we possess a distinct mental faculty by the exercise of which we perform some sort of mental act, only if Reid has decisive reason to believe that our ability to perform an act of that sort cannot be explained or otherwise accounted for as the exercise of one of the mind's other known faculties. Lehrer has evidence to support the first claim. E.g., Reid writes that

“...nature is frugal in her operations, and will not be at the expense of a particular instinct, to give us that knowledge which experience will soon produce, by means of a general principle of human nature” (*IHM* 116-117)

Further, Reid often appears to reason this way in the types of cases we are considering. Consider the following passage:

“That many operations have their natural signs in the countenance, voice, and gestures, I suppose every man will admit... The only question is, whether we understand the signification of those signs, by the constitution of our nature, by a kind of natural perception similar to the perceptions of sense; or whether we gradually learn the signification of such signs from experience, as we learn that smoke is the sign of fire, or that freezing is the sign of cold. I take the first to be the truth...

... I apprehend that it is impossible that this shouldn't be learned from experience.

When we see the sign, and see the thing signified always conjoined with it, experience may be the instructor, and teach us how that sign is to be interpreted. But how shall experience instruct us when we see the sign only, when the thing signified is invisible? Now this is the case here; the thoughts and passions of the mind... are invisible, and therefore their connection cannot be first discovered by experience; there must be some earlier source of this knowledge”
(*EIP* 485-486)

In this passage, Reid argues that the mark that distinguishes second class natural signs from first class natural signs is that the connection between sign and thing signified, in the case of the second class signs, is discovered to us by the operation of a faculty appropriated to that purpose, rather than by reasoning. Reid’s reasoning is of the form noted: our knowledge of the connection between signs and things signified in the case of natural linguistic signs cannot be accounted for as an exercise of the faculties of perception, reasoning, or our other known faculties; thus, we are licensed to conclude our knowledge of that connection is explained by positing that we have a distinct faculty that is fitted to that particular purpose - i.e., a natural language faculty.

Further, note that Reid employs this same reasoning when he argues that third class natural signs signify by a natural kind of magic, in the passage from *IHM*, in which he presents the taxonomy. Consider again the end that passage:

“...the notion of hardness, and the belief of it, is first got by means of that particular sensation which, as far back as we can remember, does invariably suggest it; and, if we had never had such a feeling, we should never have had any notion of hardness. I think it is evident, that we cannot, by reasoning from our sensations, collect the existence of bodies at all, far less any of their qualities...”
(*IHM* 59-60)

Lehrer’s claim, then, that Reid uses this reasoning in these sorts of cases, is supported by the text. So the question is: why does Lehrer think Reid cannot use this sort of reasoning to argue that signs of natural language signify by a natural kind of magic? He eloquently sums up his reasoning as follows:

“The distinction between the second and third kind of signs reflects a difference in the problem of other minds and the problem of the external world. In the case of other minds, we have a conception of mental operations from our consciousness of them. The problem is not that of obtaining a conception of mental operations of others. It is to determine what behaviour signifies those operations in that the operations are ‘invisible’ to us. Here nature supplies the connection between the sign and what it signifies as a result of a first principle. In the case of the external world, there is the problem of obtaining a conception of external objects and their... qualities as well as that of determining what signifies the existence of such objects and qualities. Here nature supplies our first conception of external objects and their... qualities by a first principle as well as supplying the connection between the sign and what it signifies in this way” (Lehrer 1989, 45)

Lehrer reasons as follows: initial conceptions of the operations of the mind could come from the faculty of consciousness, rather than the natural language faculty; thus, Reid would not take himself to be justified in claiming that natural linguistic signs signify by a natural kind of magic. On Lehrer’s reading, Reid holds that it is via consciousness that one first conceives operations of the mind that are, only later, signified by natural linguistic signs; it is, on Lehrer’s reading, only after one conceives of a token of some type of operation via consciousness that the natural language faculty “kicks in”, as it were, such that the natural linguistic signs one perceives signify operations of that type in the minds of others. Consider an example. On Lehrer’s reading, if Jane had never been in pain and thus had never conceived her pain via consciousness, then natural signs of pain in others would not express their pains to her; but if she had previously been conscious of her own pain, then such signs would express their pains to her.

Lehrer’s interpretation is insightful, but it ought to be rejected. The point to note is this: Reid is committed, on pain of absurdity, to the claim that initial conceptions of social operations cannot come from the exercise of the faculty of consciousness, but he does not have analogous reasons to think the same about the other types of operations. Further, Reid is best understood as agnostic, as it were, on whether the natural linguistic signs that signify the solitary operations signify by a natural kind of magic; he does not

have reason to say they do, but he does not thereby have reason to say they do not. I suggest, then, that Reid likely holds a complex view on whether natural linguistic signs signify by a natural kind of magic.

Why claim Reid is committed to the view that our initial conceptions of social operations cannot come from consciousness? There are two reasons. First, recall social operations must be performed with both understanding and will. On his view, then, a social operation can be performed, only if one can conceive that operation *prior* to performing it. On his account, then, one cannot perform a social operation unless one can already conceive of it; thus, on his account, one's *first* conception of a social operation cannot come from one being conscious of it when one first performs it. (Note this same reasoning holds for any operation that is essentially voluntary, and, thus, that Reid has grounds to conclude that any natural linguistic sign that signifies an essentially voluntary operation that is not a social operation - if indeed there are any such operations - signifies by a natural kind of magic.) What is the second reason? Recall I argued in the last section that, on pain of absurdity, Reid is committed to the claim that the social operations are remote operations of which we are not conscious. If so, Reid has decisive reasons to hold that the ability to first conceive social operations cannot be accounted for by appeal to the faculty of consciousness. If so, Lehrer is clearly wrong.

To sum up: Reid holds that natural linguistic signs that express social operations - or any essentially voluntary operation - express said operations to a person even if that person has never before conceived a token of that type of operation. On Reid's account, the natural language faculty is the unique source of our first conceptions of the social operations; Reid thinks, that is, that the natural language faculty is one of the fundamental sources - along with the faculties of perception and consciousness - of our empirical concepts. There is an important corollary here. Recall that, on Reid's account, social operations require both understanding and will, and, consequently, one can perform a social operation only if one can conceive the operation prior to performing it. What else follows from this? It follows that, on his account, if one has never perceived and thus understood a natural linguistic sign of a social operation, and, consequently, one cannot conceive that social operation, one is also unable to perform that social operation. On his account, then, the possibility of not only the conception but also the performance of the

social operations, depends on whether one has been appropriately exposed to the culture of society - in particular, whether one has perceived and also understood natural linguistic signs that express the social operations.

In what follows, I respond to three objections. The first objection: why not just say Reid thinks that we first conceive the social operations via consciousness, by way of being conscious of them *at the very moment* we first perform them?

This is an objection only to my first reason, not the second. It is unconvincing, however, even as an objection to that first reason. Reid's comments in *EAP* on active power make clear he thinks one must be able to conceive an action before one can step in and will to execute it. Is Reid right about that? Does Reid have good or compelling reasons to believe that? Maybe he does; maybe he does not. But Reid believes it, which is the point that concerns us. It is one thing to attribute to Reid a view he does not explicitly express in his texts, but it is another thing altogether to deny that Reid holds a view that he does explicitly express.

Second objection: if Reid holds that some signs of natural language signify by a natural kind of magic, why does he only say third class signs signify by a natural kind of magic in the taxonomy in *IHM*? Why does Reid not make his views clear? Lehrer gives us an explanation of this aspect of that text, and it is reasonable to demand that I am able to do the same.

I have an explanation to give. Suppose Reid holds the view that I attribute to him: suppose he holds that some - but not all - natural linguistic signs signify by a natural kind of magic. If so, it makes sense that Reid would not claim that all natural linguistic signs signify by a natural kind of magic. Reid does not do so in the text, which is consistent with my reading. But why does Reid not take the time to clarify the nuances of his views in that section of *IHM*? To understand why this might be so, consider Reid's stated aim in quoted the section of *IHM* in which he presents the noted taxonomy. Reid is not concerned, there, with his account of linguistic signs for its own sake, much less with his account of the social operations. His primary concern, rather, is to explain and argue for his account of sense perception. His stated aim in the section in which he presents the taxonomy, moreover, is to explain the sense in which sensations involved in sense perceptions are signs of the features of external objects - and, specifically, to emphasize

that they signify by a natural kind of magic. It is understandable, then, that Reid would not think it important to go off on a tangent in which he clarifies the details of his account of the social operations in order to clarify the nuances of his views on whether any natural linguistic signs signify by a natural kind of magic. It is understandable, then, if Reid holds the views I attribute to him, that he would leave the taxonomy of natural signs ambiguous in precisely the way that he does.

Third objection: there is a passage that might conflict with my claim that Reid holds that we do not initially conceive social operations by consciousness, but rather by the natural language faculty. Consider that passage:

“An anatomist who hath happy opportunities, may have access to examine with his own eyes, and with equal accuracy, bodies of all different ages, sexes, and conditions; so that what is defective, obscure, or preternatural in one, may be discerned clearly, and in its most perfect state in another. But the anatomist of the mind cannot have the same advantage. It is his own mind only that he can examine, with any degree of accuracy and distinctness. This is the only subject he can look into. He may, from outward signs, collect the operations of other minds; but these signs are for the most part ambiguous, and must be interpreted by what he perceives within himself” (*IHM* 13)

There are two questions here: Does this passage conflict with my claim that Reid holds that the social operations are *first* conceived by understanding natural signs we perceive in other people? And does this passage conflict with my claim that Reid holds that social operations are *never* conceived via consciousness and are *only* conceived either via conception/imagination or via understanding natural signs? To begin, note the quoted passage speaks only about what is required for *distinct* conceptions of operations. It might be thought, then, that the passage does not conflict with the first mentioned claim. Perhaps, the thought goes, Reid’s view is that we first conceive social operations by understanding natural linguistic signs, but that we subsequently come to have distinct conceptions of them - i.e., to be able to conceive the operations as universals - only by attending to the operations as they are presented to us via consciousness. Note, however,

Reid is likely committed to the claim that we can distinctly conceive at least some of the social operations - namely, those operations that presuppose moral liberty - prior to our performing them. Even if, then, the passage does contain the claim that we can distinctly conceive operations of the mind only by way of attending to them as they are presented to us in consciousness, it still conflicts with my claims.

To see why the passage does not conflict with my claims, first consider the last part of the passage in isolation:

“He may, from outward signs, collect the operations of other minds; but these signs are for the most part ambiguous, and must be interpreted by what he perceives within himself” (*Ibid.*)

As written, the claim is ambiguous. The claim might be that signs that express operations of the mind are *in most cases* ambiguous, and that *in such ambiguous cases* can be disambiguated only by being interpreted - whatever ‘interpreted’ means - by what the mind is conscious of within itself. But the claim might alternately be that signs that express operations of the mind are *in most cases* ambiguous, and *in all cases* must be interpreted by what the mind is conscious of within itself. The former, I suggest, is the more straightforward reading of the passage, as the claim that signs must be interpreted by reference to what one is conscious of in oneself is naturally read as an explanation of how the noted ambiguities are to be resolved. If, moreover, the former is the correct reading, this part of the passage does not conflict with my claims. Simply put, the ‘for the most part’ saves me: I only claim that Reid thinks that some natural linguistic signs - namely, those that signify the social operations - signify by a natural kind of magic. I would point out, moreover, that the fact that Reid qualifies his claim in the passage with the “for the most part” implies he believes that some signs of operations may not be ambiguous and in need of disambiguation via introspection. This part of the passage, then, actually lends support to my reading, as my reading provides us with an explanation for why Reid adds “for the most part”.

However, I am not off the hook that easily. Consider the whole passage again:

“An anatomist who hath happy opportunities, may have access to examine with his own eyes, and with equal accuracy, bodies of all different ages,

sexes, and conditions; so that what is defective, obscure, or preternatural in one, may be discerned clearly, and in its most perfect state in another. But the anatomist of the mind cannot have the same advantage. It is his own mind only that he can examine, with any degree of accuracy and distinctness. This is the only subject he can look into. He may, from outward signs, collect the operations of other minds; but these signs are for the most part ambiguous, and must be interpreted by what he perceives within himself" (*Ibid.*)

Note Reid writes here that it is only one's own mind that one can "examine, with any degree of accuracy or distinctness". That is the most problematic part of the passage. Reid's claim appears to be that distinct conceptions of operations can be had only by attending to said operations as they are presented in consciousness. If so, it appears to conflict with my claims.

Considered in its broader context, however, the passage need not be read as making that claim. The passage comes from an introductory section of *IHM*, in which Reid characterizes his overall aims and methods in that book. In *IHM*, Reid argues that philosophers - most notably Hume, but of course also others - failed to correctly analyze the operations involved in sense perception. Most crucially, Reid argues that they failed to distinguish the sensations that occasion acts of sense perception from the acts of perception and the objects perceived. This distinction between acts of sensation and acts of perception is, Reid suggests, particularly hard to get clear on, because it is difficult to attend via consciousness to the operations involved. It is difficult to do so for several reasons. One is that our attention is normally occupied with the objects perceived, in consequence of which we hardly - if indeed ever - give more than a scant attention to the operations involved when we are perceiving them. A second reason is we have no need to distinguish acts of perception from the sensations that occasion them in day to day life. This lack of need is born out in the fact that the artificial linguistic signs that we use day to day to talk about sense perceptions do not capture the distinction. It is notable, moreover, that any natural linguistic signs that express perceptions do not, presumably, capture that distinction either. The fact the linguistic signs we ordinarily use to talk about

the operations are ambiguous, moreover, is one reason we fail to distinctly conceive said operations. E.g., note Reid writes in *EIP* that:

“The perception of external objects is accompanied with some sensation corresponding to the object perceived, and such sensations have in many cases, the same name with the external object which they always accompany. The difficulty of disjoining in abstraction... things, which have one and the same name in all languages, has likewise been frequently the occasion of errors in the philosophy of the mind” (*EIP* 37)

Now, return to consider the problematic passage. Note that Reid thinks the anatomist of the mind - i.e., a philosopher or scientist whose aim is to accurately describe the operations of the mind - is a person who needs to find a way to get clear on the noted distinctions, in spite of the fact that the signs that we normally use to talk about the relevant sorts of operations do not help us do so. In *IHM*, Reid’s aim is to help the reader get clear on the distinction between acts of perception and the sensations that occasion them by leading the reader through several introspective exercises. First, Reid helps the reader recall their general notion of sensation by describing sensations that are not involved in the most problematic cases of sense perception. With that general notion in hand, Reid leads the reader through a number of the most difficult sorts of cases - in particular, the cases that involve perceptions of primary qualities via the sense modality of touch - and Reid tasks the reader with bringing their distinct general notion of sensation to bear on the analysis of said examples. Reid hopes the reader will thereby be able to conceive the sensations involved as distinct from the acts of perception as well as from the objects perceived.

Why does this context help me reconcile the passage with my claim that Reid holds that we do not first - or indeed ever - conceive social operations by consciousness? In the passage, I suggest, Reid ought to be read as making a narrow methodological point relevant to the aims and arguments of the *IHM*. His aim in the *IHM* is to get clear on distinctions between operations of the mind that, if signified by linguistic signs, are signified only ambiguously - i.e., as confused with each other. On my reading, Reid is fully licensed to claim that part of what is required to get clear on such distinctions is to

attend to the operations as they are presented in consciousness. There is no reason, I suggest, to think Reid needs to be read in the quoted passage as making that claim about *all* operations. Reid uses the phrase ‘look into’ and ‘examine’ in the passage to refer narrowly to the activities of a philosopher whose aim is to get clear on distinctions that ordinary folks are not already clear on. The social operations are not, on Reid’s account, operations of that sort. Reid writes, e.g., that “the nature of a... promise is perfectly understood by all men of common understanding” (*EAP* 328). I suggest this is true, on his account, because signs that express social operations are not always ambiguous; on his account, we first conceive - and distinctly conceive - social operations by attending to and understanding linguistic signs that express them.

3.3 Reconstructions of Reid’s Arguments

In the previous sections, I discussed Reid’s accounts of social operations and natural linguistic signs; we can now understand his claim that it was possible for humans to first invent and subsequently to be taught already invented artificial languages only if they possess a natural language with which they can express social operations. In section (3.3), (3.4), and (3.5), I discuss Reid’s main arguments for that claim. In what follows here in (3.3), I first discuss Reid’s account of the particular social operation of agreement, which needs to be understood, if we are to understand Reid’s first argument. Second, I present my reconstructions of the two arguments. In (3.4), I engage the literature on the first argument. In that literature, Reid’s commentators present objections to the argument and consider replies to said objections on Reid’s behalf. Reid’s commentators, I suggest, do not fully grasp the nuances of his argument - in particular, they do not fully grasp the role that his account of the social operations plays in it - and, consequently, their objections at least partly miss the mark. Their objections, however, are still instructive and worth considering: after discussing their objections, I go on in (3.5) to present two criticisms of my own invention to the argument, which are informed by criticisms offered by Reid’s other commentators and by my conclusions in earlier sections. Both of my criticisms are of the same sort: I do not argue that Reid’s argument is either invalid or unsound, but rather that presuppositions of the argument are *prima facie* incompatible with some of Reid’s other commitments. Last, I consider suggestions for how we might read Reid

differently so as to absolve his views of these prima facie incompatibilities. I conclude that these suggestions are not successful, and, consequently, that it is likely - although not completely certain - that Reid's views are in tension with each other.

To begin: what is Reid's account of agreement? It helps to lay out the context in which Reid discusses the act of agreement, which also happens to be one of the contexts in which Reid presents the two arguments discussed later in this section. Reid discusses the act of agreement in *EAP* 5.6, titled *Of the Nature and Obligation of a Contract*. There, Reid's aim is to critique David Hume's claim that we do not have any *natural* obligation to do what we have agreed to do. Reid and Hume agree on one point: they hold that an act of agreements- which they also call "compacts" and "contracts" - are what we can call "two-way promises". To clarify, note Reid writes that

"A promise and a contract differ so little in what concerns the present disquisition, that the same reasoning extends to both... In a promise, one party only comes under the obligation, the other acquires a right to the prestation promised. But we give the name of a contract to a transaction in which each party comes under an obligation to the other, and each reciprocally acquires a right to what is promised by the other" (*EAP* 328)

In entering into an agreement or contract, people make promises and thereby take on obligations to each other. Reid and Hume's disagreement, then, concerns more precisely whether we have natural obligations to keep our promises. In *Treatise* III.ii.5, Hume argues that we are obligated to keep promises because it is in the interests of society at large that we do so, and, consequently, we have adopted a social convention on which people who utter the phrase 'I promise to X' - or anything that counts as equivalent - ought to X, and disapprove of people who promise to X but fail to X. On his account, we have no obligation to keep promises prior to the establishment of such artificial social conventions, which is to say we have no *natural* obligations to keep promises. In *EAP* 5.6, Reid argues we do have such natural obligations.

To get a better grasp on the dispute, let's summarize Hume's reasoning. It goes roughly as follows. Suppose that the obligation to keep our promises is not grounded in any such artificial social conventions. If so, then what could ground said obligations?

Hume claims there would need to be a mental act expressed by the words “I promise” that creates a new obligation. He argues, however, that there can be no such act. He claims, first, that no expression of a mental state such as a belief, desire, or intention could create a new obligation. Hume claims, moreover, that the only other candidate for the mental act expressed by ‘I promise’ that creates a new obligation is the act of willing to be obligated. He argues, however, that no act of will can create a new obligation. On Hume’s account, something is obligatory because one’s failing to do it is disapproved of by oneself and/or others, which is to say that something is obligatory in virtue of facts about people’s sentiments. But sentiments, on Hume’s account, are involuntary acts, and thus cannot be created or changed by any act of will. Hume concludes, then, there can be no act of mind expressed by ‘I promise’ that creates a new obligation, and, consequently, that obligations to keep promises must instead be grounded in artificial conventions. Hume adds in a footnote that, even if one were to deny his claim that facts about obligations are grounded in facts about sentiments - even if, e.g., one were to adopt some sort of rationalist account of obligations - it would still make no sense to claim that one can create an obligation by an act of will. On any alternative rationalist account, Hume claims, to create an obligation just is to create a new abstract relation, but one cannot create a new abstract relation by a mere act of will. Hume concludes, on these grounds, that there is no natural obligation to keep promises and that said obligations are instead grounded in artificial social conventions.

