

## REVISITING REID ON RELIGION

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### ABSTRACT

This paper answers two interpretive questions surrounding belief in God in Thomas Reid's philosophy, the status question and the detachability question. The former has to do with the type of justification Reid assigns to belief in God—immediate or mediate. The later question is whether anything philosophically significant depends on his belief in God. I argue that, for Reid, belief in God is immediately justified and integral to some parts of his system. Reid's response to skepticism about God is more complicated and more interesting than many of the contemporary philosophers who, citing Reid as inspiration, also hold that belief in God enjoys immediate justification. In Reid's hands the approach to belief in God does not compete with inferential justification, does not rely on a special faculty, and foregrounds the developmental character of his epistemology.

Keywords: Thomas Reid, Natural Theology, Reformed Epistemology, Taste, Beauty, Natural Belief, Theism

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## I. THE QUESTIONS IN CONTEXT

Thomas Reid was a theistic philosopher. He believed in God and helped himself to this belief in constructing his philosophy. Reid is by no means unique in this regard, either among the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment or, more broadly, early modern Europe. The evidence of his faith is right on the surface of both his life and work. He spent the first part of his adult life as a Christian minister, and, in his last public address, described hope in the mercy of God as a consolation in old age.<sup>1</sup> Nor can the reader get past the first paragraph of his major works – indeed, not even the title pages – without encountering references to 'the Almighty', who frequents the pages that follow.

There is no free lunch in philosophy. Theistic philosophers, like Reid, naturally face philosophical questions about their belief in God. There are, of course, many such questions – too many to consider in a short paper. For reasons that will soon be clear, two such questions are at the top of the literature on Reid. On what basis does Reid believe that there is a God? That is, what sort of justification, if any, does Reid's belief enjoy in his thought? Call this the *status question*. The second question is whether belief in God is integral to his system. To what extent can his theism be extracted without disturbing the system of thought in which it is embedded? This is the *detachability question*. Exploring these questions tells us something about the way Reid's philosophy holds up and holds together. The questions also illuminate the way Reid relates to his own context and to ours. A few brief comments contextualizing Reid's answers will be helpful in what follows.

Reid's basic project was to criticize, and offer an alternative to, the philosophical principles that produced Hume's skepticism (IHM 4). These principles, which he calls the common theory of ideas, consist of a cluster of interrelated claims about the aspects of our cognitive life that are mediated or unmediated. Of particular relevance is an epistemic thesis about the range of beliefs that may be justified immediately. According to the common theory, the only beliefs that are immediately justified are beliefs about things that presently exist in the mind itself: our ideas. It follows from this claim that beliefs about anything else – things like the external world, the past, and other minds – are either unjustified or else justified mediately. (For convenience, call such things *independent objects*.) In order to be mediately justified, beliefs about independent

objects must be properly related to beliefs about our ideas; they must be related in a way that enables the transfer of justification from the one set of beliefs to the other.

Reid credited Hume (along with Berkeley) with showing that the theory of ideas accrues an irresistible skeptical force when coupled with the independently plausible thesis that beliefs about independent objects can be justified by beliefs about ideas *only if* there is a good inference from the later to the former. Reid readily concedes that there is no good inference from beliefs about ideas to beliefs about independent objects. This had been proved by Hume ‘beyond the possibility of reply’ (IHM 70, 61).<sup>2</sup> It follows that, if the common theory is true, beliefs about independent objects enjoy no justification; call this *no justification skepticism*.<sup>3</sup>

In response, Reid criticizes the underlying epistemic thesis.<sup>4</sup> His criticism is basically that this form of foundationalism is indefensibly narrow. It accepts as immediately justified the deliverances of the faculties that inform us about the present states of consciousness and the content of our ideas (consciousness and reason), and requires that beliefs produced by other faculties (perception and memory, for example) be justified by reasoning from this base. Reid sees no reason to privilege the deliverances of one subset of our faculties in this way. None of our faculties is immune to error; all are open to some degree of doubt; and all are to some degree corrigible. Accepting the immediate justification of the deliverances of some faculties while requiring the deliverances of others to be justified mediately is arbitrary; it gives some faculties an unmerited epistemic pass, while holding others in unmerited suspicion. Rejecting the deliverances of all of our faculties, however, is even more problematic. This option has the benefit of drawing no arbitrary distinction between our faculties. But it also deprives us of any stock of justified beliefs to which we may appeal in mounting a justification for any other beliefs.

