MARY SHEPHERD'S THREEFOLD 'VARIETY OF INTELLECT' AND ITS ROLE IN IMPROVING EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this paper are twofold. First, I offer a new insight into Shepherd's theory of mind by demonstrating that she distinguishes a threefold 'Variety of Intellect', that is, three kinds of minds grouped according to their cognitive limitations. Following Shepherd, I call them (i) minds afflicted with idiocy, (ii) inferior understandings, and (iii) sound understandings. Second, I show how Shepherd's distinction informs her theory of education. While Shepherd claims that her views serve to improve educational practices, she does not explain how her threefold 'Variety of intellect' does so. I argue that Shepherd's distinction contributes to her aim by providing pedagogues with a more comprehensive grasp of the various cognitive limitations of the people in their care. This allows the former to adjust their expectations and to provide need-oriented guidance.

Keywords: Shepherd, mind, education, sound understanding, inferior understanding, idiocy

In recent years Mary Shepherd's (1777–1847) two major works – her 1824 *Essay upon the Relation of Cause and Effect* (ERCE), and her 1827 *Essays on the Perception of an External Universe* (EPEU) – have attracted interest from a growing number of scholars.[1] However, current work on Shepherd is focused mainly on her notion of causality and her criticisms of Berkeley and Hume.[2] Meanwhile, as Antonia Lolordo (2020: 1) notes in the Introduction of her new edition of EPEU, 'Shepherd's theory of the mind is almost untouched'.[3] This paper examines one aspect of Shepherd's theory of mind, which has been

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neglected: her threefold distinction among minds – or as she calls it, among a 'variety of intellect' (EPEU 116; LMSM 704).[4] Following Shepherd, I call these groups:

i. Minds afflicted with 'idiocy'[5] (compare EPEU 314),
ii. Inferior Understandings (compare EPEU 287),
iii. Sound Understandings (compare EPEU 116).

According to Shepherd these groups are distinguished by their different cognitive limitations.

In the first four sections of this paper, I clarify Shepherd's terminology and present some fundamental distinctions in her theory of mind, in order to explain the cognitive faculty most central to her threefold distinction: namely the 'understanding' – that is, the capacity to reason. I argue that Shepherd's threefold distinction between minds is based on their different levels of 'understanding' or capacity to reason.

In section five I turn to the relation between Shepherd's threefold 'variety of intellect' and her educational theory. Shepherd states that the main aim of her 'analysis' of 'the operations of the mind from infancy' (EPEU xv) is to show the limits of our knowledge of (external) bodies (EPEU xi–xiv). This in turn sheds light on causation by improving our grasp of what the mind does, when it is 'acting as a cause' (EPEU xv). However, she also claims that her theory of mind could improve the practices of 'physiologists and physicians, moralists and divines, parents and instructors' with regard to 'those under their care' (EPEU 264).[6] In the following I refer to these people as 'pedagogues' in the broad sense of those who teach or offer guidance. This heterogenous group is united in having people under their care, whom they educate on various issues 'with respect to the[ir] health, the[ir] opinions, and the[ir] practices' (EPEU 264). Thus, Shepherd's theory applies to 'education' in the broadest sense of the term. It combines the 'culture or development of personal knowledge or understanding, growth of character, moral and social qualities' and 'the process of looking after a person or animal with respect to food and other physical needs'.[7] Accordingly, Shepherd does not restrict educational care to children. The professions she lists also include the care of adults, and she even points out that the actions of 'sentient capacities' are as 'multifarious' as the 'habits of education or notions of individuals can render [them]' (EPEU 265). It is worthwhile to improve these habits and notions because they influence how people act – which in turn contributes to promoting their ability to cope with the practical challenges of daily life.

While it is clear that Shepherd is interested in improving educational practices, she never spells out how her analysis of the 'variety of intellect' contributes to this improvement. I argue that Shepherd holds that a comprehensive understanding

of mind, and in particular the differing limitations of cognitive capacities and abilities, allows pedagogues to adjust their expectations and guidance. That is, a comprehensive grasp of these capacities and abilities helps pedagogues to better understand the educational needs of the people in their care.

I. SHEPHERD'S NOTION OF MIND

In this section I clarify Shepherd's terminology and outline her theory of mind. In particular, I focus on Shepherd's notion of 'sensation'. Doing so illuminates her notion of the understanding as a capacity to reason.