How does Reid respond? Reid argues that the mental act expressed by ‘I promise’ that creates a new obligation just is the social operation of promising. Reid claims that Hume’s failure to recognize that social operations are distinct from solitary operations led Hume to overlook the operation of promising when considering whether any operation of the mind can create a new obligation. As we learnt in (3.1), Reid thinks promising is an operation of the mind that cannot exist unless expressed by sensible signs and made known to another person, that must be performed with both understanding and will, that presupposes moral liberty, that is not reducible to the solitary operations, that is a remote operation, and - importantly for our discussion here - can be expressed by natural signs rather than just artificial signs. That last claim is a key part of Reid’s response to Hume in *EAP* 5.6, as it is in virtue of this claim that Reid can argue not only that a promise is act

of mind that can create a new obligation, but also that the possibility of the performance of that act does not depend on pre-established social conventions, and, consequently, that we must have a natural obligation to keep promises.

As noted, in this section, I discuss Reid's arguments for the claim that it was possible for humans to first invent and learn artificial linguistic signs, only if they shared a natural language with which they could express social operations - including, most importantly, the social operation of promising or agreeing. How do these arguments fit in with Reid's broader critique of Hume in the mentioned chapter of *EAP*? When giving these arguments, Reid takes it for granted that we invented and learnt artificial linguistic signs for some first time, and argues that this was possible only if we possessed, at that time - and therefore also currently possess - a natural language with which we could perform social operations. The arguments I discuss in this section, then, are a key part of Reid's critique of Hume in *EAP* 5.6. In what follows, however, I do not discuss that critique in any detail, but instead focus narrowly on getting clear on the details of Reid's arguments and, in particular, on the extent to which they are informed by and compatible with Reid's broader set of philosophical commitments.

The two arguments are for distinct but related claims. The first argument is for the precise claim that people could have *invented* artificial linguistic signs for the very first time - i.e., at a time back in prehistory, before artificial signs had as yet been invented - only if they possessed a natural language with which they could perform the operation of promising/agreeing. The second argument is for the distinct claim that people have a natural language with which they can express social operations to each other, and it contains a subargument for the claim that an artificial language used to perform social operations cannot be taught to a person who does not as yet understand such a language, unless teacher and student already share a natural language with which they can perform social operations. Reid presents the arguments in several texts. He presents the first in *IHM*, *MS 2/II/14*, *MS 2131/4/I/30*, as well as briefly - and, perhaps, merely arguably - in the very chapter of *EAP* in which he critiques Hume's noted claims about promising. He also presents the second in *MS 2/II/14* - it is written in the margin of the folio, right next to where the first argument is written in the body text - and is presented once again in the just noted chapter of *EAP*. I discuss each of these texts and manuscripts in this section;

my reconstructions of the arguments, however, focus on the statements of the arguments given in the published texts.

First, then, let's reconstruct the arguments. The first argument is first presented in *IHM* in the following passage:

“I think it is demonstrable, that if mankind had not a natural language, they could never have invented an artificial one by their reason and ingenuity. For all artificial language suppose some compact or agreement to affix a certain meaning to certain signs; therefore there must be compacts or agreements before the use of artificial signs; but there can be no compact or agreement without signs, nor without language; and therefore there must be a natural language before any artificial language can be invented. Which was to be demonstrated” (*IHM* 51)

I suggest that the argument can be reasonably reconstructed as follows:

1. An artificial language can be invented only if the members of a community agree that linguistic signs are to have certain meanings affixed to them.
2. The members of a community can agree to anything at all only if they can use linguistic signs to express the social operation of agreeing.
3. Thus, an artificial language can be invented only if the members of a community can use linguistic signs to express the social operation of agreeing.
4. Artificial language was invented for the first time at some point in the past.
5. When artificial language was first invented, the linguistic signs used to express agreement could not have been artificial signs, as artificial signs had not yet been invented.
6. All linguistic signs are either natural or artificial.
7. Thus, when artificial language was first invented, the linguistic signs used to express agreement must have been natural linguistic signs.
8. Thus, when artificial language was first invented, the members of the community shared a natural language with which they could express the social operation of agreeing.

One can reconstruct the argument as being for the claim that we *currently* have a natural language with which we express acts of agreeing to each other. To do so, one need only add the following implicit premise and conclusion:

9. If people in the past shared a natural language with which they could express the social operation of agreeing, people today share a natural language with which they can express the social operation of agreeing.
10. Thus, people today share a natural language with which they can express the social operation of agreeing.

Are there any objections to my reconstruction? The first point to note is an obvious one: I read the argument as concerned with what is required to perform the social operation of agreeing, prior to the first invention of artificial signs. Note, then, I read the argument as concerned with what is required for the invention of artificial language, in the sense of what is required for people to fix meanings of signs by performing promises to each other and thereby taking on obligations to each other concerning their use of said signs. There is an objection that one might make to me here: Reid does not explicitly mention social operations in the quoted passage; it might be argued, then, that I am mistaken or at least unjustified in reading the argument this way. The hypothetical objector, here, claims that the compact or agreement that Reid mentions in the just quoted passage is not the social operation, but rather some other sort of agreement. The claim would presumably be that the agreement involved in fixing the meaning of artificial signs is merely an agreement in our use of words - i.e., that we agree in the sense that we do, in fact, use the words in the same way as each other.

The objector's claim here is not obviously false: indeed, in the literature on the argument - which I discuss later - a number of Reid's commentators do interpret the argument as being for the claim that we need a natural language capable of expressing operations of the mind in general, rather than the social operations in particular, merely in order to coordinate our use of artificial linguistic signs, rather than to take on obligations to each other concerning our use of such signs. There is, however, textual evidence that supports my reading. Reid writes in *IHM*, in the paragraph that immediately follows the quoted statement of the argument, that:

“...brutes have some natural signs by which they express their own thoughts, affections, and desires, and understand those of others... But brutes, as far as we know, have no notion of contracts or covenants, or of moral obligation to perform them. If nature had given them these notions, she would probably have given them natural signs to express them. And where nature has denied them these notions, it is impossible to acquire them by art... Some brutes are sensible of honour or disgrace; they have resentment and gratitude: none of them, as far as we know, can make a promise, or plight their faith, having no such notions from their constitution. And if mankind had not these notions by nature, and natural signs to express them by, with all their with an ingenuity they could never have invented language” (*IHM* 51)

Reid makes it clear, in this subsequent paragraph, that he is talking about promises - that is, acts by which we take on obligations. This makes sense only if one holds, with me, that the argument is premised on the claim that the invention of artificial signs requires the performance of the social operation of agreeing - i.e., a two-way promise - and that the conclusion of the argument is that the first invention of artificial linguistic signs was possible, only because the people possessed a natural language with which they could make agreements of that sort. There is more evidence that supports my reading of the argument. In *MS 2/II/14*, Reid presents the first argument again, and, there, he makes the salient point explicit. Reid writes:

“Let suppose a number of intelligent beings like men in every other power but that of communicating their sentiments by natural signs of features voice, & gesture or by artificial signs of language. If it can be shown that by their reason & understanding (which we suppose to be equal to that of men) they can invent a way of communicating their thoughts so as to ask a question & testify facts, so as to give commands, ask favours make promises and bargains, then it will follow that the power of communicating our sentiments in social intercourse, is not an original faculty but may be acquired by our judging and reasoning powers. If on the other hand such a company of rational beings could not by any effort of reason make a language...

Then it will follow that the power of social intercourse by language is an original power of the human mind...

...there must be compacts or agreements before the language is begun, before the first sign of it is understood. But a compact or agreement being a social act cannot be without signs by which it may be understood by the parties. That is there must be signs whose meaning is understood before there are any signs whose meaning is understood, which is impossible.

If this reasoning is just as it seems to me to be, it follows that if men had not a natural language by which they can converse with one another in some degree, it would be impossible for them to invent any artificial language. It is by means of this natural language that those compacts are made which we have shewn to be necessary previous to all artificial language” (*MS 2/II/14*)

Reid explicitly presents the argument as being for the claim that the invention of artificial language was possible because we possessed a natural language with which we could express the social operation of agreement. In this manuscript, Reid’s aim is to refute Hume’s claim that we have no natural obligation to keep promises - this manuscript, in fact, contains many sentences included in the analogous chapter of *EAP*, and was quite likely a preliminary draft of that chapter. Reid’s arguments for the claim that we have a natural language with which we perform social operations is a key part of his critique of Hume, and this is not only true in *EAP* but also in this manuscript. The conclusion of Reid’s argument, then, must be that we have a natural language with which we can make agreements - where the act of agreement is understood in the precise sense that is at issue in his dispute with Hume - or the argument cannot serve the dialectical purposes that Reid needs it to serve. It is clear, then, Reid does not merely intend for this first argument to be an argument for the claim that we need a natural language, of any old sort, merely in order to coordinate our use of signs, but instead for the claim that we need a natural language with which we can make promises and take on obligations concerning our use of said signs. Reid’s first argument, then, is clearly premised on his account of the metasemantics of artificial signs, where that account is understood as I explained it in part one: artificial linguistic signs are those signs whose meaning is fixed by an act of

agreement - i.e., a social operation by which people take on obligations to each other - between the members of the community of sign users.

To further clarify the argument, it helps to comment on its premises, and, in doing so, to discuss Reid's likely or at least possible reasons for adopting them. First, consider premise two: members of a community can agree to anything only if they can use linguistic signs to express the social operation of agreement. Why does Reid adopt this premise? Simply put, he holds that the act of agreement, as a social operation, can exist only if expressed by linguistic signs and thereby made known to another intelligent being. His argument, then, on this reading, is premised on the details of his account of the social operations of the mind.

Next, consider premise one: artificial language can be invented only if members of a community agree that linguistic signs are to have certain meanings affixed to them. Is that true? One might suggest that, for Reid, it is true by definition, as Reidian artificial linguistic signs are, by definition, signs whose meaning is fixed by such an agreement. But that would be too easy. Reid's argument is not only premised on the claim that artificial signs, by definition, are signs whose meaning are fixed by an agreement, but also on the claim that we did, in fact, at some point, invent artificial signs of that precise sort. After all, Reid can succeed in arguing we have a natural language with which we can perform social operations of the mind, only if he can establish that we did in fact invent artificial signs of that sort in that way. Reid's argument, then, is premised on the claim that non-natural linguistic signs such as 'dog' and 'big' are linguistic signs whose meanings are fixed by acts of agreement. It might be argued, however, that Reid is simply mistaken in believing that these signs are artificial signs in his defined sense. It might be argued, then, that his argument is premised on a mistaken metasemantics of non-natural linguistic signs. How might Reid respond to this objection? Note this objection can be reframed as an objection to premise six; I respond to the objection as reframed that way in what immediately follows.

Consider premises five and six and also the inference to seven. Note Reid can conclude that the signs used to perform the act of agreeing, when artificial language was first invented, must have been natural linguistic signs, because he holds that all linguistic signs are either artificial or natural signs in his defined senses. There is an objection to

Reid's argument that can be considered here. On what grounds can Reid deny that there are - or even that there could be - linguistic signs that are neither natural nor artificial in his defined senses? This objection points to a possible gap between the two ways that Reid characterizes artificial signs: (i) signs whose meanings are fixed by the wills of the users of said signs, and (ii) signs whose meanings are fixed by a social act of agreement. Why think that there is a possible gap? It appears quite possible, at least *prima facie*, that people can exert their wills so as to use non-natural linguistic signs in accord with some common set of general rules, without ever agreeing to do so in Reid's precise sense of agreement. If Reid admits this possibility, he is not licensed to adopt premise six and the inference to seven is blocked.

How might Reid respond to this objection? He needs to deny that there can be linguistic signs whose meanings are fixed by the wills of the users of said signs but are not also fixed by agreement. Reid does not explicitly argue this, but we can understand what his reasons for it could be by drawing on results from part two. Reid could deny that it is possible for people in the relevant sort of case - i.e., a case in which artificial linguistic signs are being invented for the very first time - to exert their wills so as to use signs in accord with general rules without agreeing to do so. To understand why, recall that, on Reid's account, if one uses a word repeatedly in accord with a rule, and, moreover, if one is the efficient cause of doing so, one must be motivated by a rational principle of action. Why must it be a rational principle of action? Recall Reid identifies three types of principles of action - i.e., three sorts of motives for the things we do. There are mechanical principles, animal principles, and rational principles. Reid holds that people can be moved to repeatedly act in accord with a general rule by a mechanical principle of action - children, e.g., might first use artificial signs in accord with general rules in consequence of having acquired a habit of doing so - but also holds that if people act from mere mechanical principles, they are not the genuine efficient causes of their actions. Reid holds, moreover, that animal principles motivate voluntary actions, but that they cannot motivate rational or regular patterns of thought or behaviour. People must, then, on Reid's own account, be motivated to exert their wills so as to repeatedly follow general rules by some rational principle of action. And now note: if a person repeatedly uses a linguistic sign in accord with a general rule but is not the efficient cause of their

doing so, then that sign is not an artificial sign in either of the two senses noted in the last paragraph. On Reid's account, then, people can fix meanings of artificial signs by exercising their wills, but only if they are moved by a rational principle of action - which, in turn, requires that they have some obligation or reason to use the signs in the ways that they do. This obligation or reason cannot be grounded in the natural law, as there is no natural obligation or reason for us to repeatedly use the sound 'dog' to refer to our furry friends, and so this obligation or reason must instead be one that people somehow take upon themselves. The act promising, on Reid's account, just is the act by which people take on such obligations; and that, I suggest, might be why Reid holds that all artificial linguistic signs - i.e., those signs whose meanings are fixed by the wills of those who use them - are signs whose meanings are fixed by a social act of agreement. His argument, then, on this reading, presupposes not only his account of the social operations, but also of active power, moral liberty, and efficient causation.

There is an objection to the response outlined in the last paragraph. Recall Reid recognizes two rational principle of action. On Reid's account, one can be rationally moved to do something because one has some obligation to do it, or one can be rationally moved to do something just because it is in one's best interest to do it. The fact that Reid recognizes both rational principles grounds the objection. The objection can be put as a question to Reid: why, Reid, must the motive involved in the first use of artificial linguistic signs be grounded in an obligation created by the act of agreeing, rather than in the mere fact that it was in each person's rational self-interest to use signs in the way that other people use them? The objection is *prima facie* compelling; it appears obvious that it is often in one's interest to use words in ways that other people use them, just because, by doing so, one is able to make oneself understood and thereby able to achieve any number of one's further aims. On what grounds, then, might Reid rule out the possibility it was the regard to one's individual good upon the whole that provided humans' motives to first use artificial linguistic signs in the same ways as each other?

I do not think that Reid would deny that we normally have reasons grounded in self-interest to use artificial linguistic signs in the ways that others do, but that he might instead deny that that reason could have been operative at the time artificial signs were first invented. He might argue that it is only if there is an established public practice of

using linguistic signs in accord with general rules, that one has reasons grounded in self interest to use words in accord with said rules, because it is only then that one can use said signs to make oneself understood and thereby achieve one's further aims. If artificial signs have not been invented - and, thus, if people do not use such signs in accord with common public rules - there can be no reason grounded in rational self interest to use a sign in accord with one rule rather than any other. But people could, Reid might claim, nevertheless agree to use the word in accord with some rule, and thereby take on obligations to use the word in that way. Once the agreement is made and the people subsequently go on using the word in that way, they acquire additional reasons grounded in their rational self-interest to use the word in that way; but the first invention of the artificial signs, he might argue, must instead have involved an act of agreement.

What do we make of that response? I am not certain that Reid would make that sort of response, nor I am certain that, if he did, he could defend it against further criticisms. It is only a suggestion for what he might say. The issue will perhaps be moot, though, as I go on to present objections to Reid's argument later in this section that would appear to undermine the possibility of Reid successfully pursuing this response. Before doing so, however, I first discuss Reid's second argument for the claim that we must possess a natural language with which we can express social operations. Reid presents that argument in the following passage from the mentioned chapter of *EAP* in which he critiques Hume's claims about promising:

“The power which man has of holding social intercourse with his kind, by asking and refusing, threatening and supplicating, commanding and obeying, testifying and promising, must either be a distinct faculty given by our Maker, and a part of our constitution, like the powers of seeing, and hearing, or it must be a human invention. If men have invented this art of social intercourse, it must follow, that every individual of the species must have invented it for himself. It cannot be taught; for though, when once carried to a certain pitch, it may be improved by teaching; yet it is impossible it can begin in that way, because all teaching supposes a social intercourse between the teacher and the learner. This intercourse must, from the very first, be carried on by sensible signs; for the thoughts of other men can be discovered in no other way. I think it likewise evident, that this

intercourse, in its beginnings at least, must be carried on by natural signs, whose meaning is understood by both parties, previous to all compact or agreement. For there can be no compact without signs, nor without social intercourse.

I apprehend therefore, 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 the gift of 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, and, without which, the artificial languages of articulate sounds, and of writing, could never have been invented by human art” (*EAP* 331)

Before reconstructing the argument, I have several preliminary remarks. First, note Reid mentions the social operations in the quoted passage. Unlike the first argument in *IHM*, then, there can be no doubt, even *prima facie*, that the conclusion of the second argument is that we have a natural language with which we can perform social operations. Second, recall that, when stating the first argument in *IHM*, Reid writes he means to argue that “if mankind had not a natural language, they could never have invented an artificial one *by their reason and ingenuity* [emphasis added]” (*IHM* 51). It would appear, then, that Reid’s claim in *IHM* is that people could not have invented artificial language without a natural language, even if they possessed their mature abilities to judge and reason. Reid includes that qualification because, I suggest, he means to emphasize that the invention of artificial linguistic signs requires that people have a natural language with which they can take on obligations. The point to note here, however, is that Reid does not include any such qualification about what is possible even with one’s reasoning abilities when he states the second argument in *EAP*. This, I suggest, is because several of the premises of the second argument presupposes some of his views about what is impossible without - and thus prior to - having learnt artificial language.

Let’s get clear on the details of the second argument. My suggested reconstruction of that argument goes as follows:

1. Either the practice of performing social operations is at least partly the exercise of a natural faculty, or it is wholly invented by human beings.

2. Assume: the practice of performing social operations is wholly invented by human beings.
3. If (2), then each person either first engages in that practice by inventing it by themselves, or first engages in that practice by being taught to do so by another person.
4. But each person cannot first engage that practice by inventing it by themselves.
5. If a person is taught to engage in that practice by another person, that person and their teacher must already be able to engage in that practice with each other.
6. Thus, each person cannot first acquire the ability to engage in that practice by being taught to do so by another person.
7. Thus, (2) is false: the practice of performing social operations is not wholly invented by human beings.
8. Thus, the practice of performing social operations is at least partly the exercise of a natural faculty.
9. The thoughts of other people can be known only by the use of linguistic signs that express them.
10. Thus, the practice of performing social operations only can be carried on by the use of linguistic signs that express them.
11. Thus, the practice of performing social operations between the teacher and student, in its beginning, must be carried on by the use of linguistic signs that express them.

At this point in the argument, it appears that Reid uses reasoning drawn from the first argument to support the claim - premise (12), listed below - that the signs used, in the beginning, were natural linguistic signs. It is unclear, however, if Reid needs to employ the first argument there to support that claim, or whether he can argue for it via (a), (b) and (c) listed here:

- a. When the practice of performing social operations between teacher and student first begins, no artificial linguistic signs are as yet understood by both parties.
- b. Thus, when the practice of performing social operations between teacher and student first begins, the signs used cannot be artificial linguistic signs.

- c. All linguistic signs are natural or artificial.