We have no alternative but to trust at least some of our faculties, and no rational basis for trusting only some. The only rational alternative is, therefore, to trust them all, to treat the deliverances of all our faculties – natural beliefs – on par with one another, epistemically. In his own words:

The skeptic asks me, Why do you believe the existence of external objects which you perceive? This belief, sir, is none of my manufacture; it came from the mind of Nature; it bears her image and superscription; and, if it is not right, the fault is not mine: I even took it upon trust, and without suspicion. Reason, says the skeptic, is the only judge of truth, and you ought to throw off every opinion and every belief that is not grounded on reason. Why, sir, should I believe the faculty of reason more than that of perception? – they came both out of the same shop, and were made by the same artist; and if he puts one piece of false ware into my hands, what should hinder him from putting another? (IHM 168–69)

Three key features of the epistemological framework introduced in this passage will be important below. Reid's alternative to the theory of ideas is a form of broad and moderate foundationalism, with a strong externalist streak.<sup>5</sup> His epistemology is foundationalist insofar as it assigns a place to immediately justified beliefs, and his foundationalism is broad insofar as it recognizes the same reason to accept the beliefs produced by all our faculties. They are, one and all, natural beliefs: products of the original principles of our nature. There is no rational alternative to taking the truth to be, in general, the natural issue of our faculties (EIP 527–8). Reid's foundationalism is moderate in that the immediate justification of our natural beliefs is not the final word on their epistemic status. Taking true belief to be, in general, the natural issue of our faculties does not require any of our faculties to be infallible or any particular belief to be indubitable. Especially in light of the developmental aspects of his epistemology, which I discuss below, Reid says, 'it becomes a fallible being to be modest, open to new light, and sensible, that by some false bias, or by rash judging, he may be misled' (EIP 563). Finally, Reid's epistemology has a strong externalist streak inasmuch as the factor that secures the prima facie positive epistemic status of our natural beliefs—their being produced by faculties successfully designed for this purpose—is not something to which we have access or need have access. If our belief-forming faculties are not successfully aimed at the truth, Reid says, 'we are deceived by Him that made us, and there is no remedy' (IHM 72).

The epistemological framework that cast doubt on independent objects also cast doubt on the existence of God—a point Reid recognizes from the beginnings of his philosophical career (IHM 4–5). God is an independent object. On the theory of ideas, then, belief in God is justified only if there is a good inference to support the belief. Criticisms of theistic arguments are therefore a basis for no-justification skepticism about God. Hume was well known for just such criticisms. Both the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* touch on Hume's concerns about arguments for the existence of God,<sup>6</sup> while the *Dialogues on Natural Religion* take up the problem in earnest. Hume's *Dialogues* circulated in Reid's context from the 1750s, and were published (posthumously) in 1779, six years before Reid published his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers*. Nor were concerns about arguments for the existence of God uniquely tied to Hume's criticisms of natural theology. Debates about the proper basis of belief in God, and even the possibility of natural theology, were a major issue in Reid's context.<sup>7</sup>

Responding to this sort of challenge is a watershed issue for a theistic philosopher. One response, well-known in Reid's day and ours, is to accept the terms of the challenge and attempt to construct a satisfactory inference for belief in God.<sup>8</sup> Another strategy equally well-known in Reid's day and ours is to dispute the terms of the challenge, arguing that belief in God can be justified immediately, without the support of a good inference from other justified beliefs.<sup>9</sup> Reid's broad foundationalism is congenial to a reply of this second sort. His Reformed

theological context is suggestive as well. The concept of a *sensus divinitatis* is a touchstone of the theological tradition in which Reid was trained. As the name suggests, the *sensus divinitatis* is modeled on the senses; it is taken to be a basic intellectual faculty, whose output is belief in God. If we are endowed with such a faculty, and if the deliverances of our faculties are immediately justified, belief in God is immediately justified. We would have the same reason to believe in God that we have to believe in other independent things. Philosophers of religion in our own day, often called Reformed epistemologists, have developed this sort of response, citing Reid as a forerunner (see, for example, Plantinga 1983).