Shepherd characterizes the mind as 'the capacity or cause, for *sensation in general*' (EPEU 155).[8] While some philosophers use 'sensation' to refer to sense perception, Shepherd uses the term more broadly to denote any conscious mental state (EPEU 6–9). Similarly to Reid (IP 2.16/193–4),[9] Shepherd distinguishes 'sensation' from 'perception', but, according to her, Reid is mistaken in holding that 'perception *itself is not a sensation of the mind*' (EPEU 24). In distinction to Reid, she understands a 'perception' as a 'sensation taken notice of by the mind' (EPEU 9) and not as 'solely an act of the mind' (IP 2.5/96). In other words, for Shepherd, to perceive is to be aware of a conscious mental state. As Deborah Boyle puts it: 'A perception … is a second order sensation … That is, every sensation is conscious but not so that the thinker has explicitly noted that she is conscious of it' (2020: 96).[10] Although Shepherd's 'perceptions' are thusly not tied to external objects in the way Reid's are (IP 1.1/22–3, 2.5), it is important to note that she also uses the term in relation to 'sensible qualities' (EPEU 25). That is, following the likes of Locke (*Essay* II.i.3) or Berkeley (PHK § 9), she uses 'perception' in relation to qualities that can be perceived by our organs of sense such as colours, sounds, tastes, smells, or shapes.

Neither 'sensation' nor 'perception' is confined to the senses. According to Shepherd, 'sensation' is a 'generic term' (EPEU 5, 135) encompassing: 'sensations of present sensible qualities, sensations of the ideas of memory, sensations of the ideas of imagination, sensations of the ideas of reason, &c.' (EPEU 135–6). Shepherd divides these 'sensations' into two classes. Following Shepherd, I call the first class 'feelings' (EPEU 142) to refer to the sensation of present sensible qualities such as colours as well as sensations of our passions like pleasure or pain (EPEU 66); the second class I call 'reasonings' because it includes the various sensations of ideas that are the 'result' of a particular 'reasoning' which involves the notion of 'existences, which *have existed, may exist, will exist, must needs exist,* but whose qualities are not presently determined upon the mind' (EPEU 136). In distinction to 'feelings' our 'reasonings' result from thinking about the former or that which has existed, will, may, or must exist.

The two classes of sensation are referred to as 'objects of the understanding and the senses' (EPEU 82). According to Shepherd they correspond to two powers she calls 'the *power of thought and feeling*" (EPEU 40).[11] These powers are 'natural and original' in Reid's sense because they are not 'acquired by use, exercise, or study', so they can be called 'faculties' by Reid's standard (IP 1.1/21).[12] Following Bolton's suggestion (2021: §3.1), I will speak of the 'faculties' of 'understanding and sense'. Although the 'power of feeling' plays an important role in Shepherd's theory of mind[13] and the 'feelings' it generates often give rise to various kinds of 'reasonings', I will not consider this faculty in more detail. Shepherd's threefold 'variety of intellect' is primarily concerned with the 'power of thought' or, as I will say in the following, the (faculty of) understanding.

2. MINDS AFFLICTED WITH 'IDIOCY'

In the following sections I will consider Shepherd's threefold 'variety of intellect in detail. For the sake of brevity, I will focus on the example of causation to illustrate the differences between these groups. In ERCE Shepherd argues against a Humean notion of causation as constant conjunction (EHU 5.1.5–6/43–4; ERCE preface) that cause and effect are necessarily connected (ERCE 192–3). She holds that it is misleading to say that an effect B follows a cause A. Rather, causation is a tripartite relation. While there may be several existing entities needed for an effect to occur (EPEU 123–5), there must be a minimum of two that 'mix' (ERCE 42n) or 'coalesce' (ERCE 179) and, thusly, give rise to an effect: 'Cause and Effect, might be presented by $A \times B = C$, therefore C is included in the mixture of the objects called cause' (ERCE 141). In other words, Shepherd holds that cause(s) and effect(s) form a union. When two 'distinct natures' mix, they produce or create a third distinct nature, 'which must instantly, and immediately, have all its peculiar qualities' (ERCE 50). In light of this understanding of causation Shepherd also argues that the cause(s) and effect(s) are 'synchronous' (ERCE 27–8; EPEU 124) or 'concomitant' (EPEU 320).

With this outline of Shepherd's notion of causation in mind, consider her first group of minds: those afflicted with 'idiocy'. In Essay VII Shepherd suggests that 'idiocy' is an inborn defect that afflicts the mind of some infants (EPEU 323). She defines it as an 'incapacity for further perception than what resides in the immediate impressions created by the use of the five organs of sense, and the power of motion' (EPEU 315). In this passage Shepherd uses 'perception' in her technical sense of a second-order sensation. This is evident from her explanation of how (regular) children differ from those afflicted with 'idiocy': '[T]heir understandings take notice of, (i.e. their latent powers of observation enable them to perceive,) certain simple relations included in those ideas of sensation, which are determined to their mind by the organs of sense' (EPEU 315).