However, regardless of how one reconstructs the details of the reasoning drawn from the first argument in the passage in *EAP*, Reid can complete the argument needed to establish his main conclusion roughly as follows:

12. Thus, when practice of performing social operations first begins, the signs used must be natural linguistic signs.
13. Thus, when the practice of performing social operations between teacher and student first begins, teacher and student must share a natural language with which they can express the social operations.
14. Thus, people have a natural language with which they can express the social operations.

The details of this reconstruction of the second argument are highly debatable, as the structure of the reasoning in the text is not exactly clear. This reconstruction I offer here is only as a suggestion for how the details of that argument might be best understood. Nevertheless, I insist that the key premises included in this reconstruction are either in the text or needed to render that argument valid. To make progress towards further clarifying the various details of this argument, it might help if I once again discuss Reid's possible - if not also likely - reasons for adopting its key premises, as those reasons are not made explicit in the text. In what follows, I offer my suggestions for what Reid's reasons for said premises could be, suggestions that are informed by my results in earlier chapters and sections of the dissertation.

Consider premise four: a person cannot first engage in the practice of performing social operations by inventing it for themselves. As noted in section (3.1), Reid holds that social operations cannot be performed unless made known to others, so it is perhaps trivially true, on his account, that one cannot invent a practice of social intercourse - in the sense of actually beginning to use signs that signify social operations to communicate with other people - by oneself. Note, however, that it appears - at last *prima facie* - that a person could nevertheless exercise their will so as to use a sign to signify a social operation, even if that person could not use that sign to express that social operation to another person and thereby perform it. A person might, the suggestion goes, invent such a

sign for some odd sort of private use, and might do so, moreover, in virtue of the fact that said private use serves their rational self interest. On Reid's commitments, however, a person in the relevant sort of case could not exercise their will so as to use such a sign privately. Reid has at least two reasons for this. To understand the first reason, recall that, on Reid's account, the principle of utile - i.e., one's regard for one's good upon the whole - is a rational principle just as much as one's regard for one's duty. Reid writes, e.g., of the principle of utile that

“It cannot be denied that man, when he comes to years of understanding, is led by his rational nature, to form the conception of what is good for him upon the whole.

How early in life this general notion of good enters into the mind, I cannot pretend to determine. It is one of the most general and abstract notions we form”
(EAP 154)

On Reid's account, a person who does not yet understand an artificial language - and thus is not yet capable of conceiving universals - cannot be moved by rational self interest to use non-natural signs in accord with general rules. A person who does not yet understand artificial language, afterall, cannot conceive their good upon the whole or general rules, much less exert their will so as to act in accord with such a rule for the sake of their good upon the whole. Mature rational persons such as ourselves, of course, if we have some reason to do so, might well exert our will so as to use signs in accord with general rules for some merely private purpose, but newborn infants or children who have not as yet come to understand artificial language cannot do so. Reid's second argument concerns the sort of case in which a child or person learns to use and understand artificial signs that signify the social operations *for the first time*. This, I suggest, is one reason Reid has for his claim that a person, in the relevant sort of case, could not invent the practice of social intercourse all by themselves.

What is the second reason? Recall that, on Reid's account, one first conceives of a social operation by understanding another person's use of a natural linguistic sign of that operation, and, consequently, that if one had never conceived such a social operation by understanding another person's use of such a sign, one would be unable to conceive an

operation of that sort, and thus unable to exert one's will so as to use a sign to signify it. The child in the relevant sort of case, then, on Reid's account, could not conceive a social operation unless they had previously perceived and also understood a linguistic sign of it. On Reid's account, then, it follows that a child in the relevant sort of case could not exert their will so as to use linguistic signs to signify social operations, even if only privately to themselves, unless they had already engaged in social intercourse of the relevant sort with another person. This is a second reason Reid has, given his commitments, for premise four. It is, of course, highly debatable whether Reid in fact had either of these two reasons in mind when composing his argument; but it is possible he did, and also plausible, given that the reasons are grounded in commitments that Reid takes on elsewhere in his texts or at least that follow from such commitments.

Consider premise five: if a person is taught to engage in that practice by another person, that person and their teacher must already be able to engage in that practice with each other. Why might Reid accept this premise? I have a suggestion. Here, we need to discuss Reid's account of the processes through which children first learn the meanings of artificial linguistic signs. Reid discusses this topic in *EIP*, as well as in the manuscripts discussed in part two. In both of those texts, Reid claims that the culture of society plays a key role in that process. Consider two passages from *EIP*:

“The labour of forming abstract notions, is the labour of learning to speak, and to understand what is spoken. As the words of every language, excepting a few proper names, are general words, the minds of children are furnished with general conceptions, in proportion as they learn the meanings of general words... The meaning of some of these is learned by a definition, which at once conveys a distinct and accurate general conception. The meaning of other general words we collect, by a kind of induction, from the way in which we see them used on various occasions by those who understand the language” (*EIP* 398)

“[The meaning of general words not learned by definition are learned] by a kind of induction, by observing to what individuals they are applied by those who understand the language” (*EIP* 363)

Reid says we learn artificial signs - including general words - either by a definition or by “a kind of induction”. The former involves being told by another person, with artificial signs that convey a distinct general conception that the artificial sign in question is used to signify a general conception or else some type of individual. I might say to you, e.g., “the word ‘square’ is used to signify two dimensional closed euclidean figures with four equal sides and four equal angles” and thereby explain to you the meaning of ‘square’. That is not, however, how children first learn the meanings of words; such children, after all, do not yet understand artificial signs, and, consequently, cannot have meanings explained to them just like that. Reid claims that children first learn general words by “a kind of induction”. This induction cannot involve, on the part of the child, any inductive *reasoning* - i.e., any act of inferring the probable truth of one proposition from another - as reasoning is not yet possible for a child who has not learned artificial language. On Reid’s account, this induction must instead involve the child acquiring a habit of associating general words with universals. How is this habit acquired? Reid is light on the details here, but the view expressed in the quoted passages appears to be that children associate artificial signs with universals by observing the use that the people in their community make of said signs. The picture appears to be one on which people repeatedly use tokens of some type of sign in reference to individuals that have a common feature, the child observes that repeated use of the signs - and it is able to do so, presumably, at least in part, in virtue of their understanding natural linguistic signs that express social and solitary operations - and thereby observes the repeated conjunction of token signs of some type and features of some type. After observing enough repetitions, the child acquires a habit in virtue of which a conception of a token sign of that type prompts it to conceive of that common feature, but as abstracted away from the individuals in which it is instantiated - i.e., the sign signifies a universal to the child.

As brief and sketchy as it might be, Reid’s account of the process through which children first learn artificial language nevertheless might help us understand why Reid might think it is possible for a teacher to teach a child to understand artificial signs that express or signify the social operations, only if the teacher can already engage in social intercourse with the child. The point is that the teacher must have some means by which they can present token social operations to the child, if the child is to experience the

repeated conjunction of tokens of some type of sign with tokens of some type of social operation. How, on Reid's account, can a teacher present such token social operations to a child? This can only be done, on Reid's account, by the teacher performing the social operations in the child's presence in ways that the child is able to understand - i.e., the teacher must engage in social intercourse, at least in some rudimentary way, with the child. The natural language faculty, on Reid's account, is the source of our first conceptions of social operations, and, consequently, grounds our ability to be trained to associate artificial signs with such operations.

Consider premise nine: Reid claims that the thoughts of other people can be made known only by the use of signs that express them. There is an objection to this premise. There are, presumably, ways of knowing other people's thoughts, other than by understanding signs that express them. Reid himself almost acknowledges this himself in a manuscript in which he discusses political contracts. There, Reid writes:

“But it is to be observed that the Consent which is essential in all Contracts may be expressed many different ways; either by formal writing Signed sealed and delivered; or by the verbal declaration of the several parties; or by the actions of the parties; or even sometimes by their Silence, or by their doing nothing, when it may reasonably be presumed that they would not be silent or inactive if they did not consent... When I hear a Sermon my Silence signifies nothing, it neither implies my assent to what the preacher affirms nor my consent to what he requires me to do. But on the other hand if I am called to a meeting of Electors of a Member of Parliament, where a Candidate is proposed by one and agreed to by others. Should it be at last moved that if any man has any Objection to the candidate mentioned he should speak, & that silence would be held for a Consent, here every honest man would conceive himself no less bound by his Silence than by his Consent expressed by words... Thus I conceive it is evident that the consent of Parties which is essential to every real Contract may be expressed in a great variety of ways. By writing by words, by signs artificial or natural, by Silence or even by doing nothing; it is sufficient if the meaning of the sign whatever it be is understood by the parties” (*OPE* 136)

Reid writes that the act of consent involved in agreements or contracts can be made known in a variety of ways. Our question concerns whether Reid thinks that all such ways must involve the use of a sign that expresses or signifies the act of consent. What is the alternative to the use of a sign? The operation might be implied or implicated. To clarify, recall that Reidian signification is immediate: it does not involve *reasoning* to a conclusion about what is signified by the sign. The suggestion is that a person might observe the behaviour of another person and then reason to a conclusion about what thoughts the other person meant to make known, even in cases in which those thoughts are not strictly speaking expressed or signified by signs. Does Reid think it is possible to make thoughts known to others in this other way? It might be claimed that Reid admits as much in the quoted passage. Reid writes, e.g., that a person's silence or inactivity can make their act of consent or agreement known to others "when it may reasonably be presumed that they would not be silent or inactive if they did not consent" (*Ibid.*) If the mental move from the thought of silence or inactivity to the thought of consent involves *reasoning* - i.e., inferring the truth of one proposition from that or another - then the case is not one that involves the use of signs, but rather one in which the operation is implied or implicated in the noted sense. If so, Reid's claim in this passage would conflict with his claim that social operations can be made known to others only by way of the use of linguistic signs that express them. However, Reid speaks of expression by means of signs throughout the quoted passage. His example, in fact, appears intended as a case in which there is an established convention that silence in a particular type of context counts as an expression of consent. Close reading of the passage, then, leads to the conclusion that Reid thinks silence or inactivity in the mentioned sort of case is an artificial linguistic sign that expresses consent. I suggest, then, that Reid - be it rightly or wrongly - holds that this sort of case involves the use of a sign.

Suppose, then, Reid holds that thoughts of others are always made known by the use of linguistic signs that express them, and denies that thoughts are ever implied or implicated in the relevant sense. If he holds this, he is likely wrong about it. But our task is not to decide whether Reid is right, but to decide whether, if he is wrong, this creates a problem for his second argument. I do not think that it does. To understand why, note that the second argument concerns a case in which a person or child who does not as yet

understand any artificial signs first learns to understand them. In such a case as that, the child cannot reason to any conclusions at all, much less to any conclusions about what other people either did or did not intend to make known by remaining silent or acting in some other way, because Reid holds the ability to understand artificial language is part of what makes reasoning possible. The person in such a case could move from a thought of one thing to a thought of another, of course, because of an instinct or acquired habit. But neither of those possibilities involves reasoning, but rather signification by signs. Even if, then, Reid would - and even if he ought to - acknowledge that thoughts can be made known to others by being implied or implicated in the noted sense, his second argument can still accomplish what he means for it to accomplish.

3.4 Reid's Other Commentators

In this section, I discuss some of the existing literature on Reid's first argument. In this literature, Reid's commentators present objections to the argument and consider possible responses to said objections on Reid's behalf. In this section, I survey the objections presented in the literature and discuss whether Reid could respond in the ways proposed by his other commentators. In the next section, I present novel objections to Reid's first argument, objections which are, at least in part, inspired by the underlying point of the objections in the literature, and are, additionally, informed by my key results in previous chapters and sections of this dissertation. After presenting my objections, I then close chapter three by considering suggestions for how we might be able to read Reid differently so as to enable him to sidestep my objections. I conclude, there, that none of those suggestions is wholly successful.

The first publication to discuss the argument in detail is Turri (2015). Turri's objection takes the form of a fanciful counter-example. To appreciate the force of this counter-example, note Turri interprets Reid's argument as being for the claim that people could not coordinate their use of artificial linguistic signs - where artificial linguistic signs are understood simply as non-natural signs that are used to communicate - unless they shared a natural language with which they could express operations of the mind in general. This is to say that Turri does not interpret the argument as being for the claim that people cannot establish norms that govern their use of artificial signs, unless they

share a natural language with which they can express the social operation of agreement. In a sense, then, Turri's objection simply misses the mark, as it is not an objection to the argument that Reid gives. However, for reasons that will become clear, Turri's example is well-worth considering. His example goes like this: suppose that a person sees a wolf in a forest, comes out of the forest, and, then, upon seeing another person about to enter the forest, makes the sound of a wolf - 'owooooooooo' - with the intention of letting that other person know that a wolf is lurking nearby. Turri claims it is reasonable to conclude that the second person would, or at least could, understand or figure out that the first person intends to let her know that a wolf is lurking nearby, even if the two people do not share - or, at least, do not make use of - natural linguistic signs. He reasons that since 'owooooooooo' is clearly a linguistic sign but not a natural linguistic sign, and since Reid holds that linguistic signs are natural or artificial, it is clear the situation described is one in which an artificial linguistic sign has been used - and thus invented - without recourse to the use of any natural linguistic signs.

Rysiew (2017) responds to Turri on Reid's behalf. His main point is just this: in light of the fact that we are supposing the people do not share any natural language, it is not clear the second person would come to recognize that the first person means to let her know that a wolf is lurking nearby. To understand the force of this reply, just consider again the sort of case we are dealing with. We are supposing that the people do not share any natural language: we are supposing, then, that nothing about the first person's appearance or behaviour immediately prompts the other to think she has a mental state of any sort - including, e.g., an intention to communicate. This case, I suggest, is difficult for us to imagine, as insofar as we imagine a case involving two *people*, we are inclined to imagine it as involving things that act in ways people typically act - i.e., in ways naturally expressive to us of their thoughts. When one first imagines Turri's example, e.g., one likely imagines that the person runs out of the forest, moves in some frightened way, looks at the other person, perhaps points in the direction of the forest, and then cries "owooooooooo". If I were in that situation, and if the person's noted behaviours expressed to me the sorts of mental states that they normally express, then, yes, I would likely immediately perceive - or at least reason to the conclusion - that she meant to say something to me about a wolf. Typically, we interpret eye contact, vocal sounds, and

even bodily movements, as signs of people's mental states, and, often, as signs of an intention to communicate with us. If, however, we really are to imagine a case in which the people involved do not share any natural language at all, we must imagine a case that involves something that is not very much like a person at all. At least, if we are to imagine a case that involves people, we must imagine that that person who comes out of the forest stands perfectly still, does not look in the direction of the other person at all, does not move in ways that are expressive of their emotions, intentions, or thoughts, and, then, makes a wolf sound. We must also imagine that the second person is not inclined to interpret a vocal sound as a sign of any mental state, much less of an intention to communicate. I suggest Rysiew is quite correct, here, to suggest that it is not clear that the second person would or even could figure out that the first person intends to communicate something. Of course, the cry "owooooooooo" might signify something to the second person. If, e.g., the second person has past experience of wolves and noises they make, "owooooooooo" might well prompt her to think about wolves or about the sounds they make. But that alone would not make 'owooooooooo' a Reidian linguistic sign - i.e., a sign that is used to communicate thoughts. It is, after all, one thing for a sign to signify a wolf, but another for a sign to express a thought about a wolf.

Another similar counterexample is discussed in Powell (2017). Powell, like Turri, interprets the argument as being for the claim that we could not coordinate our use of non-natural linguistic signs unless we share a natural language, rather than - following me - as an argument for the claim that we could not establish norms that govern our use of artificial linguistic signs unless we shared a natural language with which we could make agreements with each other. He presents his counter-example in the following passage:

"Suppose that there is an intelligent alien race, whose facial expressions and tones of voice are radically different from those of humankind, and suppose, further, that we are not so constituted as to respond to facial expressions, gestures or tones of voice as signs of their mental lives. We can tell that they are an intelligent species because they build spaceships and engage in complex behavior. Could we... learn their language or develop a common language for communicating with them? It seems plausible to me that we would be able to" (Powell 2017)

Powell writes that Reid could respond to this objection in two ways: either Reid could just bite the bullet and claim we could not or would not develop a language with which we could communicate with these aliens; or Reid could claim that we either do or must share some natural language in common with any intelligent being.

Let's briefly consider Powell's suggested responses. First, what about the second option? Note that this response cannot be plausibly attributed to Reid. Reid holds that it is a mere contingent fact about the human cognitive constitution that natural linguistic signs signify the operations that they do. On Reid's account, then, it is possible other intelligent beings - such as, e.g., Powell's aliens - are constituted such that they share natural linguistic signs completely different than our own. Reid cannot, then, respond to the example by claiming that we must share some natural language in common with any intelligent being.

What about the first option? Powell thinks it reasonable to conclude that we could figure out that the aliens are intelligent beings that built the spaceships and engage in complex behaviours, and, moreover, that we could figure out a way to communicate with the aliens. It is a plausible suggestion. I do not think Reid could or would simply deny it. If we imagine people relevantly like ourselves in that scenario - i.e., if we imagine *rational* creatures - then it is likely, I agree, that those people would be able to figure out that the aliens are intelligent creatures and perhaps even figure out ways to communicate with them, at least rudimentary ways. Note, moreover, that this is a significant concession to make on Reid's behalf: it is to concede that the response Rysiew suggests in response to Turri - i.e., to deny it is reasonable to conclude that the people would, in the sort of case being described, be able to reason to the relevant conclusion - is not going to work as a response to Powell's counter-example.

There is another response available to Reid, which might also work as a response to Turri's example. Recall the issue that in our discussion so far has revolved around whether the person in the described scenario would be able to *reason* to the relevant conclusion. Reid has a way to block this whole line of discussion. Recall my earlier discussion of Reid's second argument. Recall, specifically, I noted Reid could respond to an objection to that other argument by noting that, in the relevant sort of case - namely, one in which at least one person involved does not as yet understand artificial language -

the relevant person is not as yet capable of reasoning, and, consequently, is not capable of reasoning to any conclusions at all about what operation is implied by another person's behaviour. An analogous response to Turri's and Powell's objections, then, could go like this: Turri's and Powell's objections just miss the mark, as they are thinking of cases in which the person involved already understands an artificial language - only not the same artificial language as the other person or the aliens - and, consequently, already has the ability to judge and to reason about things; but the relevant sort of case, here, is one in which the person does not as yet understand any artificial language at all. This is the relevant sort of case simply because Reid's argument concerns the question of what made possible the *very first* invention of artificial language, and consequently, on Reid's account of what artificial language makes possible, concerns a case in which the people involved are not yet capable of judgment or reasoning. If we suppose that the people in Turri and Powell's cases do not have natural language or their reasoning abilities, it is clear, I suggest, they could not grasp that 'owooooooooo' is being used to let them know that a wolf is nearby or figure out how to communicate with the aliens.

3.5 Problems with Reid's Arguments

Can Reid successfully respond to Turri and Powell's examples in the way just outlined at the end of the last section? Perhaps. That response was premised on Reid's claim that the conception of universals, judgment and reasoning - and by extension, epistemic rationality and moral liberty - are impossible for humans prior to understanding artificial language. In this section, I go on to outline two further objections to Reid's argument. I argue first that Reid's commitments concerning what artificial language makes possible give rise to serious problems for his argument. I argue, second, that Reid's commitments concerning the natural linguistic signs that express social operations give rise to a second serious problem for it. I then conclude by considering three ways in which Reid might be able to deal with these objections. I conclude that none are wholly satisfactory.

The first problem is that a key presupposition of Reid's first argument - i.e., the claim that the first invention of artificial linguistic signs involved people performing the social operation of agreement - is *prima facie* incompatible with his other commitments. To recognize the first problem, recall Reid holds that one can make a promise - and, more

relevantly, one can make a promise to use a linguistic sign in accord with a general rule - only if one possesses moral liberty and can conceive general rules. The incompatibility, then, is just this: on Reid's account, the act involved in the first invention of artificial language - i.e., the social operation of agreeing - cannot be performed unless those involved already possess moral liberty, which, in turn, is possible only if they can already understand artificial language. It would appear, then, Reid is actually committed to saying that the invention of artificial language is impossible, for humans, before they learnt - and thus before they invented - artificial language; it appears, then, that Reid's first argument is incompatible with his other philosophical commitments.