Which of these options, if any, was Reid's own response to no justification skepticism about belief in God? Does the status of belief in God matter to the account of the human mind he constructs? Throughout his long career, as a regent at King's College and then Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow, Reid lectured on a subject matter—pneumatology, as it was then called—that included natural theology (EIP 14). In preparing his lectures for publication at the end of his career, however, Reid included very little material on natural theology.<sup>10</sup> The remainder of this paper will argue that his published works include the materials necessary to find the answers. But the answers require interpretation and are therefore matters of debate.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. THE STATUS QUESTION

Reid's response to the status question is not as straightforward as the strategy he inspired in others. Reid clearly thinks there are good inferences for the existence of God. Clarke's style of first-cause arguments receive favorable mention not only in Reid's unpublished lectures but in his published works as well (see, for example, EIP 260–1 and EAP 241–3). More importantly, Reid explicitly discusses a theistic argument based on his commitment to a broad set of immediate beliefs. In his sixth *Essay on the Intellectual Powers*, Reid surveys a range of immediately justified beliefs, which he calls the first principles of necessary truths. Among this class of first principles, he lists the major premise of a design argument, that is, 'that design, and intelligence in the cause, may be inferred, with certainty, from marks or signs of it in the effect' (EIP 503). After arguing that this is indeed a first principle (that is, it cannot be sensibly rejected nor can it be established by reasoning and experience), Reid pens the most extended discussion of natural theology in his published works (EIP 508). What he calls 'the argument from final causes' proceeds by coupling the major premise with this claim: 'that there are in fact the clearest marks of design and wisdom in Nature'. Reid believes that the 'gradual advancement made in the knowledge of Nature' puts the minor premise beyond dispute (EIP 510).<sup>12</sup> Reid notes Hume's scruples about applying the major premise to the production of the world. Creation is a singular case,

which is beyond the scope of human experience, and therefore nothing can be inferred from it on the basis of experience. But Reid believes the objection is misguided. First, as a first principle, the premise is not based on conjunction of things in experience. Second, the same pattern of reasoning would lead us to doubt the intelligence of other persons (EIP 511). If it held, we would not perceive of the plans and intentions of others on the basis of their behavior.

Setting the details of Reid's design argument aside, we clearly have what he judged to be a good inference to theism from other justified beliefs. Some have thought this settles the status question (Sommerville 1995: 357; Baumann 1999: 49; Rysiew 2002: 444). Reid himself seems to invite the conclusion. In one passage, he describes first principles as propositions that 'do not admit of direct proof' (EIP 39). Since God's existence admits of direct proof, it would seem not to be a first principle. But Gregory Poore has recently argued that, upon closer examination, Reid does not rule out the possibility of arguing for first principles (2015: 219–22). In fact, Reid's more cautious statements leave the door open to arguments for first principles, and in places Reid himself steps through. He says that first principles 'seldom admit of direct proof, nor do they need it' (EIP 39). The status of a belief as a first principle rules out the need for inferential justification; it also rules out the possibility of inferential support from beliefs that are more basic than the first principle. But it is possible, even if uncommon, for immediately justified deliverances of one or more faculties to provide a good argument for the reliability of the beliefs produced by another faculty. Reid reasons in just this way about the belief in the intelligence of others. He says that the belief that there is intelligence in our fellow human beings is a natural conviction, that is, a first principle. Setting aside the status of the belief as a first principle, he proceeds to sketch a good inference for the conclusion—an inference just like his design argument for God (EIP 483). In such cases we have an abundance of justification. The fact that Reid argues for belief in God therefore does not by itself settle the status question.

In another passage that seems to bear on the status question, Reid contrasts our belief in the intelligence of our fellow human beings with our belief in the intelligence of the Author of Nature (EIP 483). He notes that belief in the intelligence of our fellow human beings is necessary for receiving improvement by the instruction and example others, and hence must be taken for granted prior to the use of reason. Because of the dependence of the development of our reasoning capacities on belief in the intelligence of others Reid says that this belief 'must be a first principle'. Though the passage does not say so directly, the suggestion is that belief in intelligence behind the created order is not similarly necessary for the development of reason, and therefore not equally fundamental. If belief in God is less fundamental than a first principle, it cannot be a first principle.