Shepherd holds that a mind afflicted with 'idiocy' has a defective understanding in that it cannot be consciously aware of the relations that obtain between the sensible qualities we perceive by the organs of sense.[14]

Since a mind afflicted with idiocy cannot be consciously aware of the relations that obtain between the sensible qualities, such a mind has no access to causal knowledge. Those afflicted with 'idiocy' cannot know which of their sense impressions are causes, nor can they know how or whether they coalesce into an effect. Because such a mind has no access to causal knowledge, they also lack access to the nature and reality of 'external existence', which presupposes knowledge about causation (EPEU xii). Shepherd concludes that someone afflicted with 'idiocy' cannot become aware of the existence of an external world (EPEU 9–12). The inability to perceive relations in general means that one cannot become aware or gain knowledge of 'continuous existences in opposition to the interrupted sensations, by which they appear to the mind' (EPEU 12). And the inability to perceive causation in particular entails that minds afflicted with 'idiocy' lack access to the so-called 'causal-principle' (CP): that nothing can begin its own existence. As Shepherd puts it: 'All objects whatever, which *begin to exist*, must owe their *existence to some cause*' (ERCE 38). Grasping the CP is required to understand that each thing stands in a (causal) relation to some other thing.[15]

The CP is one of the most fundamental tenets of Shepherd's metaphysics and a key premise in her argument for the existence of an external world. The CP is part of a 'latent reasoning' (EPEU 14): beginning in earliest childhood, we learn that sensations vanish yet are constantly renewed in relation to our movements and the 'call of the organs of sense' (EPEU 16). For example, the river outside my window seems to vanish and reappear when I close and reopen my eyes. This 'readiness to appear' is explicable only if the river were created anew or if it continually existed (EPEU 15). The former is impossible according to Shepherd because it would entail that objects like the river could begin their own existence, and even 'the youngest minds' grasp the intuitive contradiction this would involve (EPEU 14). Thus, we learn that there must be continually existing things, which are not sensations, but exist outside of our mind (EPEU 14).[16] In other words, because of this latent reasoning we conclude that there are not only 'inward objects of thought' (EPEU 42) but also 'continuous outward existences' (EPEU 45).

At first sight one might think that minds afflicted with 'idiocy' could accomplish this latent reasoning. Since Shepherd writes that this reasoning is generated by the 'minds of all men from infancy' (EPEU 14) and 'perhaps by the fetus before birth' (EPEU 105n). But it is evident that this is not the case. Minds afflicted with 'idiocy' cannot grasp the CP, which is a key part of this latent reasoning. Without access to the CP they cannot grasp the 'intuitive contradiction' that would be involved if it were possible that anything could begin its own

existence (EPEU 14) and thus they cannot infer that there must be 'continuous outward existences' (EPEU 44). Arguably the problem is even more fundamental because the latent reasoning that gives rise to knowledge of external objects and their continuous existence requires conscious awareness of relations. For example, one must be able to become aware that white is not black (EPEU 170). But a mind afflicted with 'idiocy' cannot relate its sensations to anything else, including other sensations, and is thus incapable of the latent reasoning required to form the notion of an external object in the first place.

In sum, a mind afflicted with 'idiocy' is fundamentally impaired. It cannot be conscious of the relations between its 'feelings'. Hence, this group of minds is trapped in a chaos of unconnected sense impressions, which – for all of which they are aware – exist only in their own minds. Minds afflicted with 'idiocy' can neither know that an external world exists nor do they have a clue what it is like. Furthermore, Shepherd's suggests that being afflicted with 'idiocy' prohibits learning. Absent the CP, nothing 'govern[s] their expectations' (EPEU 316) of the future (EPEU 116). Minds afflicted with 'idiocy' have no access the 'primaeval elements of the doctrine of cause'. This in turn means they lack the foundation for that which 'regulates every opinion speculative and practical' (EPEU xiii).[17]

3. INFERIOR UNDERSTANDINGS

The second group, the group of 'inferior understandings,' encompasses the minds of 'children', 'peasants', and 'brutes' (EPEU 287). While Shepherd uses the term 'inferior understandings' only once, she frequently speaks of the minds of 'children', 'peasants', and 'brutes' as a group and suggests that they have a similar level of understanding (EPEU 15, 17, 73, 189, 319, 324; LMSM 704). Shepherd uses 'brutes' to refer to non-human animals rather than to humans lacking intelligence, understanding and passion. Instead, she uses 'peasants' to refer to such persons or, more generally, for (lower-class) people who had little to no education.[18]