The second problem, again, is that a presupposition of Reid's argument is *prima facie* incompatible with his other commitments. Recall I argued in section (3.2) that, on pain of absurdity, Reid is committed to the view that one conceives the social operations for the first time - and thereby acquires the ability to conceive them and thus perform them oneself later on - by understanding natural linguistic signs of them. It appears to follow that, on Reid's account, no person could be the first in history to perform a social operation, just because each person must have observed other people perform social operations before they could perform social operations themselves. It appears, then, that Reid is committed to the claim that the act involved in the first invention of artificial linguistic signs could not have been performed for the very first time in history. It is unclear, then, if Reid can give a coherent account of how the practice of performing social operations ever got started, and, consequently, it is unclear if the account of the first invention of artificial language presupposed by his argument is coherent. It might be suggested, of course, Reid could respond to this problem by claiming that the practice of performing promises with natural linguistic signs extends indefinitely far back in time, and, consequently, that there never was a person who was the first to perform promises. But Reid cannot make that response, unless he can claim that people possessed moral liberty indefinitely far back in time, which would mean that, on Reid's account, people possessed moral liberty before they ever invented an artificial language. But Reid cannot make that claim, as it is apparently incompatible with his commitments concerning what it is that artificial language makes possible. It might also be suggested that Reid could respond by claiming that artificial language was never invented for a very first time, and

that the practice of using artificial language extends indefinitely far back. But that, of course, would undermine the whole point of Reid's first argument: if we never invented artificial language for a first time, then it makes no sense to argue that we could not have invented it for the first time unless we had an appropriate natural language, and, thus, that we have such a language. It appears, then, that there is no straightforward way for Reid to avoid this second problem either.

In what follows, I consider three suggestions for how we might read Reid, so as to absolve him of responsibility for these apparent problems. I argue, however, that none of these suggestions is wholly successful.

The first two suggestions are of the same sort: the suggestion in each case is that Reid's views and commitments may have evolved throughout his career, and that the views Reid held at any one time were compatible with each other, and that it is only because I have attempted to attribute to Reid views that he held at different moments in his career, that he appears to have held incompatible views at the very same time. Either suggestion is plausible, only if we are able to flesh out the details of a developmental story on which Reid first took on, and subsequently gave up, the relevant views and commitments. Such a story is plausible, moreover, only if it is at the very least consistent with - if not also well supported by - the textual evidence. In what immediately follows, I flush out each of the suggestions in detail, consider the relevant texts, and then argue that neither is supported by the textual evidence.

What is the first developmental story? Here, the claim is that Reid developed the first argument early on in his career, later took on the commitments that are incompatible with it, and, consequently, abandoned the first argument at some point later in his career. On this developmental story, moreover, Reid might have developed the second argument as a replacement for the first argument, as the second argument supports Reid's claim that we have natural language with which we can make promises, but appears consistent with Reid's commitments about what artificial language makes possible, and, indeed, appears premised on some of those commitments. The second argument, after all, merely makes the claim that a person or child could not be taught to understand an already invented artificial language with which one can perform social operations, and so it avoids any problems that arise for Reid's account of the first invention of artificial

language and avoids any problems that might be arise his account of how the practice of performing the social operations got started.

Is this story supported by the texts? On first glance, it appears not. The key point to note, here, is that Reid presents the first argument not only in *IHM*, but also in *EAP*, which was the last work Reid published in his lifetime, and which was written after he developed his accounts of moral liberty and social operations as well as after he took on his commitments about what artificial language makes possible.

This first glance, however, might be deceiving. I have not yet argued for the claim that the first argument is in *EAP*, but instead have merely claimed that that is. One might be tempted to argue, here, that the first argument is not presented in *EAP*, and, consequently, that the considered developmental story is plausible after all. Is the first argument, as I have interpreted it, expressed in *EAP*? Admittedly, it is rather difficult to reconstruct the details of the argument in *EAP*. But there is sufficient reason to conclude that *EAP* contains relevant claims. Recall that Reid appears to restate the reasoning from the first argument in *EAP* as follows:

“...I think it is likewise evident, that this intercourse, in its beginning at least, must be carried on by natural signs, whose meaning is understood by both parties, previous to all compact and agreement. For there can be no compact without signs, nor without social intercourse.

I apprehend, therefore, that the social intercourse of mankind, consisting of those social operations I have mentioned, is the exercise of a faculty appropriated to that purpose, which is a gift of 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, and, without which, the artificial languages of articulate sounds, and of writing, could never have been invented by human art” (*EAP* 331)

Is the claim here that we must be able to perform the social operation of agreeing, with natural linguistic signs, before we invented artificial linguistic signs, if artificial language was to be first invented? One might argue reasonably that the reasoning Reid presents in these passages ought not to be reconstructed in the exact way that I reconstructed the

analogous reasoning that he presented in *IHM*. The structure of the reasoning in the *EAP* is muddled, so it is difficult to argue decisively that the reasoning is exactly the same. But just recall what Reid needs to be committed to in order for my criticisms to get a firm foothold: Reid needs only to be committed to the claim that we could use natural linguistic signs to perform the act of agreeing - where agreeing is understood in the precise sense at issue in his dispute with Hume, which is to say a social operation by which we voluntarily take on obligations to each other - before we first invented any artificial language. It is difficult, then, to read the *EAP* passage and not conclude that Reid's first argument, whatever its exact structure, commits him to that claim. It appears, then, we cannot absolve Reid of the noted problems by claiming that he did not express in *EAP* the claims that, I argue, are presupposed in his first argument and incompatible with his other mature commitments.

However, the plausibility of our developmental story cannot be dismissed merely by way of noting that the relevant views are expressed in *EAP*. To understand why, note Reid includes the following note in *EAP*:

“The substance of the following four chapters was wrote long ago, and read in a literary society, with a view to justify some points of morals from metaphysical objections urged against them in the writings of DAVID HUME, Esq. If they answer that end, and, at the same time, serve to illustrate the account I have given of our moral powers, it is hoped that the reader will not think them improperly placed here; and that he will forgive some repetitions, and perhaps anachronisms, occasioned by their being wrote at different times, and on different occasions”
(*EAP* 289)

The chapter of *EAP* in which Reid critiques Hume on promising is one of the four chapters Reid mentions in this footnote. The content of that chapter, then, was likely developed earlier in Reid's career, before the text of *EAP* was submitted for publication in the late 1780s, and, perhaps, before Reid took on the commitments that are incompatible with his first argument. It is perhaps possible, then, Reid did not take time to revise the text of *EAP* before publishing *EAP*, and that this might explain why the problematic claims about the first invention of artificial language are included in it.

Perhaps Reid never got around to revising the details of his critique of Hume in that chapter, and, if he had, he would have abandoned the first argument and just replaced it wholesale with the second. To evaluate the plausibility of this story, we need to survey the relevant texts in chronological order and ask whether our story is supported by that textual evidence. I do that in what follows.

Reid's earliest statement of the first argument is in *IHM*, which was published in 1764. I discussed this statement of the argument in section (3.3). That argument presupposes the relevant aspects of Reid's account of the social operations - in particular, it presupposes his claim that social operations cannot exist unless they are expressed by sensible linguistic signs and his claim that the first invention of artificial linguistic signs involved the social operation of agreement. The next texts are the manuscripts I discussed in part two - i.e., the manuscripts in which Reid claims that the ability to understand artificial language makes possible conceptions of universals and propositions, judgments, and reasoning. These manuscripts are dated, so we know they were composed in the late 1760s. The next texts are the manuscripts *MS 2/II/14* and *MS 7/VII/2-6*. In these manuscripts, Reid critiques Hume's account of promises and presents his account of the social operations. *MS 2/II/14* contains statements of the first and second arguments, and, moreover, contains many sentences found in the chapter of *EAP* in which Reid critiques Hume on promising - about a third of the sentences of that chapter, in fact, are taken directly from that manuscript. It is possible, then, that *MS 2/II/14* served as a draft of that chapter. These two manuscripts are not dated. We know, however, that in 1765 - i.e., immediately after publishing *IHM*, but before writing the manuscripts I discussed in chapter two - Reid presented a talk to the Aberdeen Philosophical Society titled 'Wherein does the nature of a promise consist, & whence does its obligation arise'. We also know that in 1779 - i.e., a full decade after writing the manuscripts I discussed in chapter two, and several years before publishing *EIP* and *EAP* respectively - Reid gave a talk to the Glasgow Literary Society titled 'Wherein consists the nature of a contract and does it involve contradictions as Mr. Hume asserts?'. We know, then, that Reid first engaged the issues involved in his dispute with Hume on promising as early as 1765, before we know for certain that he took on his commitment to the claim that artificial language makes conceptions of universals possible, and that he explicitly engaged Hume on the topic in

detail as early as 1779, after having taken on the noted commitments. It is possible, of course, that these manuscripts were composed in 1765 or 1779. It is not entirely clear, however, when exactly Reid composed those manuscripts. The next texts are *EIP* and *EAP*, published in 1785 and 1788 respectively. In *EIP*, Reid presents his account of social operations and claims that it is by learning artificial language that we first form general conceptions. In *EAP*, Reid presents his accounts of rational principles of action and moral liberty; claims that without the culture of society, people would not grow into rational and moral creatures; presents his account of social operations; critiques Hume on promises in *EAP* 5.6; and, in doing so, presents the arguments we have been considering.

Is this textual evidence compatible with the claim Reid took on the commitments that are incompatible with the first argument only after he developed that first argument, and on which he subsequently rejected that argument, possibly replaced it wholesale with the second, and only presented the first argument in the text of *EAP* - to the extent that he did - because he did not revise the relevant material before sending *EAP* out for publication? If so, then we can explain away the prima facie incompatibilities noted between the argument and Reid's other commitments. The textual evidence, however, does support that story. We know that Reid revisited the issues involved in his dispute with Hume on promising in detail in 1779, after he wrote the manuscripts that I discussed in part two in which he claims artificial language makes conceptions of universals possible and after he had developed the relevant aspects of his account of social operations. Reid, then, reconsidered the first argument in detail after he had taken on the various commitments that are, I have argued, incompatible with it. It seems quite unlikely, therefore, that Reid simply did not get around to reworking the material in *EAP* 5.6 after he had taken on the relevant commitments.

There is an additional reason to conclude that Reid continued to make the first argument at the end of his career. Dugald Stewart was a student of Reid's at the University of Glasgow and became Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh in the late 18th century. Reid's essays are dedicated to Stewart and to Reid's nephew Dr. James Gregory. Reid writes in the dedication to *EIP* that

“...if these Essays have any merit, you [i.e., Stewart and Gregory] have a considerable share in it, having not only encouraged me to hope that they may be

useful, but favoured me with your observations on every part of them, both before they were sent to the Press and while they were under it” (*EIP* 3)

Stewart was a student of Reid’s at Glasgow, himself an expert on the subjects in Reid’s *Essays*, and a person who discussed the content of said essays with Reid in considerable detail. Stewart, then, we can assume, is, at least, a respectable source concerning Reid’s mature views. This point is relevant, here, because Stewart reports in 1792 that Reid endorses the first argument (Stewart 2007, 133-134). It is unlikely, I suggest, that Stewart would report that Reid endorses that argument, if Reid had given up or abandoned that argument decades earlier.

The first developmental story, then, is not plausible. Perhaps there is a different developmental story that might do the trick. On our second story, Reid gave up the claim that the ability to understand artificial language makes conception of universals possible before he published *EIP* and *EAP* in the 1780s. Here, Reid developed the first argument no later than in 1764, and took on the commitment that artificial language makes conceptions of universals, judgment, and reasoning possible sometime in the late 1760s, but then perhaps noticed that that claim is incompatible with the presuppositions of his first argument - perhaps, e.g., when he reconsidered his dispute with Hume on promising in detail in 1779 - and, consequently, chose to keep the first argument and abandon his claim that the ability to understand artificial language makes possible distinct conceptions of universals and rationality. If this story is consistent with and even well supported by the textual evidence, we have a way to absolve Reid of any responsibility for the prima facie incompatibilities between his views.

There are, however, reasons to think that this story is implausible. First, recall that there are two problems. First, Reid’s first argument is incompatible with his commitment to the claim that artificial language is part of what makes conceptions of universals and moral liberty possible. Second, Reid has difficulties accounting for the first performance of the social operations. Our story does not help Reid with that second problem. Reid gives his account of social operations in both *EIP* and *EAP*, so it is implausible to suggest that he had given up his account of social operations later in his career. But note the story cannot help with the first problem either. We have reasons to conclude Reid that continued to claim that artificial language makes conceptions of universals possible - and

thus that he was committed to holding that artificial language makes moral liberty possible - when he composed his later essays. As I noted in part two, numerous passages in *EIP* and *EAP* support the claim that Reid continued to hold that artificial language makes conceptions of universals possible. There are passages in the *Essays* in which Reid claims, e.g., that the process through which we first conceive universals involves learning general words and that the culture of society is required for rationality and moral agency. The textual evidence, then, supports the claim that Reid continued to hold the views that are *prima facie* in conflict with his first argument right up until the end of his career.

There is a third suggestion to consider, which was made to me in conversation by Lorne Falkenstein. This suggestion is of a different sort. We are not suggesting, here, that a developmental story helps Reid avoid conflicts between his views. We are suggesting, rather, that Reid might be saved by a sort of *deus ex machina*. The suggestion is that, given Reid's presumed commitment to theism and creationism, he may have believed that God created the first humans - i.e., Adam and Eve - as mature adults in possession of their rational and moral faculties and as in possession of innate ideas of social operations. On this suggestion, Reid only held that subsequent human beings - so, e.g., Cain, Abel, and so on - came into the world without an ability to reason or conceive social operations. The suggestion, then, is that Reid's theological commitments might render his account of the first invention of artificial signs consistent with those of social operations and what artificial language makes possible.

The suggestion is plausible. I think, in fact, Reid *could* pursue this line of defense. It may offend contemporary sensibilities, but that is no reason to not attribute it to Reid. I have my doubts, however, whether Reid *would* pursue this line of defense. To see why, let's consider Reid's commitments on methodology and explanation, and also consider the role that appeals to God play for him, given such commitments.

When it comes to methodology, Reid takes himself to be a committed Newtonian. On Reid's understanding of what that involves, we properly do philosophy or science by first empirically observing many objects, events, or facts in the world, and then, second, by reasoning inductively from those observed events or facts to discover general laws of nature. We then explain particular facts and less general laws by reasoning deductively from those most general laws of nature. His Newtonian methodology rules out appeals to

hypotheses, in the sense that it rules about positing the existence of as yet unobserved or undiscovered objects or facts and appealing to said facts when attempting to explain what we do observe. If, e.g., you were to explain why the flowers bloom in spring by appeal to the fact that there are flower fairies with the power to make flowers bloom that come around in springtime, Reid, a committed Newtonian, would reject your explanation on the grounds that we have not observed such flower fairies as constantly conjoined with blooming flowers, much less reasoned inductively to a general law of nature which states that flower fairies cause flowers to bloom.

What role do appeals to God play in Reid's conception of philosophical method and explanation? Simply put, God serves as the explanation for the *known* brute facts. I know, e.g, through observation, that particular facts are what they are. I know, moreover, through observation and inductive reasoning, that general laws of nature are what they are. The existence of the world itself and the most general laws of nature are brute facts that have no further philosophical explanation - i.e., there is no more general law of nature from which those most general laws can be deduced and explained. Why are the brute facts what they are? The answer is that God made the world that way. On this view, God, to put the point suggestively, is the principle of sufficient reason personified. But the point to note is that, on Reid's methodology, God only serves to explain the *already known* brute facts: faith and revelation do not supply us with knowledge of *novel* brute facts not discovered to us via empirical observation and reasoning - at least, that is, they do not supply us with new knowledge to which we can legitimately appeal when doing proper philosophy. If one were to theorize on the supposition that God made something the case, where that something is not already independently known by way of observation and reasoning, then one would have adopted an hypothesis in a sense that Reid would have regarded as illicit.

Now, the question is: if Reid were to adopt the third suggestion - i.e., if he were to suppose that God created the first human beings with their full rational and moral powers and innate ideas of social operations, to explain the first invention of artificial language - would he violate his methodological commitments? I suggest he would. I suggest, then, it is unlikely that Reid would have wished to adopt that suggestion.

Are we to conclude, then, that Reid's views were in tension with each other? It is unlikely that Reid would have knowingly held incompatible views. Had he noticed either of the two noted conflicts, he likely would, on reflection, have revised or rejected either his first argument or his other commitments. How, then, are we to account for these prima facie incompatibilities? I wrote, in the preface, that it is appropriately charitable to attempt, first, to read Reid's views as maximally internally coherent. But that principle of charity can be taken too far: if one's aim is to understand what Reid actually thought, one must remain open to the possibility that Reid held views that were in conflict with each other. There are, inevitably, judgment calls to be made that concern how to best balance the desire to read Reid as charitably as possible and the desire to read each passage in Reid's texts in as straightforward a manner as possible. I suggest that,, we analyzed Reid's views to a degree that is sufficient for us to have uncovered conflicts of which Reid himself may not have been aware. It is also possible, of course, that Reid has another response available to him that I have not yet considered.

Chapter Four: Reid on Perception, Memory, and Imagination

In chapter four, I discuss Reid's accounts of perception, memory, and imagination. I build upon my results in chapter two - namely, our recognition that Reid thinks that artificial language makes conceptions of universals and reasoning possible - to better understand several aspects of his accounts of the three noted operations. In particular, I argue Reid holds that we perform acts of perception, memory, and imagination before we learn artificial language, and, consequently, that he holds that said acts do not essentially involve the exercise of those abilities that the ability to understand artificial language makes possible. I point out that Reid's other commentators have not fully recognized that key point, and that they have, consequently, failed to fully understand some related details of his accounts of perception, memory, and imagination. Chapter four has four sections. In section (4.1), I present the basics of Reid's accounts of original perception, acquired perception, memory, and imagination, in order to provide readers who lack broad familiarity with Reid's views the background information required for them to follow and critically engage the discussions in later sections. In (4.2), I argue that Reid holds that perception, memory, and imagination do not essentially involve distinct conceptual content. In (4.3), I compare and contrast my claims in (4.2) with analogous claims by Reid's other commentators. In (4.4), I propose a novel reading of Reid's distinction between acquired perceptions and judgments made habitually on the occasion of original and acquired perceptions.

4.1 The Basics of Reid on Perception, Memory, and Imagination

In this section, I present the basics of Reid's accounts of original perception, acquired perception, memory, and imagination. I do not aim to make controversial claims, but instead to present the basics of Reid's accounts of these operations in ways to which other commentators would not reasonably object.

The first point that needs to be made, here, concerns all three operations. Reid himself points to one key difference between his accounts of perception, memory, and imagination, and the accounts of said operations by his predecessors and contemporaries.

On Reid's telling of the history of philosophy, all other philosophers - with perhaps the exception of Antoine Arnauld (*EIP* 165) - held that acts of perception, memory, and imagination are intentional mental acts that are directed at objects that exist in the mind, which objects function as representations of the objects that ordinary folks naively take such acts to be immediately directed at. On the view he attributes to others, e.g., when one perceives a chair, the immediate object of the act is an object in the mind that is a representation of the chair, and the chair itself is but only a mediate object of the perception that is, in some sense or another, perceived by means of the mind's immediate awareness of said mental representation. Likewise, on the view Reid attributes to others, when one remembers a chair that one perceived yesterday, the immediate object of the memory is but a presently existing mental representation of that past chair, rather than that chair itself; and when one imagines a chair, the immediate object of the act of imagination is but a presently existing mental representation of a possible chair. The point, here, is not that Reid was ultimately correct to attribute that representationalist theory to all his predecessors and contemporaries; the point, rather, is that Reid rejected that theory. To illustrate, consider a few choice passages:

“Perception, as we here understand it, 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 the 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; but the act of the mind by which it is perceived hath neither trunk, branches, nor leaves” (*IHM* 168)

“Philosophers tell me, that the immediate object of my memory ... is not the past [object], but an idea of it, an image, phantasm, or species... that this idea now exists in my mind, or in my sensorium; and the mind contemplating this present idea, finds in it a representation of what is past, or of what may exist; and accordingly calls it memory... Upon the strictest attention, memory appears to me to have things that are past, and not present ideas, for its object” (*IHM* 28)

“Memory must have an object. Every man who remembers must remember something, and that which he remembers is called the object of his remembrance... The object of memory, or thing remembered, must be something that is past; as the object of perception and of consciousness must be something which is present: What is now, cannot be an object of memory; neither can that which is past and gone be an object of perception or of consciousness” (*EIP* 253)

“The philosopher says, I cannot conceive a centaur without having an idea of it in my mind. I am at a loss to understand what he means... what then is this idea? Is it an animal, half horse and half man? No. Then I am certain that it is not the thing I conceive. Perhaps he will say, that the idea is an image of the animal, and is the immediate object of my conception, and that the animal is the mediate or remote object.