The passage may thus seem to settle the status question by implying that belief in God is not foundational, but depends for its justification upon inferential

support. But not even this passage is decisive. For the sense of priority Reid ascribes to belief in the intelligence of our fellow human beings in the passage is not epistemic, but psychological. The fact that the deliverances of one faculty are required for the development of a second does not mean that the deliverances of the second are not immediately justified. Reid cites moral and mathematical axioms as examples of beliefs that are immediately justified but require the development of a ‘ripened understanding’ (EAP 279). One must acquire the concepts used in mathematical axioms and become accustomed to applying them before one can see their truth. But this does not mean that one must justify belief in the axioms by inference from other beliefs. Axioms stand on their own two feet, epistemically speaking.

Other interpreters have emphasized the fact that, despite the familiarity of the idea in Reid’s theological tradition, he nowhere posits a special faculty, or *sensus divinitatis*, for producing immediately justified belief in God (Nichols and Callergård 2011: 324; Tuggy 2004: 299). But this is not a decisive point either. The fact that he does not posit a unique or designated faculty for producing belief in God does not mean that he thinks we have no faculty that produces theistic beliefs without inference. In fact, Reid does think we have such a faculty. He calls it ‘taste’.

The faculty of taste is the subject of Reid’s eighth and final *Essay on the Intellectual Powers*. Taste is a complex mental operation by which we discern and relish the beauty and grandeur of sensible objects (EIP 573). The beauty and grandeur we discern and relish in sensible objects is, according to Reid’s theory, only derivative beauty—a manifestation or expression of original beauty.<sup>13</sup> He compares derived beauty to the light reflected by the moon and planets; their light is borrowed and transmitted from another source. Original beauty and grandeur—the source—is some admirable trait, or excellence, in the mind responsible for the organization and features we see. In a rational subject, the derivative beauty in sensible things functions as a sign of the original beauty in minds that are otherwise inaccessible to us. To call derived beauties ‘signs’ is simply to say that perception of them immediately triggers belief in the thing signified—original beauty or grandeur—by an original principle of our constitution (EIP 599).

Reid explicitly models the faculty of taste on the external senses (EIP 573), noting that taste is a faculty for the production of immediately justified, non-inferential beliefs alongside certain feelings. Taste closely resembles the acts of perception by which we become aware of the thoughts and feelings of others through their facial expressions and bodily gestures (EIP 486). Both mental operations build upon, or are triggered by, a prior operation of the external senses.<sup>14</sup> To come to believe that a child is experiencing delight on the basis of her facial expression, one must first perceive the facial expression; and to come to believe in the excellences of an artist’s mind, one must first perceive her

work. In both cases the original principles of our constitution effect a connection between the objects of sense and otherwise inaccessible features of minds. In the first case, we form beliefs about the thoughts and feelings of others on the basis of their bodily dispositions; in the second, we form beliefs about excellences in other minds on the basis of the derivative beauty they impart to the objects of sense. Since we have no independent access to the minds of others, we cannot produce the underlying associations by reasoning and experience. These mental acts involve what Reid calls second class signs, ‘wherein the connection between the sign and the thing signified, is not only established by nature, but discovered to us by a natural principle, without reasoning or experience’ (IHM 60).

Reid’s account makes taste a social operation of the mind in the sense that it involves the presence of another mind. In the experience of beauty, Laurent Jaffro says, there is ‘communication from spirit to spirit. Someone is speaking there’ (2015: 173). The beauties of nature, on this approach, are God’s speech or signature (EIP 603). Through them the original principles of our constitution lead us to believe, without the aid of inference, in the grandeur of the divine mind, and thereby the existence of God. In the context of Reid’s broad foundationalism, the broadly theistic beliefs produced by the faculty of taste are not just immediately formed but immediately justified (EIP 595).