Despite this wide variety of minds, Shepherd contends that they all agree in the level of their understanding.[19] In contrast to minds afflicted with 'idiocy', minds with inferior understandings are capable of perceiving relations and 'of drawing them as occasions require into *practical* results' (EPEU 189, my emphasis). An inferior understanding can perceive the relation of cause and effect, and it even has access to the CP. As Shepherd puts it, 'Thus, to *begin of itself,* would appear to every child under the faintest and most indistinct form of latent conception, to be a contradiction' (EPEU xiii). But minds with 'inferior understandings' are limited in their ability to 'analyse' relations (EPEU 105–6, 171). For example, while their access to the CP entails that they are able to conduct rudimentary causal analyses (EPEU 315), these analyses are deficient according to the best of our knowledge.

That is, in light of the knowledge of causation we have by philosophy and other sciences, the causal analyses of inferior understandings are inadequate.

Shepherd never defines what analyses are, yet she indicates that it is a form of 'examination' (EPEU 210, 221), in which complexity is broken down (EPEU 221, 263–5, 309, 373). She also holds that analyses are 'requisite to form correct definitions' (LMSM 698). Importantly, Shepherd argues that this process of breaking down requires abstraction (EPEU 304). 'Abstraction', for Shepherd, is 'the consideration of any quality apart from others with which it may be usually united, in order to notice what inferences may be drawn from its nature' (EPEU 291).

Minds with inferior understanding distinguish insufficiently between effects and other qualities (EPEU 96–7, 315). In other words, they are limited in their ability to abstract and thusly fail to keep certain qualities (that is, effects) apart from other qualities (ERCE 46–7). Shepherd uses an example of a child burning her finger on a candle to demonstrate this deficiency: a 'child or ignorant person' realises that there is '*some* object, which *is not in themselves*' that will 'affect their touch with a painful sense of burning', yet the person does not (correctly) identify all and only those qualities, which when mixed 'efficiently govern[s] the burning of the flesh' (EPEU 318). To put it more generally, inferior understandings can correctly identify exterior objects or 'masses of unknown qualities' (EPEU 127) as the cause of (some of) their sensations. However, their causal analyses are deficient insofar as they are limited in their ability to properly abstract and to analyse their (causal) experiences. Consequently, they do not correctly identify only those qualities that are causally efficacious in producing that particular sensation.

Shepherd argues that there is another limitation with respect to the (adequacy of) causal knowledge inferior understandings can gain. This limitation concerns Shepherd's second fundamental 'causal principle' aside from the CP (Bolton 2011: 248): '[L]ike causes, must generate like Effects' (ERCE 194). Following Boyle (2020: 94) call it the 'causal likeness principle' (CLP).[20] In distinction to minds afflicted with 'idiocy', inferior understandings can grasp the CLP and, crucially, use it to draw (causal) inferences. However, Shepherd argues that inferior understandings, in drawing these inferences, lack 'good sense' (ERCE 102). That is, inferior understandings, such as children or brutes, 'too readily' consider objects to be 'similar' (EPEU 292). The reason inferior understandings do this is that their judgements are based on 'insufficient data' (EPEU 323). Sometimes their data is insufficient because they lack exposure with a certain object. In those cases the inferior understanding has not been able to form memories of the object's qualities and the way it causally interacts with others. Yet, as Shepherd argues, memories are 'requisite' to guide our future expectations (ERCE 100). Additionally, inferior understandings (usually) fall short of the 'quick, steady, accurate observation' needed to determine, '*whether the prevening*

causes are the SAME, *from which an object is elicited in any* PRESENT *instance*, *as upon a* FORMER one' (ERCE 100). Whenever 'things *appear* alike' (my emphasis) to inferior understandings and the circumstances seem alike as well, they believe that those things are indeed alike. However, in doing so, they fail to consider 'a possible variety' because they do not take into account that there could be 'some unperceived reason' that could lead to a different outcome (EPEU 323). In other words, inferior understandings either lack access to the causal history of an object or do not sufficiently consider it when drawing causal inferences.

Despite this deficiency Shepherd holds that inferior understandings can use the CLP to learn and to regulate their future expectations (ERCE 92–3; EPEU 115–17, 320–1). The same holds for their deficient causal analyses. Shepherd argues that these analyses, especially of 'successions of ideas which arise in the mind', allow children or 'peasants' to learn from the past and to 'predicate of the future' – and she responds to anyone who would doubt this by asking them to select 'any ordinary affair of life' as an example to correct this wrongful impression (LMSM 704). Consider the candle example: Despite the fact that a child fails to correctly identify which qualities of the candle caused the burning of her flesh upon touching it, she correctly expects that the burning would reoccur if she were to touch the candle again. The child correctly identifies the candle as the cause of her pain (EPEU 317–19) and can prevent another burnt finger by simply not touching the candle again. Similarly, she may use a candle when something needs to be burned, and so on.