To this I answer: First, I am certain there are not two objects of this conception, but one only; and that one is as immediate an object of my conception as any can be.

Secondly, This one object which I conceive, is not the image of an animal, it is an animal. I know what it is to conceive an image of an animal, and what it is to conceive an animal; and I can distinguish the one of these from the other without any danger of mistake. The thing I conceive is a body of a certain figure and colour, having life and spontaneous motion” (*EIP* 321-322)

Reidian perceptions are about external material objects that now exist, Reidian memories are about objects that existed in the past, and Reidian acts of imagining are about objects conceived without any regard for their actual existence. With that point made clear, let us survey the key details of Reid’s accounts of each of these operations.

Let’s begin with Reid’s account of perception. Reid distinguishes *original* perception from *acquired* perception. First, let’s consider the former. On Reid’s account, an act of original perception is a complex act, in the sense that it involves a number of distinct constituent parts and/or constant or necessary concomitants. There are four distinct sorts of things involved in normal cases of Reidian original perception: (i) a material impression, (ii) a sensation, (iii) a conception of the object that is perceived, and

(iv) a belief in the present existence of that object. In what follows, I present the basics of Reid's accounts of each of these four things.

The material impression is a bodily state. When one perceives an object via the senses, the perceived object causes or occasions a change in one's sense organs, nerves, and brain. The material impression, here, just is a bodily state that results from that change. To clarify, consider some simple examples of original perceptions: I touch a coffee cup with my hand, and the cup contacts my skin, thereby occasioning a change in my skin, nerves, and brain; I look at a coffee cup, and light reflecting off the surface of the perceived object strikes my retina, and thereby occasions some change in my retina, nerves and brain. In both these examples, the material impression is just a bodily state that results from the noted changes.

The material impression occasions a sensation. The sensation is an operation of the mind; it is, moreover, a non-intentional operation, in the sense that it is not about any object that is distinct from itself. The mind is conscious of all its sensations, and the intrinsic nature of each sensation is exhaustively determined by that sensation's phenomenal character - each sensation, that is, is nothing more than what it is felt to be. The fact that material impressions of particular sorts happen to occasion sensations of particular sorts is contingent and grounded in hardwired facts about the mind's constitution: the material impression that a coffee cup makes, e.g., is followed by a sensation of a particular sort rather than any other, solely in virtue of the fact that God "wired up" the human mind in the way that God did.

The sensation signifies the object perceived. If one recalls Reid's taxonomy of natural signs discussed in section (3.2), one recalls that the sensations involved in acts of original perception are third class natural signs - i.e., signs that signify objects by what Reid calls "a natural kind of magic". Different types of sensations signify individuals with different sorts of features; once again, the fact that sensations of one particular sort happen to signify features of objects of another particular sort is wholly contingent and grounded in facts about the mind's constitution. A heat sensation signifies a particular sort of state of a material body, e.g., but it could have signified a different sort of state, or, indeed, it could have signified nothing at all.

The conception is a thought of the object that is signified by the sensation.⁸ Note, however, that different types of conceptions follow different types of sensations. In some cases, e.g., the sensation prompts what Reid calls a “*direct* conception” of the perceived object’s features; in other cases, the sensation prompts what Reid calls a “*relative* conception” of that object’s features. The key difference is this: with relative conceptions, a feature is conceived merely as it relates to something else; whereas with direct conceptions, a feature is conceived as it is in itself. In the case of the relative conceptions involved in original perception, the feature of the object perceived is conceived relative to the sensation that signifies it. To clarify, let’s consider examples. Suppose you touch a hot stove element and thereby perceive it to be hot. Here, the heat is conceived relative to that sensation, and is not itself made known; the heat is conceived, rather, as something like “that unknown feature of the object that is the cause or occasion of this sensation in me”. Although scientific investigation may lead us to discover that heat is molecular kinetic energy, the nature of heat is not conceived or otherwise made known when we originally perceive it. Next, let’s consider an example of a direct conception: suppose I touch the surface of a table with my hand and thereby perceive it to be flat. On Reid’s account, I conceive the flatness as it is, and not merely as something like “that unknown feature of the table that occasions this sensation in me”. To clarify, it might help some readers to note that, on Reid’s account, in acts of original perception, we have direct conceptions of features that philosophers commonly call “primary qualities”, whereas we have relative conceptions of features that they commonly call “secondary qualities”.⁹ Shape, hardness, and size, e.g., are typically counted as primary qualities, whereas temperature, colour, and sound, are typically counted as secondary qualities.

To sum up: on Reid’s account, original perceptions involve a material impression, a sensation, and a conception. Now, note that they involve a fourth thing: the conception is accompanied by a belief in the present existence of the object as conceived. One not

⁸ One qualification: in normal cases of original perception, Reid holds that the sensation signifies the object conceived, there is, however, one non-normal case. Reid holds that in original perceptions via the sense of sight of the location and figure of objects, no sensation is involved, but instead only a material impression, a conception, and a belief. In that one case, the conception and belief is not triggered by a sensation, but instead by the occurrence of the material impression.

⁹ See McKittrick (2002) for a good discussion of Reid’s account of the primary/secondary quality distinction as well as of various exegetical issues on that topic debated in the literature.

only conceives the stove element to be hot, but also believes it to exist and to be hot; likewise, one not only conceives the surface of the table to be flat, but also believes it to exist and to be flat. The conception and belief are distinct: it is one thing to conceive an object as having a feature, but another to believe that object exists and has that conceived feature. One cannot have a belief without a conception, as one cannot believe that something exists and has some feature unless one conceives it as having that feature, but one can nevertheless conceive an individual as having some feature without also having any belief about its existence. In original perception, however, on Reid's account, the conception is accompanied by a belief. The fact that a belief is involved in original perception is a contingent fact grounded in the mind's hardwired constitution: God just "wired us up" such that, when originally perceiving, we believe in the existence of what we conceive. These beliefs are not conclusions of any chain of reasoning; they are, rather, results of some hardwired mental reflex being triggered by the occurrence of the material impression, sensation, and conception.

We now have a rough understanding of Reidian original perception. Now, note that Reid distinguishes *original* perception from *acquired* perception. The difference is roughly this: Reidian original perceptions are not results of prior experiences, whereas acquired perceptions are results of prior experiences. To clarify: recall that in original perception, the move from sensation to conception of and belief in the existence of the object is grounded in facts about the mind's innate constitution; and now note that, in acquired perception, in contrast, the move from sign to conception of and belief in the existence of the thing signified, is grounded in the fact that one has had certain prior experiences. In acquired perception, the sign is an object of original perception - or, perhaps in some cases, a sensation involved in such an act - and it signifies "whatever has always been found connected with it" in one's past experience (*EIP* 236). To clarify, let's consider one of our previous examples. When one *sees* - i.e., perceives via the sense of sight - a hot red stove element, one originally perceives the element only as red, but not also as hot. That original perception, however, might well prompt one to conceive and believe the element to be not only red but also hot, in virtue of one's past experience of the repeated conjunction of red stove elements and felt sensations of heat. In the past, the story goes, one repeatedly *saw* red stove elements and *felt* them to be hot at the same

time. In virtue of those past experiences, one acquired a habit in virtue of which one now conceives as hot the red stove elements that one merely sees, and believes said elements to be hot. In such cases, on Reid's account, one has an *acquired* perception of the heat of the red stove element via the sense of sight.

Next, let's consider the basics of Reid's account of memory. There are two things involved in Reidian memories: a conception and a belief. The conception is of an object that the mind previously perceived - or, of course, of something of which the mind was previously conscious, if the thing is remembered is a past modification of one's own mind. The belief, however, is a belief in the past existence of the thing conceived, rather than its present existence. As in original perception, the belief in memory is not a conclusion of reasoning, but is instead an act triggered by a mental reflex built into the mind's innate constitution: we just are wired up such that we immediately believe in the past existence of the things we remember.

Last, let's consider Reid's account of imagination. There is one thing involved in cases of Reidian imagination: a conception of the imagined object. The conception, here, is not accompanied by any sensation or any belief in the existence of the object conceived. It is important to note, however, Reid holds that imagination is just one species of conception: a conception in general is an act that is, broadly put, a thought about an object that is distinct from the act itself, whereas an act of imagination is more specifically a conception of such an object, as that object would appear to the senses if it were perceived - and, even more specifically, as it would appear if perceived by the sense of sight. An imagined object, of course, need not be an object that one has previously perceived: one might, e.g., imagine an object such as a gold mountain or a centaur. However, recall that Reid is a concept empiricist: on his account, all the things we can but conceive or imagine are either simples, or objects composed of simples, that were first conceived via the exercise of a faculty distinct from that of conception or imagination. Consider an example: if I have seen something that is gold, and if I have seen something that is a mountain, then I have in my conceptual repertoire, as it were, the conceptions *gold* and *mountain*, and can now conceive and imagine a gold mountain. Consider another: if I have seen one person's head, and if I have seen another person's body, then I can conceive and imagine the one person's head as attached to the other

person's body. In both of these examples, the simpler parts of which the more complex imagined object is composed, are parts of things previously conceived via some earlier act of perception. There is, of course, a question to ask here about the nature of these simples out of which conceived or imagined objects are composed: are they universals, abstract particulars, or merely substantial parts of objects that one previously perceived? I address this question in the next section.

To close this section, it is worth asking a clarificatory question: is there any qualitative difference, on Reid's account, between what it's like to perceive an object, what it's like to remember that object, and what it's like to imagine an object with features identical to those of that object? On Reid's account, there are differences. The experience of perceiving, on his account, is different than that of remembering, and this is, at least in part, because the memory does not involve a sensation of the sort involved in perception. A further difference between the phenomenology of perception and memory on the one hand and imagination on the other, moreover, is grounded in the fact that imagination does not involve a belief in the past or present existence of the object. To get clear on what exactly Reidian sensations, conceptions, and beliefs are, it helps to take a little bit of time to do the following introspective experiment, in which one attends to the phenomenological differences between one's perceptions, memories, and imaginings. First, look at an object sitting on a table in front of you, such as a coffee cup. Next, close your eyes and remember that same cup. Last, remove the cup from the table, open your eyes, and imagine a cup with the very same features as that object. When I do this, I can note clear differences between the phenomenology of these experiences. On Reid's account, these differences are partly explained by the presence or absence of the sensations and beliefs. If one attends to these phenomenological differences, one can - presuming that Reid's views are not incoherent - get clear on what Reid is referring to when he speaks of conceptions, sensations, and beliefs that are involved in perception, memory, and imagination.

4.2 Reid on Distinct Conceptual Content

In this section, I ask: does Reid hold that perception, memory, and imagination essentially involve distinct conceptual content? In what follows, I argue that the answer is “no”. To begin, let’s get clear on the question.

First, what is meant by “essentially involves”? I say a type of operation essentially involves distinct conceptual content if and only if every token of that type of operation involves distinct conceptual content.

Second, what is meant by “distinct conceptual content”? I follow Folescu (2018) in using this phrase. It is not used by Reid himself, so work needs to be done to clarify a genuinely Reidian sense of that phrase - if, that is, we are to succeed in using it to ask a genuine exegetical issue. Folescu explains her use of it this way: operations essentially involve distinct conceptual content if and only if they “essentially involve conceptual descriptions in order to present [their] objects to the [subject]” (Folescu 2018, 222). But what does that mean? And how can we make sense of this notion within Reid’s conceptual framework? There is literature on Reid’s accounts of the conceptions involved in acts of perception, memory, and imagination. One strategy pursued by some of Reid’s commentators is to import analogous contemporary distinctions back into Reid, such as, e.g., Bertrand Russell’s distinction between conception by acquaintance and conception by description. On Russell’s version of that distinction, what distinguishes a conception by acquaintance from a conception by description is that the former, unlike the latter, is a non-conceptual thought about the object - i.e., one does not think the object as falling under some general concept - but involves the object being *directly presented*, in some sense or another, to the mind. If this distinction were imported back into Reid, the claim would be that Reidian conceptions that possess distinct conceptual content just are Russellian conceptions by description, whereas Reidian conceptions with indistinct content are conceptions by acquaintance. It is understandable for one to choose to pursue that strategy when trying to make sense of Reid’s views. If, however, we are to get clear on Reid’s own views, we need to avoid anachronistically importing such distinctions back into Reid, and instead work to get clear on this notion of distinct conceptual content by way of working from Reid’s own technical distinctions. In what follows, I present an

interpretation of what it means, for a Reidian, to say a perception, memory, or imagining involves distinct conceptual content.

First, note that, on Reid's account, things that are perceived, remembered, and imagined are individual substances. On Reid's account, moreover, such substances are conceived *relative* to their conceived features. A substance is, that is, is conceived as something like "that otherwise unknown thing that is the metaphysical subject of these conceived features". On Reid's account, e.g., your coffee cup is conceived by you roughly as that unknown thing that is the metaphysical subject of its various conceived features, such as its shape, colour, and weight. What the substance of the cup is in itself, on this view, is wholly unknown to you. The features of the cup, on Reid's view, may be conceived via direct conceptions or relative conceptions: but, in either case, the substance is conceived relative to its conceived features. So we need to get clear on, first, what it means, on Reid's account, to say that we conceive features of individuals more or less distinctly, and, then, we can proceed to get clear on what it means to say that we conceive individuals more or less distinctly relative to said features.

First, let's get clear on the degrees to which Reid holds that one can conceive a feature of an individual more or less distinctly. To conceive something distinctly, on his account, is just to conceive it as *not confused* with anything else: i.e., one conceives the one thing as different from the other, instead of conceiving both as a single confused and undifferentiated whole. On Reid's account, moreover, all things we conceive are either individual substances or the features of such substances.¹⁰ There are, then, on Reid's account, two types of things one might conceive a feature of an individual as confused with: its metaphysical subject or other features. Consequently, the most confused conception of a feature is one in which that feature is conceived as confused with not only the individual substance of which it is a feature but also with that individual's other features. I'm not clear on whether, on Reid's account, it is possible to conceive a feature as distinct from one of those things while at the same time not also the other. But that is a bit beside the point: insofar as a feature is conceived as confused with its metaphysical subject, that subject's other features, or both, we will say the conception of that feature

¹⁰ There are exceptions: space and time. Reid writes that he does not quite know what to make of space and time, as they are neither things nor features of things. See *EIP* 217-225.

involves indistinct conceptual content. A more distinct conception of a feature, then, is one in which one conceives it not only as distinct from the individual substance of which it is a feature but also as distinct from that individual's other features. However, there is an important distinction to draw here. One may conceive the feature as a token of some distinctly conceived universal type: i.e., one may conceive the feature as an instantiation of a distinctly conceived universal, or one may fail to do so. It is one thing to conceive the colour of an object as distinct from that object's other features, but it is another thing to conceive that colour as an instantiation of some distinctly conceived universal. The distinction, here, is the distinction I drew in part two: it is one thing to conceive a feature as an abstract particular, but another thing to conceive that feature as a token instantiation of a distinctly conceived universal.

The point to note going forward is this: different cases involve conceptual content of different degrees of distinctness. Those cases that involve a conception of a feature as a token instantiation of a conceived universal are said to involve fully distinct conceptual content, whereas those cases that involve conceptions of features as abstract particulars are said to involve partly distinct conceptual content, whereas the other cases are said to involve indistinct conceptual content.

Next, let's get clear on the ways in which individual substances can be conceived more or less distinctly relative to their various conceived features. The suggested view, here, is that, on Reid's account, individuals are conceived more or less distinctly, depending on the degree to which their conceived features are conceived more or less distinctly. A point of clarification: on this reading, it is not all or nothing. One might, that is, conceive an individual substance, and, in doing so, conceive some of its features fully distinctly, some partly distinctly, some indistinctly, and, of course, one might simply fail to conceive some of its features at all. It is not always possible to say, then, on my reading, that one conception of an individual is, on the whole, more or less distinct than another conception of that same individual: one conception of an individual, that is, might be more distinct in some one respect, but also less distinct in another. Nevertheless, it is quite possible for us to lay down some clear distinctions between the different ways in which individuals can be conceived more or less distinctly. In what follows, I present and explain each of these cases.

First, there are those cases in which an individual is conceived as confused not only with its features, but also as confused with another individual or individuals. In this case, one does not distinguish the individual and those other conceived individuals, but instead conceives both or all of them - and, of course, their various indistinctly conceived features - as one undifferentiated whole. Second, there are those cases in which an individual is conceived as distinct from other individuals, but nevertheless as confused with all of its conceived features. Here, the individual is conceived as an undifferentiated whole, with no difference conceived between the metaphysical subject and the features. Conceptions of individuals in either of these two cases are ones that, on this terminology, involve indistinct conceptual content.

Second, there are those cases in which an individual is conceived as distinct from not only other individuals but also from some of its own features. In this sort of case, however, all features conceived as distinct from their subject are conceived as abstract particulars, rather than as token instantiations of distinctly conceived universals. The conceptions of individuals in this second type of case are, on my terminology, said to involve partly distinct conceptual content.

Third, there are those cases that involve distinct conceptual content. Simply put, these cases are those that involve conceptions of at least some features as instantiated universals. There are, however, two different types of cases that involve distinct conceptual content. First, there are those cases in which an individual is conceived not only as distinct from all other individuals and as distinct from some of its conceived features, but also in which at least some but not all of its conceived features are conceived as instantiated universals. Second, there are those cases in which an individual is conceived not only as distinct from all other individuals and as distinct from its conceived features, but also in which *all* of its *conceived* features - which is not to say all of its features, as some of its features may simply be unconceived - are conceived as instantiated universals, rather than as indistinct features or abstract particulars. This last sort of case, uniquely, does not involve any indistinct content at all. This last sort of case is perhaps most analogous to what Bertrand Russell called “conception by description”; whereas all of the other cases involve, at least in part, conceptions that are perhaps more analogous to what Russell called “conception by acquaintance”. It is important, however,

that we do not follow that analogy so far as to think that our Reidian distinctions just are Russellian distinctions - they are, after all, only analogous - and that we remain working within our Reidian framework.

We are now clear on the meaning of “essentially involve” and “distinct conceptual content”. So we now understand my claim: on Reid’s account, perception, memory, and imagination do not essentially involve distinct conceptual content. In what follows here in chapter four, I present several arguments for that claim. After doing so, I offer two qualifications to the claim, which are, I suggest, required for it to be consistent with all of Reid’s texts. Third, I respond to an important objection. Fourth, I survey the literature, to contrast my views with the analogous views of Reid’s other commentators, and thereby to make clear the novelty of my conclusions. Fifth, I discuss an exegetical issue discussed in the literature on Reid’s account of acquired perception.

What is my main argument? First, recall I argued in part two that Reid holds that we possess a set of mental abilities that are either innate or acquired without any exposure to the culture of society, and that it is in virtue of the fact that we have said abilities that it is possible for us to engage with the culture of society such that we acquire the ability to understand artificial language, which in turn makes it possible for us to conceive and to recall universals, to judge, to reason, and to possess epistemic rationality and moral agency. My main argument goes quite simply as follows: (i) Reid holds that we can perceive, remember and imagine prior to learning artificial language, and (ii) Reid holds that conceptions of universals are possible only after learning artificial language; therefore, (iii) Reid is committed to the claim that perception, memory, and imagination do not essentially involve distinct conceptual content. The basic idea here is that, if one cannot as yet conceive universals, then one cannot yet distinctly conceive the features of the individuals that one perceives, remembers, and imagines.