Reid’s approach to beauty deserves far more attention than it can receive here, and we will have occasion to say more in what follows. The present point is simply that the status question is not settled by noting that Reid does not posit a special faculty (*sensus divinitatis*) to produce immediately justified belief in God. His understanding of taste preserves the spirit of the Reformed epistemologists’ response to the status question, even if it departs from the letter. It seems that Reid takes belief in God to be immediately justified through the operations of taste. Thus, Reid is indeed a sort of forerunner of the Reformed epistemologist’s response to no-justification skepticism about belief in God. And Reid’s version of the response does not exclude or compete with good inferences for theism, and does not require a special faculty.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. THE DETACHABILITY QUESTION

Reid not only believed in the God of traditional theism, he put the belief to work. He repeatedly invoked the wisdom and beneficence of the Author of nature as a reason to trust the deliverances of our faculties. ‘Our intellectual powers are wisely fitted by the Author of nature for the discovery of truth, as far as suits our present estate. Error is not their natural issue.’ (EIP 527). ‘The genuine dictate of our natural faculties is the voice of God . . . and to say that it is fallacious is to impute a lie to the God of truth.’ (EAP 229). The detachability question concerns the work Reid’s theism does in his system. Can such remarks be dismissed,

as some have recommended, as pious irrelevancies? Are they meant to have philosophical relevance? If so, are they capable of getting the job done, and are they required to get the job done?

The standard interpretation of Reid's epistemology, sketched earlier, is a form of externalism. The deliverances of our belief-forming faculties are immediately justified by being the natural output of a properly functioning belief-forming faculty. It is certainly true that our natural beliefs have this status for Reid, and that he treats this status as sufficient for some sort of knowledge. If this were the whole story about Reid's epistemology, it is hard to see how Reid could expect appeals to God to do any significant work in the justification of our beliefs. To use belief in God to support the reliability of other faculties is to embrace the sort of reasoning Reid rejected in the 'same shop' passage, discussed earlier. It is to take the reliability of some faculties (in this case, taste) for granted in proving the reliability of others (perception). Reid explicitly criticizes Descartes for failing to see the error of this sort of reasoning (EIP 480–1). But as several scholars have recently argued, the standard interpretation is by no means the whole story. Proper functionalist externalism is the starting point for Reid's epistemology, not the endpoint. The endpoint, toward which he thinks a rational agent must strive, is to retrace the steps of nature by reason.

We come into the world without the exercise of reason; we are merely animal before we are rational creatures; and it is necessary for our preservation that we should believe many things before we can reason. How then is our belief to be regulated before we have reason to regulate it? Has Nature left it to be regulated by chance? By no means. It is regulated by certain principles, which are parts of our constitution . . . They do the office of reason while it is in its infancy, and must as it were be carried in a nurse's arms, and they are the leading strings to it in its gradual progress. (EIP 238–239).

Reid's epistemology is developmental. We begin with instinctive beliefs. By the original principles of our nature various inputs trigger specific beliefs as outputs. These beliefs enjoy a degree of immediate justification necessary for knowledge. But this knowledge is instinctive, animal-like (EAP 85–7). As reason develops, and experience accrues, we are sometimes able to confirm some of our natural beliefs by reasoning and reflecting from other beliefs. As we do, the epistemic status of natural beliefs is upgraded. Instinctive knowledge becomes reflective. We then yield to our natural beliefs, but not as Reid says 'from instinct only'. In describing beliefs accepted on the testimony of others, Reid says:

I believed by instinct whatever they told me, long before I had the idea of a lie, or thought of the possibility of their deceiving me. Afterwards, upon reflection, I found they had acted like fair and honest people who wished me well. . . . And

I continue to give that credit, from reflection, to those of whose integrity I have had experience, which before I gave from instinct. (IHM 170–1)

It is in the upgrading of instinctive to rational knowledge where Reid's theism performs significant philosophical (Poore 2015: 219–22). In such a system, the sort of excess of justification that occurs when the deliverances of one faculty support the reliability of another is no longer idle or superfluous.<sup>16</sup>

Addressing the reliability of the senses, specifically, Reid asks: 'Shall we say then that this belief is the inspiration of the Almighty?' His answer is subtle, making use of the distinction between instinctive and reflective knowledge. '[I]f inspiration be understood to imply a persuasion of its coming from God, our belief in the objects of sense is not inspiration; for a man would believe his senses though he had no notion of a Deity.' On the other hand, one 'who is persuaded that he is the workmanship of God, and that it is part of his constitution to believe his senses, may think that a good reason to confirm his belief.' Such a person is in a position to 'deal with the Author of my being, no otherwise than I thought it reasonable to deal with my parents and tutors.' He is now in a position to have reflective knowledge of what previously he only knew by instinct. He is now in a position to yield to the direction of his senses 'not from instinct only, but from confidence and trust in a faithful and beneficent Monitor' (IHM 170).