As far as the practices of daily life are concerned, the causal analyses of inferior understandings suffice despite falling short of being adequate to the best of our knowledge. In the same vein, the child can successfully make use of the CLP to draw practical conclusions despite her lack of 'good sense' when employing it. Imagine a child, after having burnt her fingers, sees an electric candle shining for the first time. She has no memories of electric candles that could guide her expectations and also lacks knowledge about the causal history of this candle. However, the child remembers how she once burnt her fingers on a (real) candle and is determined not to repeat that experience. Provided the appearance of the electric candle is sufficiently similar to a real one, the child will avoid touching this candle because she will expect a similar effect (a burnt finger) from touching an apparently similar object. Thus, the child successfully employs the CLP from a practical point of view inasmuch as she succeeds in avoiding another burnt finger.

4. SOUND UNDERSTANDINGS

The last section established that inferior understandings, in contrast to minds afflicted with 'idiocy', are capable of perceiving relations. They have access to

and knowledge of causation as well as the CP and the CLP. They know that the external world exists, and they have (limited) access to the nature of the external world and its relations to minds. Furthermore, their level of understanding allows them to draw practical consequences from perceived relations. That is, they can draw consequences, which are sufficient for the affairs of daily life. In the case of causation this is achieved despite a lack of 'good sense' and an inability to properly abstract or analyse their (causal) experiences. In particular, inferior understandings do not sufficiently distinguish effects from other qualities. Furthermore, they often lack knowledge about the causal history of an object or do not sufficiently make use of their available knowledge when drawing inferences.

In discussing the third group of minds, Shepherd does not explicitly use the term 'sound understanding'. Rather, she writes concerning this 'variety of intellect,' that the 'wisest determinations' result from the 'soundest understandings' (EPEU 116). Furthermore, she neither provides a definition of sound understandings, nor provides examples. Nevertheless, what Shepherd says about inferior understandings suggests that sound understandings are distinct from them in being able to perceive (causal) relations, analyse them correctly to the best of our knowledge, and have 'good sense' when it comes to drawing causal inferences. That is, they are better at abstracting as well as using their knowledge about the causal history of a given object, and so they can successfully employ the CP and the CLP beyond the practical necessities of their daily life. A sound understanding can, for example, become aware consciously of which qualities of the candle are causally efficacious in the case of a burnt finger and is better in telling the difference between an electric and a real candle. Furthermore, sound understandings are able to 'express' the results of their analyses in formal and general ways that are beyond the reach of inferior understandings (EPEU 105–6). As Shepherd puts it, a sound understanding can 'argue formally' on subjects such as causality (EPEU 315). In other words, in distinction to inferior understandings, they can analyse their (causal) experiences to the best of our (philosophical or any other scientific) knowledge, draw correct (causal) inferences, and debate the correctness as well as the merits of their respective analyses and inferences.

These abilities obviously provide those with a sound understanding more comprehensive knowledge of the 'nature and reality of external existence' (EPEU xii). But what are the (epistemic) limitations of sound understandings? While they have the highest level of understanding, their capacity to reason is far from unrestricted. For example, Shepherd insists that we do not know the essences of external bodies.[21] Such essences are unperceivable by the senses (ERCE 46; EPEU chap. V; LMSM 697, 708), given how Shepherd thinks sense perception works. According to Shepherd, we are not merely passive observers of the external world. Rather, in perceiving something by our sense, we engage actively with the world in being partial causes of our sense perceptions (EPEU 72). When we perceive an exterior object or 'combined mass of qualities' (ERCE 64), this

object or these qualities mix with our senses and mind (ERCE 47). In doing so, the object perceived is modified and altered (EPEU 184–5).[22]

While essences of external bodies are epistemically out of reach for even the soundest understanding, we can become aware of structural similarities between sense perceptions and the variety of objects (EPEU 259).[23] Yet, interestingly, so may inferior understandings. Shepherd argues, for example, that inferior understandings can know that their 'feelings' are structurally similar to the external world. At some point they may become aware that variety in feelings is due to proportional variety in the external world (EPEU 171–2). What sets sound and inferior understandings apart in this matter is, again, that only a sound understanding can argue formally on this subject, draw more accurate inferences, and analyse it to the best of our knowledge beyond the practical concerns of daily life. Furthermore, only sound understandings can become consciously aware of their limitations.