The argument has a premise for which I have not yet argued: Reid thinks that we perceive, remember, and imagine prior to learning artificial language. There are reasons to accept this premise. I give three such reasons in what follows. The third is perhaps the strongest: it is, quite simply, that there are passages in Reid’s texts in which he claims that these acts are performed by infants and other creatures - such as, e.g., animals - who

have not yet learnt artificial language. Before presenting those passages, however, I first offer two additional reasons.

Now, the first reason is not directly for the claim that Reid thinks that perception, memory, and imagination are possible before artificial language, but rather more directly for the claim that they are possible before we can exercise the power of abstraction. This reason, however, serves my argumentative aims just as well. Note the order in which Reid presents his essays in *EIP* as well as Reid's stated reason for ordering them in that way. The order is as follows: after (i) a preliminary essay in which Reid defines his terms and characterizes his project and methodology, Reid includes (ii) an essay on perception, (iii) an essay on memory, (iv) an essay on conception and imagination, (v) an essay on abstraction, (vi) an essay on judgment, and (vii) an essay on reasoning. What are Reid's reasons for sequencing the essays in this way? At the start of essay two, Reid writes:

“Of all the operations of our minds, the perception of external objects is the most familiar. The senses come to maturity even in infancy, when other powers have not yet sprung up. They are common to us with brute animals, and furnish us with the objects about which our other powers are most frequently employed” (*EIP* 71)

Then, at the start of essay three, Reid writes:

“In the gradual progress of man, from infancy to maturity, there is a certain order in which his faculties are unfolded, and this seems to be the best order we can follow in treating of them... The external senses appear first; memory soon follows, which we are now to consider” (*EIP* 253)

Reid says he sequences the essays in *EIP* as he does, because he discusses the powers of the mind in the order in which they first arise in that process through which the mind grows from infancy to maturity. The senses come first and are common to us and other animals, memory comes a bit later, and then the rest of the operations follow sometime after that. These passages make sense only if Reid's view is that acts of perception and memory - if not also imagination - are powers that the mind exercises before it acquires the powers of abstraction, judgment, and reasoning.

The second reason concerns Reid's account of the process through which children first learn artificial language. Recall that, on that account, certain powers are required for us to be able to acquire the ability to conceive universals, and, consequently, cannot themselves essentially involve distinct conceptual content. I do not argue, here, that imagination - or even, for that matter, memory - are involved in that process, as Reid's explanation of that account is too incomplete for me to argue for such claims effectively. But Reid clearly holds that we perceive things - such as, e.g., signs of natural language - prior to learning artificial language, just because he holds that the ability to understand natural linguistic signs is part of what makes it possible for us to learn artificial language. Reid's account, moreover, is one on which children observe the use that members of their community make of artificial linguistic signs, and are thereby trained to habitually associate types of features with types of artificial signs. It would appear, then, on his account, that a child could not learn to understand artificial linguistic signs - and, thus, cannot come to conceive universals - unless the child can already perceive features of individuals and signs. Reid's account of the process through which children first learn artificial language, then, is one on which children can perceive before they learn artificial language. It appears clear, then, that Reid holds that acts of perception do not essentially involve distinct conceptual content.

Third, there is the direct textual evidence. Reid asserts in MS 2131/4/I/31, MS 2131/4/I/29, MS 2131/4/I/20, *EIP*, and *EAP*, that perception, memory and imagination are possible before learning artificial language. I cite and discuss just two passages here. One passage that concerns memory and imagination is:

“It may be doubted, whether children, when their imagination first begins to work, can distinguish what they barely conceive from what they remember. I have been told by a man of knowledge and observation, that one of his sons, very often told lies with great assurance, without any intention, as far as appeared, or any consciousness of guilt. From which the father concluded, that it is natural to some children to lie. I am rather inclined to think, that the child had no intention to deceive, but mistook the workings of his own fancy, for things which he remembered. This, however, I take to be very uncommon, after children can

communicate their sentiments by language, though perhaps not so in a more early period” (*EIP* 298-299)

In this passage, Reid notes that young children often confuse what they merely imagine with what they remember. He says, moreover, that this is probably uncommon after children learn to communicate by means of language, but not so before they learn to communicate by means of language. This implies that Reid thinks children likely - or at least possibly - remember and imagine before learning artificial language. If he believes that such acts essentially involve distinct conceptual content, he would not think it possible, much less likely, that children perform such acts before learning such language. Another passage that concerns to imagination is:

“We have not means of knowing how the fancy is employed in infants. Their time is divided between the employment of their senses and sound sleep: So that there is little time left for imagination, and the materials it has to work upon are probably very scanty. A few days after they are born, sometimes a few hours, we see them smile in their sleep. But what they smile at is not easy to guess; for they do not smile at anything they see, when awake, for some months after they are born. It is likewise common to see them move their lips in sleep, as if they were sucking.

These things seem to discover some working of the imagination, but there is no reason to think that there is any regular train of thought in the mind.

By a regular train of thought, I mean that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end, an arrangement of parts, according to some rule, or with some intention. Thus, the conception of a design, and of the means of executing it; the conception of a whole, and the number and order of the parts. These are instances of the most simple trains of thought that can be called regular...

Such trains of thought discover themselves in children about two years of age. They can give attention to the operations of older children in making their little houses, and ships, and other such things, in imitation in the works of men. They are then capable of understanding a little of language, which shows both a regular train of thinking, and some degree of abstraction. I think we may perceive

a distinction between those faculties of children of two or three years of age, and those of the more sagacious brutes. They can then perceive design and regularity in the works of others” (*EIP* 340-341)

In this passage, Reid claims it is likely infants imagine objects before they learn artificial language. If Reid thought that acts of imagination essentially involve distinct content, then he would likely argue that such children are not capable of acts of imagination at that early stage of their cognitive development. But Reid does not argue that. This passage makes it quite clear, then, Reid holds that acts of imagination do not essentially involve distinct conceptual content.

To clarify, note that, given Reid’s concept empiricism discussed in part three, it is presumably his view that an infant cannot imagine an object, unless they are capable of analyzing the individuals presented to them via perception into their component parts, and then subsequently recombining those parts into some new object. Someone might argue, moreover, that those parts must be distinct conceptions of the features of the objects that the infant previously perceived, because the infant could conceive those features as features of a different individual only if they could conceive them as universals. If this reasoning is correct, there would be a clear problem with my reading. But there is no such problem. To understand why, we need only distinguish two senses in which one can talk about the *parts* of an individual. First, we can talk about *conceptual* parts. The conceptual parts of an individual include the universals instantiated in that individual as features. Second, we can talk about *substantial* parts. The substantial parts, in contrast, include the simpler individual substances of which the complex individual is composed. A brick, e.g., is a substantial part of a brick wall, whereas the shape of the wall is but a conceptual part of that wall. It is true, on my reading, that Reid holds that one can distinctly conceive the conceptual parts of individuals only if one understands artificial language. But it is not true, on my reading, that Reid holds that one cannot distinctly conceive the substantial parts of individuals - in the sense of conceiving each substantial part as distinct from the other substantial parts - without artificial language. To clarify, consider the examples discussed earlier: (i) if I have seen something that is gold, and if I have seen something that is a mountain, then I have in my conceptual repertoire, as it were, the conceptions *gold* and *mountain*, and, therefore, can now

conceive and imagine a gold mountain; (ii) if I have seen one person's head, and if I have seen another person's body, then I can conceive and imagine the one head attached to the other person's body. In both examples, the simpler parts of which the imagined object is composed were parts of other individuals. But the two examples involve different kinds of parts. In the first, the parts are conceptual parts; in the second, the parts are substantial parts. On my reading, Reidian pre-linguistic acts of imagination are conceptions of individuals that are composed of the substantial parts of previously perceived individuals, whereas post-linguistic acts of imagination are conceptions of individuals composed of either substantial parts, conceptual parts, or even of both substantial and conceptual parts of previously perceived individuals.

Last, I will complete my argument by pointing out that although the last quoted passage concerns only the act of imagination, it provides evidence for my claim that Reid holds that acts of perception and memory are possible prior to learning artificial language. Recall that Reid says, in the passages I quoted when giving the first reason, that perception and memory are the first powers that are exerted by the mind. On his account, then, those powers are exerted before the power of imagination. It follows, then, from the fact Reid says that infants can imagine prior to learning artificial language, that Reid holds that infants can perceive and remember prior to learning artificial language. The last quoted passage, then, supports my claim that Reid thinks that infants also perceive and remember prior to learning artificial language.

The textual evidence, then, supports my claim that Reid thinks acts of perception, memory, and imagination occur before learning artificial language and, consequently, supports my claim that Reid holds that they do not essentially involve distinct conceptual content. Before going on, let's review what that means. I claim Reid holds that these three acts do not essentially involve conceptions of individual objects in which either: (a) the individual is conceived not only as distinct from all other individuals and as distinct from at least some of its conceived features, but also in which at least some but not all of its features are conceived as token instantiations of conceived universals; or (ii) the individual is conceived not only as distinct from all other individuals and from its own conceived features, but also in which all of its conceived features are conceived as token

instantiations of conceived universals. With that made clear, let's discuss clarifications to that claim. In what follows, I make three clarifications.

First, on my reading, Reid holds that the noted operations do not *essentially involve* distinct conceptual content, but also holds that said operations can and most often do - in mature people - involve some distinct conceptual content. Reid only holds that *pre-linguistic* perceptions, memories, and imagings - i.e., acts performed prior to learning artificial language - involve only indistinct (and perhaps partly distinct) content, but also holds that people who have learnt artificial language and thereby acquired the ability to conceive universals can, and most often if not always do, conceive at least some of the features of the individuals that they perceive, remember, and imagine as instantiated universals. On my reading, however, Reid does not hold that post-linguistic acts of perception, memory, and imagination involve only distinct conceptual content. Quite the contrary: on my reading, Reid holds that the post-linguistic acts most often - if not even always - involve at least some indistinct or partly distinct conceptual content. Consider, e.g., the following passage:

“I believe indeed we may have an indistinct perception of resemblance, without knowing wherein it lies. I may see a resemblance between one face and another, where I cannot distinctly say in what feature they resemble: But by analysing the two faces, and comparing feature with feature, I may form a distinct notion of that which is common to both...

There is therefore an indistinct notion of resemblance when we compare the objects only in gross; and this I believe brute animals may have” (EIP 403)

By attending to this passage - as well as the others like it - we can see Reid holds that perceptions - in mature people such as himself - can often involve a mix of distinct and indistinct content. Reid holds, of course, that mature humans such as himself can analyze the individuals presented to them via perception, and thereby come to distinctly conceive their features as token instantiations of universals. But he does not hold that we *always* conceive *all* of their conceived features as such. Reidian individuals are complex sets of universals instantiated in a metaphysical subject, and he thinks we distinctly conceive features as instantiated universals, but only if we understand general terms that signify

them. It is a bit unlikely, I suggest, that my linguistically acquired conceptual repertoire is richly varied enough for me to distinctly conceive every single aspect of the individual substances that I have ever conceived.

Why does this first clarification make my reading consistent with Reid's texts? There are many passages in which Reid appears to straightforwardly say of some perception, memory, or imagination, that it involves distinct conceptual content. Without this clarification, then, any number of those might be thought to speak against my reading. But they do not. There are also many passages in which Reid appears to straightforwardly say of some perception, memory, or imagination that it involves at least some indistinct conceptual content. On my reading, Reid thinks perception, memory, and imagination can each involve a mix of distinct and indistinct conceptual content. Such passages, then, are all consistent with my reading.

Second, on my reading, Reid holds that we can conceive individuals in ways that involve only distinct conceptual content. This is to say that there are cases in which we conceive an individual, and in which all the individual's conceived features are distinctly conceived. Of course, these are not cases in which all of an individual's features are conceived distinctly - we rarely, if indeed ever, conceive every single aspect of an individual - but rather cases in which all of the individual's features that are conceived are conceived distinctly. To clarify, consider an example: a person describes an individual using artificial linguistic signs, and does so in enough detail for their description to apply to that one single individual only; you understand what that person said, and you thereby distinctly conceive that one individual that they described. The only features of the individual that you conceive, here, are features signified to you by general words the person used to describe that individual. This is, then, a case in which one conceives an individual and conceives all that object's conceived features as instantiated universals. There are many passages in which Reid says that we have conceptions of this sort. It is important, then, that I do not deny Reid thinks such cases occur. The only claim that I mean to deny is that Reid holds that perception, memory, and imagination essentially involve such fully distinct conceptions. On his account, rather, individuals perceived, remembered, and imagined, are first presented to us as indistinct wholes, and the mind can then go to work on said objects so as to analyze and thereby come to

distinctly conceive any number of their various features, and it is able to do that analytical work only insofar as it possesses a repertoire of distinct conceptions of universals it acquired by coming to understand general words. Reid holds, moreover, that this analysis of objects of perception, memory, and imagination is rarely complete in humans, and, consequently, that said acts usually - if not in fact always - involve some amount of indistinct or at least partly distinct conceptual content.

Third, I need to clarify Reid's account of the beliefs included in acts of perception and memory. Why do I need to clarify this? Even if one accepts my claim that the conceptions involved in perception and memory do not essentially involve distinct conceptual content, one might nevertheless argue that the beliefs must involve such content. One might claim Reid holds that the conception supplies a sort of imagistic acquaintance with the object, but the belief is an act in which the object thus conceived is then subsumed under some general concept or category. In response, I note, first, that the evidence that I gave in this section concerned not only the conceptions that are involved in perception and memory, but rather concerned those operations as wholes. I argued, that is, that Reid holds that acts of perception and memory do not essentially involve distinct conceptual content; I did not merely argue that the *conceptions* involved in those acts do not essentially involve such content. Insofar as Reid is clear that beliefs are essentially involved in acts of perception and memory, then I have argued that such beliefs do not essentially involve distinct conceptual content.

However, a few things stand in need of further clarification. If, e.g., Reid holds that beliefs essentially involved in perception and memory are *de re* judgments, there is an apparent conflict between Reid's account of judgment and his claim that perception and memory are possible before learning artificial language. However, the conflict is only apparent. To see why, consider the following passage from *EIP*:

“In persons come to years of understanding, judgment necessarily accompanies all sensation, perception by the senses, consciousness, and memory, but not conception.

I restrict this to persons come to years of understanding, because it may be a question, whether infants, in the first period of life, have any judgment or belief at all. The same question may be put with regard to brutes and some idiots. This

question is foreign to the present subject; and I say nothing here about it, but speak only of persons who have the exercise of judgment.

In them it is evident, that a man who feels pain, judges and believes that he is really pained. The man who perceives an object, believes that it exists, and is what he distinctly perceives it to be; nor is it in his power to avoid such judgment. And the like may be said of memory, and of consciousness. Whether judgment ought to be called a necessary concomitant of these operations, or rather a part or ingredient of them, I do not dispute; but it is certain, that all of them are accompanied with a determination that something is true or false, and a consequent belief. If this determination be not judgment, it is an operation that has got no name, for it is not simple apprehension nor negation; it may be expressed by a proposition affirmative or negative, and it is accompanied by the firmest belief” (*EIP* 409)

Reid explicitly says that infants likely do not have judgments at all - which is to say they do not perform acts of assenting to the truth of propositions - when they perceive. Reid would not need to restrict his claim that perception usually involves judgment to those cases involving mature people, if he did not believe infants perceive. It appears, then, we have reason to think Reid holds that judgments are not essentially involved in perception (or memory, for that matter).

Further, note that Reid indicates at the end of the passage that the determination of the mind that might be judgment is accompanied by a belief. This indicates that Reid does not believe that the belief essentially involved in perception is an act of judgment, but instead something else - such as, say, a practical commitment of some sort or another. Further, Reid indicates that he is even open to the possibility that the determination of the mind that is essentially involved in acts of perception and memory in mature people might not be judgment, but might instead be something else. Whatever that something is, he claims, it is akin to judgment, as it is a “determination that something is true or false” and “can be expressed by a proposition”. What else could this something else be? I am not clear. Reid indicates that he is not clear on this either. However, Reid could say that this something is a mental act in which one assents to *particular* things being a *particular* way, in much the same way that an act of judgment is a mental act of assenting to the

truth of an abstract proposition. To clarify, recall that, on Reid's view, a judgment is an act of assenting to the truth of a proposition, where that proposition is partly composed of universals. When judging a *de re* proposition to be true, on his view, a universal is judged to be instantiated in an individual. On the suggestion being offered here, the act essentially involved in mature perception and memory is similar, only it does not involve assenting to the claim that an individual has a feature that is conceived as a token of a universal type, but is instead as a mere abstract particular. This judgment-like act, as Reid himself might plausibly be read as explaining in the passage, might be called "a determination of the mind concerning what is true or false" (Ibid.) and might be something that can, in some relevant sense, be expressed by a sentence.

My clarifications are now complete. Before going on to discuss the literature, I will first briefly consider one important objection. The objection goes as follows: the claim that acts of memory and imagination involve conceptions with indistinct conceptual content is absurd *when attributed to Reid*. Why? Recall that Reid rejects the claim that the immediate objects of acts of memory and imagination are presently existing mental representations, and instead holds that they are external objects that do not presently exist. If one thinks that the only alternative to a conception that involves purely distinct conceptual content is an imagistic conception roughly of the sort that Berkeley and Hume think we have when perceiving, and if one thinks that one can conceive an object via such an imagistic conception only if the object conceived presently exists, it might well follow that Reid's rejection of the theory of ideas demands that he holds that the conceptual content involved in acts of memory and imagination is wholly distinct. In what follows, I explain why the objector might simply misunderstand the view I mean to attribute to Reid.

Consider the following introspective experiment. Attend to an object on the table in front of you, such as a coffee cup. First, close your eyes, grasp the coffee cup with your hand, and thereby perceive both its size and shape. Second, distinguish the cup and its conceived features from the sensations that signify them to you. The sensations can, I suggest, be best described as "the feelings of pressure in your hand".¹¹ It helps one to

¹¹ The description of it as the "feelings of pressure in your hand" might be misleading. One might, e.g., upon hearing that phrase, be prompted to conceive of a confused object of thought

distinguish these sensations from the cup and its features, I suggest, if one squeezes the cup more firmly and then less firmly. When one does this, the sensations change so as to become more and subsequently less intense, whereas the features of the cup itself do not also change. Next, stop touching the cup, but continue to conceive it and to believe that it existed when you previously touched it - i.e., remember it. Note that the tactile sensations are now gone from your experience, but a conception of the cup's features and a belief in its existence remains. Or so says Reid.

Suppose Reid is right about that much. Now ask: is the conception involved in the act of remembering different from the conception involved in the act of perceiving? I suggest that Reid plausibly holds they are not different. Of course, the absence of tactile sensations makes the experience of remembering very different from that of perceiving. When you perceived the cup, you were presented with things in a way that was possible only if those things presently existed. But those, I suggest, were merely *the sensations*. If you distinguish the sensations involved in the perception from the object, and consider the manner in which the features of the perceived object are presented to the mind, it is not clear, I suggest, that one's conceptions of those features are acts that, like a Berkelean perception, a reflexive sensation, or a Russellian act of conception by acquaintance, might require the current existence of their objects. The difference between the way in which the features of the cup one conceives and one's sensations are present to the mind, I suggest, is like the difference between remembering a pain that you had yesterday and being in pain right now. In the latter case, the pain is present to the mind in a sense in which it is not present in the former case. On Reid's view, as I interpret it, the shape of the cup, likewise, is not present to the mind when I perceive it, remember, or imagine it, at least not in some way that current sensations are present - i.e., in a way that appears to require their current existence.

that consists of not only the sensation but also some part of the material impression. Isolating the sensation, then, may require a further act of abstraction. The material impression, on Reid's view, is located in space as well as spatially extended, whereas the sensation, as an operation of the mind, is neither of those things. In any case, the exercise described above should be sufficient for distinguishing the object of conception on the one hand from the other things involved in the act of perception.