Theism raises animal knowledge to the status of reflective knowledge. Because Reid takes belief in God to be both immediately justified (by taste) and confirmed by reflection (through the argument from final causes), he shows little concern about the detachability issue. Indeed, he goes in the opposite direction, invoking God at other crucial junctures in his system.<sup>17</sup> The extent to which Reid's philosophy must be revised to set his theism aside is too large a question for one paper, and one that goes well beyond the texts themselves. I conclude by highlighting one difficulty for any detachability claim that builds on the analysis offered thus far.

Suppose there were a way to endorse reflectively the reliability of our basic belief-forming faculties that does not suppose theism: something that could do the epistemic work Reid's theism does. It would not be possible to reflectively endorse the reliability of all our basic belief-forming faculties—at least not as Reid understands them. Taste would have to be ruled out, as taste produces natural belief in God. If there were no God, taste would be unreliable. Rachel Zuckert calls this 'the God-problem' (2015: 155). The immediate problem is found in Reid's account of beauty. Are the beauties of nature not really beautiful? Do the beauties of nature stand to real beauty as counterfeit paintings stand to the real thing, to use Rebecca Copenhaver's apt description (2015: 135)? A second worry is raised by the 'same shop' reasoning that supports Reid's epistemology. In the context of such reasoning, an erroneous faculty is a matter of grave consequence. For, as we have seen, his system depends crucially on the thesis that our faculties

all came out of the ‘same shop’. One and all were ‘made by the same artist; and if he puts one piece of false ware into my hands, what should hinder him from putting another?’

The aesthetic dimension of the God-problem is resolvable, but only by raising the stakes on the epistemic issue. As Zuckert notes (2015: 158), Reid himself ascribes a certain derivative status to artistic expressions that are disjoined from the qualities they naturally signify. In such cases, natural signs trigger belief in an admirable intelligence where none is present. Smiles and artistic masterpieces can both be faked. In such cases Reid is willing to ‘pay homage’ to the expression as such (EIP 613). That is to say, he appreciates such objects not because they actually reflect admirable intelligence but because they are similar to things that do. Such beauty, if we may call it that, is doubly derivative. Its aesthetic value is derived from the derived beauty of things that are properly related to admirable intelligence. Applying such an account to natural beauty may reclaim the aesthetic value of some things, namely, those most like the works of human contrivance. But, many of the beauties of nature (a spiral galaxy, the double helix, a rainbow) are so unlike the works of human contrivance that their beauty could not be captured in this way. Reid discusses such works of the Supreme Being under the heading of grandeur and sublimity (EIP 582–91). While he does not reserve these terms for God’s works alone, it is not plausible to see the grandeur of the natural order as meriting aesthetic response merely by virtue of its similarity to the products of human intelligence. The derivative strategy applied to cases of natural grandeur only if there may be some veridical judgments about the grandeur of nature – the very possibility that the atheistic interpretation undermines.

Because Reid’s foundationalism is moderate, however, the problem of disowning natural beliefs about the beauties of nature is not altogether intractable. Reid only requires an error theory of a certain sort. Our natural beliefs or judgments, he says,

can be erroneous only when there is some cause of the error, as general as the error is: When this can be shewn to be the case, I acknowledge it ought to have its due weight. But to suppose a general deviation from the truth among mankind in things self-evident, of which no cause can be assigned, is highly unreasonable. (EIP 465–66)

As Copenhaver’s analysis highlights, Reid’s has a ready explanation of errors in cases of perception that depend on learned associations in his theory of acquired perception. Acquired perception is Reid’s name for perceptual sensitivity to learned associations. We learn by experience that certain property types are linked, and subsequently the presence of one triggers perceptual belief in the associated property. In this way, experience enriches the beliefs originally triggered by our sensations, for example, the taste of wine triggers the perception

of a certain vintage to a sommelier, and smoke triggers belief in fire in us all. It is certainly possible for these learned associations to lead us astray. Counterfeiters of all sorts exploit this fact, as Reid himself explains in discussing the ‘fallacy of the senses’ (EIP 245).