To put the last point differently, while both groups are limited, only sound understandings are able to consciously grasp their own limitation concerning their knowledge of the (external) world and its nature. Sound understandings are unique in being able to analyse and express the limits of their capacity to reason. In fact, the distinctions between different groups of minds are themselves ones that solely a sound understanding is capable of drawing, because doing so requires a high level of reasoning and comparing.

5. THE 'VARIETY OF INTELLECT' AND SHEPHERD'S EDUCATIONAL AIMS

Shepherd distinguishes among a threefold 'variety of intellect' (EPEU 116; LMSM 704) in the faculty of understanding. In this section, I turn to the question of how this distinction is used to improve the educational practices of pedagogues.

Shepherd's aim in analysing the operations of the mind from 'infancy' is motivated by the wish to improve our knowledge of causation and the external world (EPEU xv). However, she also claims that her view could improve our educational practices. But Shepherd does not explain how her theory of mind and her distinctions concerning the 'variety of intellect' could contribute to such an improvement. I will tackle this challenge in three steps. First, I examine Shepherd's interest in education. Second, I demonstrate that Shepherd holds that the faculty of understanding can be developed and improved. Finally, I argue that Shepherd's engagement with the mind is also driven by a concern to provide a realistic and adequate picture of our abilities to reason at different stages of our (cognitive) development, which in turn serves to improve our educational practices.

Shepherd clearly has some interest in education, as attested by a footnote in which she mentions a 'pamphlet' by James Mill (father of John Stuart Mill) 'on Education' (EPEU 78). Her interest in education and in improving educational practices may have been personally motivated. Shepherd's daughter Mary Brandreth (1886: 124) writes that her brother 'died an invalid' and 'had been greatly misunderstood in his childhood, and in consequence mismanaged all through his early life up to manhood, and then it became too late to save him for this world'.[24] Moreover, Shepherd is clear that her view could help pedagogues to improve their educational practices with respect to the variety of people (young and adult) in their respective care (EPEU 264).

Shepherd holds that inferior understandings can be developed into sound ones.[25] She offers no reason to think that children who do not suffer from 'idiocy,' if properly educated, should not develop sound understandings. On the contrary, Shepherd believes that 'intellect' comes in various gradations (EPEU 116)[26] and suggests that it is possible to ascend from a lower to a higher grade of intellect, when she argues that inferior understandings can learn to abstract. An ability she considers to be 'truly the origin of all science' (EPEU 291). Thus, typical children possess a capacity that, if properly developed, may eventually allow them to reason at a level sufficient for doing science. Finally, Shepherd points out that even though a young adult does not remember its state as young child, the young child its state as an infant, or the infant its state as a foetus, 'each of these mental states improves by what it has learnt in knowledge, (*if not in virtue*,) from that which immediately preceded it' (EPEU 382–3).

Shepherd also claims that the reasonings of inferior understandings are 'analogous' to a sound understanding's, such as a philosopher's, up to a certain point (LMSM 704). In contrast to the philosopher inferior understandings endorse deficient causal analyses in as much as they are unable to identify all and only those qualities that are causally efficacious – 'a *discovery* which they leave to the philosophers to make' (EPEU 318). Yet, a mind with an inferior understanding is sufficient to manage the (practical) affairs of ordinary life. For example, inferior understandings can come to know that a fire has the capacity to burn the house in which they live. Furthermore, they learn that this 'capacity' is confined to external objects – for example, that a fire cannot burn their ideas. Thus: 'They [that is, inferior understandings] consequently place a guard against that action of that cause, but none over their thoughts of it' – that is, 'they insure their houses, without thinking it necessary to obtain any security for their ideas' (LMSM 704).

More generally put, inferior understandings endorse analyses and draw inferences that are deficient to the best of our knowledge, but, importantly, suffice for the ordinary purposes of daily life. In fact, Shepherd does not even believe that inferior understandings are automatically worse off compared to sound understandings when it comes to causal knowledge (EPEU 299; LMSM 705). On the contrary, she claims that the inferior understandings of children 'possess

a truer philosophy than that contained in the modern theories, concerning cause' (EPEU 319).

All of this suggests that Shepherd's focus on cognitive limitations is not driven by a desire to establish the superiority of minds with a sound understanding. Rather, she is concerned with providing a realistic and adequate picture of our abilities to reason at different stages of our (cognitive) development. And Shepherd's threefold distinction of the 'variety of intellect' supports the improvement of our educational practices *precisely because* it results in a comprehensive and realistic understanding of our differing cognitive capacities and abilities at different developmental stages. This allows pedagogues to improve their practices by giving them the means to adjust their expectations – what they say and do in light of the (cognitive) needs and limitations of the people they educate. For example, being aware of the fact that inferior understandings are too quick in judging things to be similar because their judgement is based on 'insufficient data' (EPEU 323) enables pedagogues to tackle the issue at its core. In order to rectify this deficiency, they have to improve their knowledge about causal histories. This can be achieved by providing more data or by teaching ways in which inferior understandings can collect further data themselves and by showing how this data ought to be used when drawing inferences.