There is of course a sense in which the features of the cup, when either perceived, remembered, or imagined, are *presented* to the mind, insofar as they are conceived in a manner quite distinct from the manner in which features of objects might be said to be conceived via some Russellian conception by description - i.e., a conception that, on our Reidian terminology, involves all and only distinct conceptual content. Nevertheless, the features of the individuals perceived, remembered, or imagined are not, on Reid's account, therefore present to the mind in the way in which a current sensation is present to the mind. Or so says Reid, on my reading.

Note that I do not claim that Reid's views, as I interpret them, are either true or plausible. I only claim that the views are not so implausible that they ought not to be attributed to Reid. If the available evidence supports an interpretation of a philosopher's views, we should adopt that interpretation, even if we believe or suspect the philosopher is wrong in holding the views that we thereby attribute to him. Reid is clear that we do not remember or imagine by conceiving a presently existing mental representation of an object. There is good evidence, moreover, that Reid thinks perception, memory, and imagination are possible before we ever learn language, and, thus, possible before we ever acquire the ability to conceive objects via anything that might reasonably be called a "conceptual description". Reid might be wrong, but that does not provide us good reason to interpret him differently.

4.3 Reid's Other Commentators

How do my claims about Reidian perception, memory, and imagination compare and contrast with analogous claims made by Reid's other commentators? Some of my claims in the preceding section are wholly novel, but others are not. My main argument, though, is novel: i.e., the argument that Reid holds perception, memory, and imagination are possible prior to learning artificial language, and, therefore, that those acts do not essentially involve any distinct conceptual content. In what follows, I *briefly* summarize the various claims made by Reid's other commentators, just so as to contrast them with my own. At the end of the section, I offer general remarks meant to diagnose the cause of the disagreements in the literature.

First, consider original perception. There are three readings in the literature. The first is endorsed in Wolterstorff (2001) and Buras (2008). On this first reading, Reid holds that the conception involved in original perception is a conception of a complex set of universals and the act of belief is an act of assenting to an abstract proposition which asserts that an individual exists that has particular features that are instantiations of said universals. I should note that Wolterstorff's reading is a bit more nuanced: he believes that all of our original perceptions involve only distinct conceptual content, with the one exception of our original perceptions of the shape of objects via the sense of sight, which instead involve an acquaintance-like or non-conceptual presentation of that feature. The second reading is endorsed in Copenhaver (2010). Copenhaver claims that the act of conception involved in original perception does not involve distinct conceptual content, but that the act of belief does. Copenhaver writes, e.g., that "the conception provides a non-conceptual presentation of an object; the belief predicates features of the object conceived by way of concept-application" (Copenhaver 2010, 285-286). The third reading is endorsed in Alston (1989), Van Cleve (2015), and Folescu (2015). These commentators all claim that the conception involved in original perception does not involve distinct conceptual content, and that Reid does not have a settled position on whether the belief essentially involves distinct conceptual content.

My reading contrasts with these other readings in different ways. I hold that the conceptions involved in Reidian original perceptions can involve indistinct, partly distinct, and distinct conceptual content, rather than only one sort of content. In contrast to Copenhaver's reading, moreover, I argued that judgments are not essentially involved in Reidian acts of original perception, although I agree with her on the more narrow claim that Reid holds that, in mature minds, perception is always - or usually- accompanied by at least some *de re* judgments. I disagree with the third reading, moreover, insofar as I take a clear stand on the question of whether Reid thinks that the beliefs in perception and memory essentially involve distinct conceptual content.

Second, consider Reidian memory. There are three other readings in the literature. The first is endorsed in Copenhaver (2006) and Hamilton (2003). These commentators argue that, in contrast to original perception, Reidian memory and imagination do not involve a nonconceptual presentation of the object, but instead involve conceptual

descriptions. Hamilton argues for this sort of reading, roughly put, by claiming that Reid cannot hold that memory involve a purely non-conceptual acquaintance with an object that existed in the past, on the grounds that that view is just absurd. Second, Van Cleve (2015) argues Reidian memories do not essentially involve distinct conceptual content, but takes no stand on whether they can involve such content. I disagree with Copenhaver and Hamilton for reasons that I need not recap here. My view is similar to Van Cleve's, as I do not claim Reidian memories essentially involve distinct conceptual content, but it is distinct from that view too, as I claim that Reidian memories can and often do involve distinct conceptual content.

A third interpretation of Reidian memory is endorsed in Folescu (2015). Folescu's reading is intertwined with the details of her reading of Reidian imagination, and so I will discuss Folescu's readings of both memory and imagination together, after I first discuss the other readings in the literature on Reidian imagination. There are two other readings. The first is mentioned - albeit not endorsed - in Van Cleve (2015). On this proposed reading, objects of Reidian imagination are non-existent individuals conceived relative to distinctly conceived sets of universals. The second reading is endorsed in Lehrer (1989) and Wolterstorff (2001). On this second reading, objects of Reidian imagination simply are complex bundles of universals. On both of these readings, then, acts of imagination only ever involve distinct conceptual content.

My reading differs from the reading mentioned in Van Cleve. On my reading, objects of imagination are non-existent individuals conceived relative to their conceived features, but such features can be conceived as either indistinct features, abstract particulars, or instantiated universals. Both our readings, moreover, differ from the reading offered by Lehrer and Wolterstorff, in that Van Cleve and I hold that Reidian objects of imagination are not merely complex free floating bundles of universals: the objects of Reidian imagination are in fact *individuals* that do not exist and are conceived relative to their conceived features.

Last, there is Folescu on memory and imagination. Recall Folescu holds that Reidian perceptions essentially involve a non-conceptual presentation of the object perceived. She claims that Reidian memories, in contrast, essentially involve what she calls "proto-distinct content" and that Reidian imaginings essentially involve distinct

content. What is this proto-distinct content? Her claim is that the content involved in memory is not yet fully distinct, but that it is in some sense - which I explain in the next paragraph - not yet fully indistinct either. Folescu's view, moreover, is similar to the view that is proposed by Lehrer and Wolterstorff, but also slightly different, in that she holds that objects of imagination are not mere complex bundles of *universals*, but are instead complex bundles of *tropes*. This is to say that they are not complex bundles of things that are both abstract and *universal*, but instead complex bundles of things that are both abstract and *particular*. The idea, roughly put, is that Reidian objects of imagination are complex bundles of particular properties.

Interestingly, Folescu attributes to Reid a particular account of how memory and imagination come to involve progressively more distinct forms of conceptual content. She claims, quite rightly, Reid thinks the mind acquires powers to perceive, remember, and imagine in successive developmental steps, but also claims that with each step, the newly possible operation involves a more distinct form of conceptual content. The view she proposes is roughly this: Reid holds that, when we remember an object we formerly perceived, the conception of that object has less content than the conception involved in the earlier perception, just due to the imperfection of our faculty of memory. We might not remember, e.g., which precise shade of red that the object we formerly perceived was, but instead just remember that it was some shade of red. The incompleteness of the memory, on this reading, is the first step that the mind takes on the road towards fully abstracting and thus towards having conceptions that involve distinct content. Folescu laudably notes that the developmental account she attributes to Reid here is drawn from contemporary psychology, rather than Reid's texts and manuscripts, but she nonetheless suggests it is a view Reid would have appreciated.

My view is distinct from Folescu's in several ways. First, our readings differ on the type of content essentially involved in memory and imagination. I do not deny that Reidian acts of imagination can involve conceptions of things like Folescu's tropes: on my reading, after all, Reid holds we can conceive features of imagined objects as abstract particulars, which are at least analogous to whatever one might mean by "tropes". There are many disputes in contemporary metaphysics concerning what exactly it is to be a trope. It is an open debate, then, whether or not Reidian abstract particulars of the sort

I've described are aptly called tropes. But the basic idea, here, is that tropes are particular properties. On my reading, Reid holds that one can conceive features as particular properties, without conceiving them as token instantiations of universals, which is to say, more or less, that one can conceive them as tropes. But we do not need to wade into the details of any such contemporary debates about what is or is not a trope, as Folescu does not attribute any particular contemporary trope theory to Reid. It is nevertheless clear that, on my reading, in contrast Folescu's, Reidian memory and imagination can involve conceptions of features not only as abstract particulars, but also as indistinct features and as instantiated universals.

Second, Folescu and I have different readings of Reid's account of the processes through which conceptions, including those conceptions involved in perception, memory, and imagination, come to involve distinct conceptual content. On my reading, Reid holds that the process of learning to understand artificial language plays the essential role in the process through which the mind comes to have conceptions that involve distinct conceptual content. Reid's account is not one on which acts of perception, memory, and imagination each become possible at successive developmental stages, where each of those stages involves an increasingly distinct form of conceptual content. His account, rather, on my reading, is one on which these operations become possible in successive developmental stages, but on which the operations are all possible before a child learns artificial language, and, consequently, before a child can have conceptions that involve distinct conceptual content.

To sum up: my readings of Reid's account of the conceptual content essentially involved in acts of perception, memory, and imagination are novel in a number of ways, but also akin to a number of the readings of Reid's other commentators. The key point to note, however, is that, with respect to all of my readings, my main argument for them is quite novel: Reid holds that acts of perception, memory, and imagination can be performed before one learns artificial language, and, further, that conceptions of universals are possible only after we learn artificial language; consequently, Reid also holds that perception, memory, and imagination do not essentially involve distinct conceptual content. I suggest that we are obligated, as Reid's interpreters, to defend readings of Reid's account of perception, memory, and imagination that are compatible

with that key point, as well, ideally, with the rest of the textual evidence. I have attempted to do so in the preceding sections.

What accounts for the variety of readings in the literature? The passages in which Reid talks about the conceptions involved in perception, memory, and imagination, are, I suggest, rather mixed: some passages show Reid thinks that an operation involves distinct conceptual content, whereas others show the opposite. It is understandable, then, there are a wide variety of readings. I suggest that some interpreters latch onto passages that point in one way and take them to express his view, whereas others latch onto passages that point the other way and take them to express his view. On my reading, however, we can make coherent sense of the entirety of this mixed or muddled body of textual evidence: on my reading, all the passages express a part of Reid's complete view, as he holds that the conceptions involved in perception, memory and imagination can involve conceptual content of varying degrees of distinctness.

4.4 Reid on Acquired Perception and Habitual Judgment

I have not discussed Reid's account of acquired perception in any detail. In this section, I clarify the details of my reading of Reid's account of acquired perception and contrast it with readings in the literature. I do so, moreover, by addressing an exegetical issue that is discussed in the recent literature.

First, recall the explanation of Reidian acquired perception that I gave in (4.1). Acquired perceptions are products of past experience. In acquired perception, just like in original perception, a sign signifies an object. In acquired perception, however, the sign is an object of an original perception and the thing signified is something that has always been found connected with the sign in past experience. To clarify, consider our earlier example. On Reid's account, when one sees a hot red stove element, one originally perceives the element only as red. An original perception of a stove element as red, however, might prompt one to conceive that red element not only as red but also as hot, in virtue of one's past experiences of the repeated conjunction of seen red stove elements and felt sensations of heat. In the past, that is, one repeatedly *saw* red stove elements and at the same time also *felt* them as hot. In virtue of those experiences, one acquired a habit

in virtue of which one now conceives as hot the red stove elements one sees and believes that said elements are also hot. Of situations such as this, Reid says one has an *acquired* perception via sight of the heat of the stove element.

In light of that explanation, it is not unreasonable to think that a Reidian acquired perception is an original perception plus an additional conception and judgment/belief that is the product of an acquired habit. Our question here concerns whether Reid draws a distinction between acquired perceptions and other sorts of judgments/beliefs we habitually make on the occasion of our original perceptions. Why suppose that Reid draws any such a distinction? Part of the reason is that the discussion in the literature on this issue concerns a related issue of whether or not acquired perceptions are *genuine* perceptions in the very same sense as original perceptions. To grasp this issue a bit better: note we are inclined to say of some instances that involve an original perception plus an additional habitual conception and belief that they involve an additional perception, but we are not so inclined for other such cases. Van Cleve (2004), e.g., gives a good example of a case of which we are *not* inclined to say it involves an additional genuine perception. He presents the example as follows:

“I return home and see my wife’s car keys on the counter, whereupon I automatically conceive of her and believe that she is home.” (Van Cleve 2004, 127)

Commenting on this example, he writes:

“Since she is upstairs, I do not perceive her, but it seems that I fulfill all the conditions for [acquired] perception” (Ibid.)

The situation described appears to be one in which an object of original perception is a sign that prompts one to some additional conception and belief. Of course, if the situation here is one in which the belief is not automatic, but is instead a conclusion of some chain of reasoning that began with a *de re* judgment about the keys being on the counter, then we could simply say that that judgment is not properly speaking an acquired perception. The beliefs in Reidian acquired perceptions are, like the beliefs in original perception, immediate and not conclusions of any chain of propositional reasoning. The example,

then, is supposed to be one in which the judgment is not the conclusion of any rational inference, but is instead the product of some sort of acquired habit. This is what Van Cleve indicates when he says “I *automatically* conceive of her and believe that she is home” (Ibid.) Since the belief is stipulated to be automatic, the example does appear to satisfy the conditions of what it is to be a Reidian acquired perception. Van Cleve points out, moreover, it is odd to say of the man in this example that he *perceived* his wife. And Van Cleve is surely right, no? We are not inclined to say that he *perceived* his partner to be at home after seeing her keys. This case, then, appears to be a mere habitual judgment rather than an acquired perception. The question in front of us, then, is just this: is there a mark that serves to distinguish genuine Reidian acquired perceptions - such as, e.g., our example of a perception via sight of the heat of a red stove element - from mere habitual judgments - such as, e.g., Van Cleve’s key example?

Van Cleve thinks the mark that genuine perceptions involve an acquaintance-like presentation of the perceived object and its features; and he thinks, furthermore, that most Reidian acquired perceptions do not involve conceptions of that sort. It follows, on his reading, that most Reidian acquired perceptions are not genuine perceptions, but are instead mere habitual judgments that we happen to call “perceptions”. Van Cleve gives a number of arguments for the claim that acquired perceptions are not genuine perceptions. We need not survey those arguments here, as the claim I mean to argue for is not that Reid holds that acquired perceptions are genuine perceptions, but instead the claim that there is a real distinction to draw between Reidian acquired perceptions and mere habitual judgments. The phrase ‘genuine perception’ is not a term of art that Reid himself uses, but is instead one that his commentators have used and imposed onto his views. There may of course be any number of differences, on Reid’s account, between original and acquired perceptions, and if one wishes to say that, therefore, Reidian acquired perceptions are not genuine perceptions in the sense that Reidian original perceptions are, one will not receive any protest from me. The issue I am concerned with is whether a clear distinction can be drawn between Reidian acquired perceptions and mere habitual judgments. Van Cleve holds that it cannot.

Copenhaver (2010) argues that such a distinction can be drawn. She responds to Van Cleve's keys example, and, in doing so, explains why it does not involve a Reidian acquired perception. Copenhaver writes:

“Van Cleve does not perceive the presence of his wife upon seeing the keys on the counter. This is not a case of perception. Van Cleve is right that the reason it is not a case of perception is that the visual experience does not acquaint him with the presence of his wife. He concludes from this that just as this acquired perception does not count as genuine perception, most cases of acquired perception are not cases of genuine perception, for Reid. They are perceptual in a merely metaphorical sense.

However, this conclusion follows only if the car key example is an example of acquired perception. But it is unlike Reid's examples of acquired perception in an important way: in Reid's cases, original perception of qualities of objects equips perceivers with the ability to acquire a perceptual sensitivity to additional features *of those objects*, features not presented in original perception” (Copenhaver 2010, 304-305)

Copenhaver suggests, then, that the mark that distinguishes acquired perceptions from habitual judgments of the sort that Van Cleve describes in his example is this: if the individual object that the habitual judgment is about is the same individual object that the original perception that prompted it is about, then the additional conception and belief is in fact a genuine acquired perception rather than a habitual judgment; but, moreover, if the two individuals are not the same, then it is but a mere habitual judgment. On Copenhaver's suggested reading, then, acquired perception is quite specifically a way in which we become perceptually acquainted with additional features of those objects that we originally perceive. Van Cleve's keys example is not a case of that sort; therefore, it is not a case of Reidian acquired perception.

Has Copenhaver's reply just hit the nail right on the head? Van Cleve presents the following counter-example:

“A color-blind motorist can see that a traffic light is red by seeing that the illuminated light is the one in the top position. Here the signifying quality (place) and the signified quality (color) are qualities of the same object, so our motorist satisfies our latest condition for having an acquired perception of the color of the light. But does he perceive the redness of the light? No, for he is colour blind” (Van Cleve 2015, 135)

This example satisfies Copenhaver’s criterion: the additional conception and belief are about the same individual object. If Copenhaver’s reading is correct, then the colorblind motorist really does perceive the colour of the traffic light. But Van Cleve appears to be correct in saying that the motorist does not.

What is my alternate reading? I agree with Copenhaver there is a real distinction between acquired perceptions and habitual judgments, but I give a modified account of that distinction. I argue that one mark that - in addition to Copenhaver’s suggested mark - can serve to fully distinguish Reidian acquired perceptions from habitual judgments. Her criterion may not be sufficient to mark the distinction by itself, but our two can together. To begin, note the following passages:

“This power which we acquire of perceiving things by our senses, which originally we should not have perceived, is not the effect of any reasoning on our part: It is the result of our constitution, and of the situations in which we happen to be placed.

We are so made, that when two things are found to be conjoined in certain circumstances, we are prone to believe that they are connected by nature, and will always be found together in like circumstances. The belief which we are led to in such cases is not the effect of reasoning, nor does it arise from the intuitive evidence of the thing believed. It is, as I apprehend, the immediate effect of our constitution: Accordingly, it is strongest in infancy, before our reasoning power appears, before we are capable of drawing a conclusion from premises” (*EIP* 238)

“Acquired perception is not properly the testimony of our senses which God hath given us, but a conclusion drawn from what the senses testify. In our past experience, we have found certain things conjoined with what our senses testify.

We are led by our constitution to expect this continuation in time to come; and when we have often found it in our experience, we acquire a firm belief, that the things which we have found thus conjoined are connected by nature, and that the one is the sign of the other. The appearance of the sign immediately produces the belief of its usual attendant, and we think we perceive the one as well as the other.

That such conclusions are formed even in infancy, no man can doubt; nor is it less certain that they are confounded with the natural and immediate perceptions of sense, and in all languages called by the same name. We are therefore authorized by language to call them perception, and must often do so, or speak unintelligibly. But philosophy teaches us in this, as in many other instances, to distinguish things which the vulgar confound. I have therefore given the name of acquired perception to such conclusions, to distinguish them from what is naturally, originally, and immediately testified by our senses. Whether this acquired perception is to be resolved into some process of reasoning, of which we have lost the remembrance, as some philosophers think, or whether it results from some part of our constitution distinct from reason, as I rather believe, does not concern the present subject” (*EIP* 247)

There are two key points to make about these passages. First, Reid says that acquired perceptions are formed by people even in infancy, before they can reason. This gives us reason to conclude that Reid holds that the conceptions and beliefs that are involved in acquired perceptions do not essentially involve distinct conceptual content. On my reading, Reidian acquired perceptions are just like original perceptions, memories, and imaginings, in the sense that they can involve indistinct content, partly distinct content, distinct content, or a mixture of all three. The additional conception involved in acquired perception is more or less an act of Reidian imagination - i.e., a conception of an individual as it would appear to the senses if it were perceived - plus an immediate belief that the object exists and is what it is conceived to be.