Based on the analogy between sense perception and taste, Copenhaver suggests a similar explanation of the errors of taste. Perhaps the beauties of nature are a sort of counterfeit beauty – just as a replica of Michaelangelo’s *David* produced by unguided natural forces would be, on Reid’s theory (2015: 135). In the presence of such an object, nature would trigger our sensitivity to features typically indicative of the excellences of minds, when in fact there are none. But, as we noted above, taste does not depend on property types associated by experience. The analogy with ordinary acquired perception breaks down at this point. The comparison to the perception of the mental states of others is more apt. For we have no independent access to the excellences of minds, just as we have no independent access to the mental states of others. So we do not learn the associations between sensible qualities and mental excellences or inner mental states by experience. The original principles of our constitution forge the connections relied upon in the operations of taste.

With God removed from Reid’s system, and in the absence of a more satisfactory error theory, we have an erroneous faculty (taste), and the cause of the error is built into the constitution of our nature. Reid’s broad foundationalism, his account of taste, and his theism form a consistent set; without the theism, his broad foundationalism and his account of taste fall foul of one another. This forms a partial answer to the detachability question. One cannot remove Reid’s theism from his philosophy without disrupting the relationship between his epistemology and his account of taste.

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NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For an account of Reid's early ministerial career see Fraser (1898: 26–43), see also (126) for a description of his last public address. The address itself is included in Wood (1995: 103–124).
- <sup>2</sup> Reid is certainly referencing: §§18–20 of Berkeley's *Treatise* (1710/1998: 109–10); and §1.4.2 of Hume's *Treatise* (1739/2000: 125–144).
- <sup>3</sup> The name is due to John Greco, who helpfully distinguishes this form of skepticism from several others Reid engaged; see Greco (2004: 134–55).
- <sup>4</sup> This paragraph summarizes the epistemological argument of (IHM 70–2).
- <sup>5</sup> This description is again due to Greco (2004). It is important to note, however, that Reid's epistemology is not simply foundationalist; for a discussion of coherentist strands in Reid, see Poore (2015: 222–24). Similarly Reid's epistemology is not simply externalist; for discussion of internalist themes, see van Woudenberg (2013) and McAllister (2016).
- <sup>6</sup> See for example *Enquiry* XI and *Treatise* I.iv.5 (162–3); Reid seemingly references the later passage at (EIP 511–2).
- <sup>7</sup> See Stewart (2006) for an overview of these debates in the Scottish Enlightenment.
- <sup>8</sup> Samuel Clarke seems to be the champion of this response for Reid; see, for example, EIP 243. See also Tuggy (2004: 291–293).
- <sup>9</sup> Stewart notes (2006: 46) that Hume himself draws favorable attention to this option in Reid's context in part XII of the *Dialogues*. See Penelhum (1983: 120–45) for analysis.
- <sup>10</sup> Some indication of the content of his lectures on natural theology survive in the form of student transcriptions; see Thomas Reid (1981) *Lectures on Natural Theology*, ed. Elmer H. Duncan, Washington, D.C.: University Press of America. The lectures cover theistic arguments, the divine attributes, and the problem of evil – topics that are almost completely unaddressed in the published works. See Tuggy (2004) for an overview.
- <sup>11</sup> A range of explanations have been offered for Reid's apparent hesitancy to wade into matters of natural theology; see Nichols (2009) for a survey of the options.
- <sup>12</sup> Reid thus qualifies as a Newtonian theist, according to Callergård (2010).
- <sup>13</sup> Reid is thus seen as an early forerunner of expressivist theories of art Kivy (2004), and beauty Zuckert (2015).
- <sup>14</sup> As Copenhaver (2015) notes, this makes taste a sort of acquired perception; more on this when we turn to the detachability question.
- <sup>15</sup> See Evans (2010) and Ratzsch (2003) for contemporary approaches that are in keeping with the position attributed to Reid above. Both reference Reid as a sort of forerunner, though neither focuses on the role of beauty.
- <sup>16</sup> The transition from instinctive to rational judgements is not simply a matter of establishing through reflection that the results of our faculties positively cohere. The distinction is maintained throughout Reid's account of sensory, moral, and aesthetic perception; and it includes the ways in which experience, education, and culture extend and enhance our original perceptual sensitivities. See Copenhaver (2014) for an overview of these developmental themes in Reid's account of our intellectual powers.
- <sup>17</sup> See Cuneo (2009) for discussion of the role of theism in Reid's moral philosophy; and Yaffe (2004) on God's role in Reid's metaphysics of change and agency.