6. CONCLUSION

My goals in this paper have been to (a) analyse Shepherd's threefold 'Variety of Intellect' and (b) show how this distinction relates to Shepherd's aim to improve the educational practices of pedagogues. I have argued that Shepherd distinguishes three groups of minds according to the differing level of their understanding. While (i) minds afflicted with 'idiocy' are unable to perceive relations, (ii) inferior understandings perceive relations and are able to (rudimentarily) analyse them, as well as drawing inferences from them. For example, inferior understandings have a (comparatively limited) knowledge of causation and the causal principles such as the CP and the CLP, which allows them to know there is an external world. Furthermore, they can learn from the past, adapt their future behaviour, and adjust their expectations. In contrast to (iii) sound understandings, their analyses and inferences are deficient to the best of our knowledge. Only sound understandings are able to express the results of their analyses, as well as inferences, in a more formal and general way and to become consciously aware of their limitations.

In the last part of this paper, I presented a rationale for how Shepherd's threefold 'Variety of Intellect' could contribute to the aim of improving the educational practices of pedagogues. The distinction provides an adequate and realistic understanding of the mind and its various cognitive limitations at

different stages of its development. This understanding allows pedagogues to improve their practices by adjusting their expectations in light of these differing cognitive limitations.[27]

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NOTES

[1] See for example: Atherton (2005), Boyle (forthcoming), Landy (2020a), LoLordo (2019), and McRobert (2003).

[2] For more on Shepherd and Berkeley compare: Atherton (1996) and Rickless (2018). More on Shepherd, Hume, and her notion of causality more generally can be found in: Bolton (2019), Landy (2020b), and Paoletti (2011).

[3] LoLordo (2020: 1) explicitly mentions Deborah Boyle (2020) as the sole exception. At the time of writing this paper there are various new pieces of work that focus on (aspects of) Shepherd's theory of mind: Boyle (2021), Folescu (2021), and Lindblom (2020). Moreover, this issue will be discussed in several articles in Keota Fields' forthcoming anthology. Compare: LoLordo (forthcoming), Landy (forthcoming), and Fasko (forthcoming).

[4] LMSM = Mary Shepherd, 'Lady Mary Shepherd's Metaphysics'.

[5] Shepherd seemingly does not intend to use the term in today's colloquial and derogatory sense (compare section II). Rather, it seems that she intends to use the term in a medical sense. Since it was common in the ninteenth century to refer to people with 'intellectual disability[ies]' as 'idiots' (McDonagh 1998: 8). Despite this intended medical use, Shepherd's use of 'idiots' raises the question, whether and to what degree she is making use of an ableist language, especially since a well-meaning intention does not suffice to override the harm an ableist use does.

[6] The notion that a theory of mind had practical implications for science and education was widespread in the Scottish Enlightenment. For more on this compare: Berry (1997: 1–8, chapter 3).

[7] For these and other uses of 'education', which were still prevalent in the nineteenth century, compare: 'education, n.' *OED Online*, August 2021.

[8] Compare also EPEU 15, 56–7, 163–4, 217, 242, 310–11, 375.

[9] IP = Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*.

[10] There is an interesting parallel between Shepherd's view and contemporary higher-order thought (HOT) and higher-order perception (HOP) theories of consciousness. In particular, the question whether Shepherd's view is closer to an actualist HOT (in the same vein as Rosenthal 2005) or a dispositionalist HOT (similar to Carruthers 2005) merits a more substantial treatment.

[11] Although it is important to note that Shepherd believes that the mind is a '*simple* power' (EPEU 48; 239). For more on the simplicity of the mind as well as its other key aspects see: Boyle (2020: 101–4).

[12] For more on Shepherd's and Reid's notions of power and the ways in which they differ see: LoLordo (2021: 233–42).

[13] For example, Shepherd argues that the (use of the) faculty of sense allows to distinguish an awake from a sleeping mind (EPEU 203). While Shepherd admits that our 'sleeping and waking *perceptions* of sensible qualities' may be exactly similar (EPEU 91), she argues that the actual and real objects of sense exhibit an order or 'harmony' the sensations in dreams lack. Hence, she holds it is possible to confuse dreams with reality but impossible 'to be affected with the *same train of sensations* in the *same order* in a dream' (EPEU 92). This is why we ordinarily have no trouble distinguishing dreams from reality (EPEU 108). Interestingly, Shepherd compares an insane state of mind to the condition of sleeping (EPEU 32, 87, 118, 235). Moreover, she equates actions of the sleeping and insane mind (EPEU 265) as well as 'insanities' or 'hallucinations' with 'dreams' (EPEU 253, 257). In light of this, it is arguably more precise to say that her threefold 'variety' is concerned with minds that are sane and awake. Following for example Rosenthal (1986), one could say that Shepherd is rather concerned with

a certain form of creature consciousness (being awake) than different types or aspects of state consciousness such as the difference between Block's (1995) phenomenal- and access-consciousness.