Second, and most importantly, Reid says at the end of the second passage that he believes - in contrast to other philosophers - that *reasoning* is not involved in the process through which we acquire the habits involved in acquired perception. That process is not, Reid says, to be “resolved into some process of reasoning, of which we have lost the

remembrance” (Ibid.) Reid says, rather, that the habits are acquired by the exercise of some part of our constitution that is “distinct from reason” (Ibid.) To clarify this claim, first recall that reasoning, on Reid’s account, is an act in which one infers the truth of a proposition from that of another, by recognizing that the truth of the one makes the truth of the other evident. Reid’s claim in the passage, I suggest, is that reasoning, in that precise sense, is not involved in the process through which one acquires the habits that are involved in acquired perceptions. It makes good sense, of course, for Reid to deny that reasoning of that sort is involved in that process: Reid holds, afterall, that infants can have acquired perceptions, presumably before they ever learn an artificial language, from which it directly follows that the relevant processes cannot essentially involve the exercise of those abilities artificial language makes possible. But my interpretive claim here is a bit stronger than just that: I claim, that is, that Reid holds that such reasoning is *never* involved in the process, and that this is what serves to distinguish Reidian acquired perceptions from mere habitual judgments.

To clarify, we need to get clear on the “part of our constitution distinct from reason” Reid mentions in the quoted passage. I suggest we need only attend to the passages quoted, as Reid himself describes the type of process involved. To clarify, however, note there are two types of process we might call “induction”. In the first, one perceives the conjunction of tokens of distinct types so often that one acquires a habit of conceiving and believing in the existence of tokens of the one type on occasions in which one happens to perceive tokens of the other. In the second, the probable truth of one abstract proposition is inferred from that of another such proposition. In the quoted passage, I argue, Reid is properly read as denying that the second type of inductive process is ever involved in the process through which we acquire the habits involved in acquired perceptions, and that the first type is essentially involved. The developmental process involved is one in which one repeatedly perceives individuals with a certain set of features as having an additional feature, and one thereby comes to acquire - without engaging in any propositional reasoning - a habit in virtue of which one conceives the individual one perceives with the first set of features as having said additional feature. In a habitual judgment, in contrast, the process is one in which one previously perceived an individual with certain features, judged a proposition about that particular individual to

be true, then reasoned from the truth of that proposition to the truth of another proposition about that same or another individual, and did this so often that, now, when one perceives an individual like that again, one habitually judges a proposition of the latter sort is true without any of the previously explicit reasoning.

Together, Copenhaver and my own criteria can distinguish acquired perceptions from cases of mere habitual judgments. To see why, let's reconsider Van Cleve's example of the colour-blind motorist.

In that example, the sign is the location of the light and the thing signified by that sign is the colour of the light. These features are features of the same individual object, so Copenhaver's criterion does not explain why this is not a case of acquired perception. Note, however, that the colour-blind driver did not have past experiences in which she perceived lights in a particular place as being lights of a particular colour. She is, after all, colour-blind. The process through which she came to acquire the habit, then, is not like our example in which one repeatedly perceives stove elements to be red and also hot, and thereby acquires a habit of conceiving and believing of the red stove elements one merely sees that they are hot. How could the colour blind driver acquire the habit? I suggest the example must be one in which the driver was told, at some time in the past, that top lights on traffic light boxes are red lights rather than green or yellow lights. She consequently judged some proposition to be true on the basis of that testimony. She then subsequently repeatedly reasoned to the conclusion that the particular lights that she saw on top of particular traffic light boxes were in fact red rather than yellow or green. She repeated that sort of reasoning so often that she now habitually and immediately - that is, without using any explicit reasoning - judges that traffic lights she sees on the top of light boxes are red. On my reading, then, this case does not involve acquired perception, but instead habitual judgment. Copenhaver's criterion does not account for this case, but my criterion allows us to do so. Last, consider one further example:

In mid december 1993, I was a small boy who received a Christmas present from my parents, which was boxed and placed under a Christmas tree in the corner of my family's living room. One night, I snuck down to the living room and shook the present, so as to hear the sound the object made, in hopes of being able discern what I was getting for Christmas. I heard a sound, and, after a sophisticated bout

of reasoning, I arrived at the conclusion that I was getting a ninja turtle action figure as a present for Christmas. This was good: I liked ninja turtles a lot. The sound was not, of course, all by itself enough for me to reason to my conclusion. However, the size and weight seemed about right, and, additionally, I was aware that my parents knew I liked ninja turtles, and I thought I had overheard my sister say something earlier about a ninja turtle action figure that I knew I did not as yet possess: from all this, I concluded, the object in the box was a ninja turtle. Every night thereafter, right up until Christmas, I, ever excited at the prospect of getting a new ninja turtle action figure, snuck down to see my present again. Each time, I shook it just as before, heard the sound, and judged that the object I heard was a ninja turtle action figure, without going through the reasoning I previously used to come to that conclusion. One night, moreover, I noticed there was a new present for me under the tree. It was from my grandmother. I shook it and it made the very same sound. In my excitement, I immediately judged it to be another ninja turtle, without employing any reasoning at all.

The question is this: did I *perceive* the present from my grandmother to be a ninja turtle? Note that on Copenhaver's reading, the example indeed appears to be an acquired perception. On my reading, in contrast, it is but a mere habitual judgment. I reasoned to the conclusion that objects in boxes that are presents for me that make a particular type of sound are ninja turtle action figures, and came to judge habitually of such objects that they are ninja turtle action figures. I did not perceive the object to be a ninja turtle until I opened my present on Christmas morning.

To close, I need to qualify my claims in this section by noting that I only mean to argue that Reid was thinking of the distinction between acquired perception and habitual judgment in this precise way when he wrote *EIP* in the mid 1780s. I suspect, in fact, Reid simply did not bother to draw a clear distinction between these cases when he wrote *IHM* in the 1760s. The textual evidence supports this developmental claim. Note, e.g., Reid writes the following in *IHM*:

“When a painter perceives, that this picture is the work of Raphael, that the work of Titan; a jeweller, that this is a true diamond, that a counterfeit; a sailor, that this

is a ship of five hundred ton, that of four hundred: these different acquired perceptions are produced by the same general principles of the human mind” (*IHM* 192)

Make note of the examples that he gives in this passage. And then note that, in *EIP*, in a chapter titled “Of the fallacy of the senses”, Reid explains why supposed examples of false original perceptions are not original perceptions at all. Reid argues, there, that such examples fall into four distinct categories. The first category, he writes, are not errors of original perception, but instead

“...conclusions rashly drawn from the testimony of the senses”; the second category, moreover, are not errors of original perception but instead “[errors] which we are liable to in our acquired perceptions” (*EIP* 244-251)

The details of the third and fourth types are not particularly relevant to our discussion here; the point to note concerns the particular examples that Reid includes of the first and second types. Of the first, Reid writes:

“Many things called deceptions of sense are only conclusions rashly drawn from the testimony of the senses. In these cases the testimony of the senses is true, but we rashly draw a conclusion from it, which does not necessarily follow. We are disposed to impute our errors rather to false information than to inconclusive reasoning, and to blame our senses for the wrong conclusions we draw from their testimony.

Thus, when a man has taken a counterfeit guinea for a true one, he says that his senses deceived him; but he lays the blame were it ought not to be laid...” (*EIP* 244)

The example Reid identifies - the example “perceiving” a coin to be a real guinea - as a conclusion drawn rashly from the senses, is the same type of example that Reid identified in *IHM* - that is, the example of “perceiving” a diamond to be genuine - as an acquired perception. How do we account for this? I suggest that Reid made more precise his notion of acquired perception in the later works. In *IHM*, Reid used ‘acquired perception’ to mean something rather more broad, something roughly like “a conclusion habitually

drawn from the senses that we are apt to mistake for original perception”, but that he subsequently went on to refine that notion so as to distinguish acquired perceptions from our habitual judgments. Recall our very first example of acquired perception: you repeatedly saw stove elements to be red and at the same time felt them to be hot, and thereby acquired a habit of conceiving and believing of the stove elements that you merely see as red that they are also hot. Now contrast that with the example in which one judges a diamond to be genuine. In the latter, one did not originally perceive rocks in the past as having a set of features and at the same time originally perceive them as having the additional feature of being a genuine diamond. Instead, one was likely told at some point in the past that rocks with certain features are genuine diamonds. One then remembered that general truth and reasoned from the general to the particular often enough, such that one now habitually judges of the rocks one sees with that set of features that they are genuine diamonds. It is clear, on my reading, why Reid notes in *EIP* that this sort of case is a conclusion drawn from the testimony of sense rather than an acquired perception. The fact that he identifies that sort of case, in *IHM*, as an act of acquired perception is, I suggest, simply a product of the fact that he is working, there, with a looser definition ‘acquired perception’, on which the signification of that term includes cases that he considers in *EIP* separately as acquired perceptions and judgments formed habitually on the basis of what we perceive.

4.5 Summary and Conclusions

This dissertation concerns Thomas Reid’s philosophy of language. As noted previously, that topic has not received much attention in the literature. One aim of the dissertation is to make some progress towards rectifying this situation in the literature, by carrying out a detailed study of Reid’s philosophy of language. I hope to have accomplished that aim. I noted that a second aim of the dissertation, moreover, is to use the results of that study of Reid’s philosophy of language to contribute to the literature on his philosophy of mind. I suggested, in the introduction, that Reid’s views on language and mind are so intertwined such that, by understanding the former, we can hope to better understand the latter. I hope that I have shown the reader that this is very much the case, not by way of argument, but by way of showing that progress can be made.

Throughout the chapters and sections of the dissertation, I argue for a number of novel exegetical claims. In what follows, I briefly recap those claims.

In chapter two, I discuss Reid's answer to the question: what does the ability to understand artificial linguistic signs make possible? Reid's answer, I argue, is that the ability to understand artificial linguistic signs makes it possible for us to conceive universals, to judge, and to reason. I argue, further, that those claims, in conjunction with Reid's accounts of moral liberty and efficient causation, commit him to the further claim that artificial language makes possible moral liberty.

In chapter three, I discussed Reid's answer to the question: what makes artificial language possible. That question is really two questions: (i) what makes it possible for infants to first learn to understand an artificial language that is already spoken by the members of their linguistic community? and (ii) what made it possible for humans to first invent artificial languages, at the point way back in history before any such language had yet been invented. I focus, moreover, on Reid's claim that learning and inventing artificial linguistic signs is possible in such cases, only if we have a natural language faculty by the exercise of which we can perform social operations of the mind. In seeking to understand Reid's answers to these questions and his arguments for them, I argue for a number of novel exegetical claims.

First, I argue for a novel interpretation of Reid's account of the social operations of the mind. On that interpretation, Reid holds that social operations are (i) operations of the mind, (ii) cannot exist unless expressed by signs and thereby made known to another intelligent being, (iii) are just as simple as and cannot be reduced to or identified with solitary operations, (iv) presuppose understanding and will, and, in the case of the social operations of giving testimony and making promising, presuppose moral liberty, and (v) social operations are remote operations of which the mind is not conscious.

Second, I argue Reid is committed to the view that the natural linguistic signs that we can use to express the social operations are signs that signify by what Reid calls "a natural kind of magic", which is to say they signify their objects even if one has never before conceived the social operations that they signify, and, consequently, holds that the natural language faculty is, along with the faculties of perception and consciousness, one basic source of our empirical concepts.

Third, I presented detailed reconstructions of Reid's arguments for his claim that artificial language is possible only if we possess a natural language with which we can express social operations. I then went on to critically engage the literature on the first of those arguments. I point out that Reid's other interpreters - namely, Turri (2013) and Powell (2017) - do not fully appreciate the role that Reid's account of the social operations plays in his argument. I argue, moreover, that the account of the first invention of language presupposed by that argument is *prima facie* incompatible with Reid's views on what artificial language makes possible and his account of the social operations. I consider several suggestions for how we might absolve Reid of these problems, but conclude that none of those suggestions wholly succeeds.

In chapter four, I show how my results in chapters two and three can help us better understand Reid's accounts of perception, memory, and imagination. I argue for several novel claims. I argue Reid holds that we can perceive, remember, and imagine before we learn artificial language, and, consequently, that Reid holds that those acts do not essentially involve distinct conceptual content. I develop readings of Reid's accounts of perception, memory and imagination, readings consistent with that first point. I point out some of the errors of contrasting readings. Last, I argue for a novel reading of Reid's distinction between acquired perceptions and judgments made habitually on the occasion of our original and acquired perceptions.

I have, then, made some progress towards better understanding Reid's accounts of language and mind. There is more progress to be made. In particular, I think that the results achieved on better understanding Reid's philosophy of language can help us to better understand some aspects of Reid's epistemology. To explain: recall, e.g., Reid holds that some propositions are self-evident to us; Reid often calls these propositions "first principles of common sense". Reid lists a number of such principles in his essay on judgment in *EIP*. There is a question to ask here concerning why these propositions - rather than others - have the privileged epistemic status that they do. Reid is clear that it is by exercising our faculty of common sense that we can recognize such principles as self-evident. On one plain reading, first principles simply are those propositions that, when understood, immediately command assent from any normally functioning mature human mind, and they do so simply because God "wired" up the mind in the way he did.

But I think it important to note that Reid has a little bit more to say about common sense principles. He writes:

“There is a certain degree of [judgment] which is necessary to our being subjects of law and government, capable of managing our own affairs, and answerable for our conduct towards others: This is common sense, because it is common to all men with whom we can transact business, or call to account for their conduct. . .

The same degree of understanding which makes a man capable of acting with common prudence in the conduct of life, makes him capable of discovering what is true and what is false in matters that are self-evident, and which he distinctly apprehends” (EIP 426)

The part of the quote passage I want to emphasize is: “[common sense is that degree of judgment that] is common to all men with whom we can transact business, or call to account for their conduct” (Ibid.) I want, moreover, to read “transact business” as meaning roughly “communicate with each other so as to perform the social operations”. Recall Reid holds that the ability to understand artificial language capable of expressing social operations is part of what is required for epistemic rationality and moral liberty. Whatever commitments are necessarily involved, then, on Reid’s account, in our using and understanding such artificial language, are also required for epistemic rationality and moral liberty. What I want to suggest, moreover, is that Reid holds those commitments just are our common sense commitments, and, further, that this fact might serve to account for why Reid thinks that the first principles have the privileged epistemic status that they do. Reid holds that the first principles are those propositions one must assume to be true - if only in practice - if one is to possess epistemic rationality, and, thus, to know anything at all. I will not argue for - or even explain any further - that suggestion, but will leave the task of doing so for future work.

Works Cited

- Alston, William. 1989. "Reid on Perception and Conception." In *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid*, edited by Dalgarno and Matthews, 35-48. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Ardal. 1984. "Hume and Reid on Promises, Intention, and Obligation." In *Philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment*, edited by Vincent Hope, 13-27. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Austin, John L. 1962. *How to do Things with Words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Bach, Kent and Robert M. Harnish. 1979. *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*, Cambridge: M.I.T. Press.
- Castagnetto, Susan. 1992. "Reid's Answer to Abstract Ideas." *Journal of Philosophical Research* 17: 39-60.
- Coady, C.A.J. 1989. "Reid on Testimony" In *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid*, edited by Dalgarno and Matthews, 225-248. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Coady, C.A.J. 1989. "Reid and the Social Operations of Mind" In *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid*, edited by Cuneo and Van Woudenberg, 180-203. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Copenhaver, Rebecca. 2004. "A Realism for Reid: Mediated but Direct." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 12, no.1: 61-74.
- Copenhaver, Rebecca. 2006 "Thomas Reid's Theory of Memory." *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 23, no.2: 171-187.
- Copenhaver, Rebecca. 2010. "Thomas Reid on Acquired Perception." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 91, no.3: 285-312.
- Copenhaver, Rebecca. 2016. "Additional Perceptive Powers: Comments on Van Cleve's Problems from Reid." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 93, no.1: 218-224.
- Copenhaver, Rebecca. 2020. "Reid on Language and the Culture of Mind." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, DOI: 10.1080/00048402.2020.1753086
- Crosby, Alastair. "Social Intercourse and Social Epistemology from Thomas Reid's Point of View," MA Thesis. University of Victoria, 2015.

- Folescu, Martina. 2015. "Perceptual and Imaginative Conception: The Distinction Reid Missed." In *Thomas Reid on Mind, Knowledge and Value*, edited by Buras and Copenhaver, 52-74. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Folescu, Martina. 2018. "Reid's View of Memorial Conception" *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 16, no.3: 211-226.
- Gallie, Roger. 1998. *Thomas Reid: Ethics, Aesthetics, and the Anatomy of the Self*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Harré & Robinson. 1997. "What Makes Language Possible? Ethological Foundationalism in Reid and Wittgenstein." *Review of Metaphysics* 50, no.3: 483-498.
- Henle, R. J. 1983. "Thomas Reid's Theory of Signs" *Semiotics*: 155-168.
- Hume, David. 2007. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Houston, Joseph. 2004. "Testimony Contrasted with Judgment and Opinion" In *Thomas Reid: Context, Influence, Significance*, edited by Houston, 1-34. Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press.
- Jacquette, Dale. 2003. "Thomas Reid on Natural Signs, Natural Principles, and the Existence of the External World." *Review of Metaphysics* 57, no.2: 279-300.
- Jensen, Henning. 1979. "Reid and Wittgenstein on Philosophy and Language." *Philosophical Studies* 36, no.4: 359-376.
- Lehrer, Keith. 1989. *Thomas Reid*. New York: Routledge.
- McKittrick, Jennifer. 2002. "Reid's Foundation for the Primary/Secondary Quality Distinction." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 52, no.209: 478-494.
- Nichols, Ryan. 2007. *Thomas Reid's Theory of Perception*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pouivet, Roger. 2012. "Reid on Testimony, and Virtue Epistemology." *Philosophical News* 4: 24-39.
- Powell, Lewis. 2017. "Thomas Reid on Signs and Language." *Philosophy Compass* 12, no.3: e12409.
- Reid, Thomas. 1997. *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press
- Reid, Thomas. 2002. *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press

- Reid, Thomas. 2002. *The Correspondence of Thomas Reid*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press
- Reid, Thomas. 2005. *On Logic, Rhetoric and the Fine Arts*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press
- Reid, Thomas. 2007. *On Practical Ethics*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press
- Reid, Thomas. 2010. *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press
- Russell, Bertrand. 1910. "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 11: 108–128.
- Rysiew, Patrick. 2015. "Thomas Reid on Language." In *Linguistic Content: New Essays in the History of Philosophy of Language*, edited by Cameron and Stainton, 48-84. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rysiew, Patrick. 2017. "Meaning, Communication, and the Mental." *ProtoSociology* 34: 31-43.
- Searle, John. 1969. *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schuhmann, Karl & Barry Smith. 1990. "Elements of Speech Act Theory in the Work of Thomas Reid." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 7, no.1: 47-66.
- Sommerville, James. 1989. "Making Out the Signatures: Reid's Account of our Knowledge of Other Minds." In *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid*, edited by Dalgarno and Matthews, 249-274. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Stewart, Dugald. 2007. *Selected Philosophical Writings*. Exeter: Imprint Academic.
- Todd, D.D. 1987. "Thomas Reid's Semiotic." In *a Word: Essays in Honour of Steven Davis*: 126-144.
- Turri, John. 2013. "Reid on the Priority of Natural Language." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 41: 214-223.
- Van Cleve, James. 2004. "Reid's Theory of Perception." In *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid*, edited by Cuneo and Woudenberg, 101-133. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Van Cleve, James. 2015. *Problems from Reid*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yaffe, Gideon. 2007. "Promises, Social Acts, and Reid's First Argument for Moral Liberty." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 45, no.2: 267-289.

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Alastair Crosby

Post-secondary Education and Degrees: University of Victoria
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
2003-2008 B.Mus.

University of Victoria
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
2010-2013 B.A.

University of Victoria
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
2013-2015 M.A.

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2016-2021 Ph.D.

Honours and Awards: UVic Graduate Scholarship
2013-2015

Western University Graduate Scholarship
2016-2020

Related Work Experience Teaching Assistant
University of Victoria
2013-2016

Research Assistant
University of Victoria
2015-2016

Teaching Assistant
The University of Western Ontario
2016-2021

Publications:

Crosby, Alastair. Review of *Thomas Reid and the Problem of Secondary Qualities* by Andrew Shrock. *Locke Studies* 18 (November 2018).