[14] It might even be the case that Shepherd believes minds afflicted with 'idiocy' cannot register relations by their organs of sense in the way someone not afflicted with 'idiocy' can. This is suggested by her reference to the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836) whom she quotes as saying that a child (normally) perceives a relation the same way she perceives a colour (EPEU 316n; de Tracy 1801: 60). This gives rise to the assumption that minds afflicted with 'idiocy' cannot become consciously aware of relations because they are incapable of registering them with their organs of sense in the first place. This also makes sense from a contextual point of view in light of the widely accepted characterization of 'idiocy' as a result of a deficient sensory apparatus (Miller 1996: 362). In the words of the British intellectual John Thelwall (1764–1834): '[A] mind, contracted in its sphere of activity by physical privations' (Thelwall 1810: 94). Yet, Shepherd remains vague on this issue. So, it might be the case that 'idiocy' is confined to the understanding in as much as the relations are registered by the organs of sense, but not cognitively processed afterwards.

[15] This also holds if we follow Folescu's interpretation that the 'causal maxim' (that is, CP) would be best understood as a 'first principle' known by 'intuition' (Folescu 2021: 2). For even if it were self-evident, it would be impossible to grasp CP unless you can also perceive that relations exist.

[16] Compare Boyle (2020: 98) for a more detailed reconstruction of this 'latent reasoning'. Boyle (2020: 98 n. 12) also notes that Shepherd does not consider the possibility that God could be the 'immediate cause of our sensation'. This would entail that the things we perceive by sense would not begin their own existence. Rather, they would be constantly created by God. More on CP, the way it is used to react to Hume, and its role for proving the existence of the external world can be found in Fantl (2016) and Folescu (2021).

[17] Shepherd does not comment on what this distinction amounts to. However, for the purposes of this paper it is sufficient to note that this difference can be characterised as one between opinions concerning theory (that is, science, philosophy, and so on) and practice (that is, the ordinary affairs of daily life).

[18] In contrast to 'idiots' she seemingly intends to use 'peasant' in a derogatory sense, which can be found in the English language at least since the end of the sixteenth century (compare 'peasant, n. and adj', *OED Online*, August 2021). This use further accentuates the importance of investigating the question of Shepherd's ableism.

[19] I cannot address the question of which kinds of non-human animals Shepherd includes in that group. While it seems prima facie plausible to assume that non-human vertebrates such as certain mammals, birds, or octopi ought to be considered, it is unclear if the same goes for other invertebrates. It is also beyond the scope of my present investigation to consider whether non-human animals can develop a sound understanding or whether (and for what reason) this is beyond their reach.

[20] Shepherd points out minds afflicted with 'idiocy' do not have access to the CLP at all (EPEU 323). For more on the CLP, compare Bolton (2011).

[21] A further important restriction concerns the essence of minds which Shepherd also takes to be unknowable (LMSM 708; LoLordo 2020: 19; Boyle 2020: 101). For the sake of clarity, I focus on the essence of external bodies. Shepherd's 'epistemic humility' concerning essences in general is discussed in more detail by Lindblom (2020: chap. 4).

[22] Compare Atherton (1996: 350–4). See Boyle (2021: 10–11) for a concise summary of Shepherd's causal account of perception.

[23] For an in-depth discussion of the important role this proportionality claim plays for Shepherd's theory of knowledge, see (Lindblom 2021: sec. 2).

[24] I thank Sandra Lindblom for pointing out this passage to me.

[25] Folescu has recently pointed out how seriously Shepherd takes 'developmental psychology' (Folescu 2021: 3) and highlighted its importance for Shepherd in connection with the knowledge of the external world that we can acquire (Folescu 2021: 9–10).

[26] This passage is also interesting because it clearly indicates that there are differences *even within* each group. The different levels of understanding seem to be best understood in the sense of indicating a range, and it has to be assumed that the boundary between inferior and sound understandings is fluid. I thank Deborah Boyle for pressing me on the importance of this remark as well as her suggestions concerning the lack of 'good sense' by inferior understandings, which where immensely helpful for my discussion in the third section.

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