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AN INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF SCOTTISH PHILOSOPHY

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ISSN 0268-9723

•REID•STUDIES•
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THE INNATENESS CHARGE: CONCEPTION AND BELIEF FOR REID AND HUME

CATHERINE KEMP

In the much-discussed letter to Hugh Blair of 1762 Hume writes that upon reading a draft of Thomas Reid's *Inquiry into the Human Mind* (1764) he finds that the doctrine Reid presents "leads us back to innate Ideas"¹. As John Wright remarks, this seems at first a surprising thing to say of a man distinguished by his vehement rejection of the "way of ideas" or the "ideal system"². That Reid sees Hume as the logical extreme of this tradition, as the very train wreck of philosophy which Reid's system is designed to avoid, makes this exchange even more puzzling. Wright points out that Reid thinks – mistakenly – that the theory of ideas assumes the existence of a class of immediate objects of thought, objects which are entities existing in the mind in addition to the act of thinking and to the object of that act,³ and that Reid's own reliance on "notions" or "conceptions" introduced by sensations suggests that Reid does in fact hold a doctrine of innate ideas.⁴ Several of Reid's commentators have applied themselves to the question of whether this claim will stick in Reid's case.⁴ In this essay I turn to a comparison of Reid and Hume in order to illuminate Hume's interpretation of Reid from the side of Hume's own doctrines. I suggest that Hume and Reid are closer than Reid realizes in the use they both make of the term "conception" (Hume's reliance on *ideas* notwithstanding) and that it is a difference in the way each casts this term in his theory of belief which is behind Hume's charge of nativism.

In the first part of the paper I summarize Reid's account of conception or simple apprehension, paying particular attention to the role it plays in perceptual belief. In the second part, I defend the thesis that Hume relies on a notion of conception very close in its outline to Reid's, namely, as a conviction-neutral relation between the mind and its objects. Finally, I suggest that it is this view of conception and its role in his own theory of belief which, when compared with Reid's view of the relation between conception, belief, and doubt, makes sense of Hume's claim in the Blair letter.

I

Reid's account of perceptual belief holds that when we experience a particular sensation, our minds take the sensation as a sign of a quality in an object, and (8) immediately (E 119, II.xvi), inexorably,⁹ and mysteriously,¹⁰ form both a conception (9+10) of that object and a belief in its existence (E 137-38, II.xx). All three of these elements, as Reid is at pains to point out, arrive together in a "complex operation" in which the "ingredients" are "conjoined in our constitution" and can only be discerned or "disjoined" by abstraction (E 14, I.i). Reid's interpreters have explored the potential that doctrines such as Reid's theory (or theories) of signs, the relation of "suggestion" (11)

between sensation and conception which appears in the *Inquiry*,¹² and the mechanisms of attention and generalization¹³ have to elucidate Reid's theory of the formation of conceptions or notions. In this section I want to set out in general terms what conception is for Reid, apart from the question of its origins or formation. (12)

Conception is a natural and original power of the mind (E 4, I.i), a kind of thought (E 186, IV.i). Its designation as an original power places it among those things which are part of our "constitution", among those powers and specific operations or acts that we have in virtue of our nature or creation. For Reid, the traditional philosophical expression "to have an idea" is properly understood as a mental act or operation in which the mind conceives or simply apprehends an object (E 186-87, IV.i). Here, the relation between the mind and object is unmediated – there is no third thing standing between the mind and the object to which its act is directed (E 10, I.i). Most importantly, this act of the mind involves no judgment or belief about the object to which it is directed (E 183, IV.i) and is never true or false (E 184, IV.i). Conception does vary in its degree of force and vivacity (E 189-90, IV.i) and in its clarity and distinctness (E 191-92, IV.1), but these qualities in no way affect the epistemically uncommitted and truth-value neutral nature of this operation. Conceptions come in three types: "fancy pictures" which have no originals (E 187, IV.i), copies of individual originals (E 187-88, IV.i), and universals or general terms, which are copies of copies of individuals (E 188-89, IV.i). Although its arrangement of its material is unlimited (E 192-93, IV.i), conception is limited to those materials acquired through some other "original power of the mind" (E 192, IV.i), including sensation¹⁴ as well as the powers of analysis, abstraction, and generalization (E 228, V.iii). (14)

Sensations do not provide the contents for conception, as impressions do for Hume: conception for Reid is not 'copied' from sensations and does not at all resemble them.¹⁵ Nor do sensations produce belief by their presence or their liveliness or their relation to conception, as impressions can for Hume. Our senses do "suggest" conceptions to us,¹⁶ or, as Reid puts it in the *Essays*, our senses give us a notion of the object of perception (E 52, II.v). Both the conception and the belief contained in perception require maturity and experience on the part of the perceiver: a fully-fledged concept of a roasting jack is something an adult, but not a child, possesses (E 53, II.v), while the belief that something exists and is thereby different from other things that do not exist seems to require "a notion of existence; a notion too abstract, perhaps, to enter into the mind of an infant" (E 54, II.v). (17)

Reid says that conception accompanies every operation of the mind, even sensation (E 14, I.i; 116, II.xvi) and that we find that it is at the bottom of every other act (E 183, IV.i). We make this discovery, however, only through analysis: conception is not the first operation of the mind although it is the 'simplest' (E 204, IV.iii). Reid points out, counter to the traditional classification advanced by logicians which holds that conception is limited to terms, that we conceive not only objects or terms (perception), but also propositions (judgment) and syllogisms (reasoning) (E 202-203, IV.iii). Conception, then, is a belief-neutral, truth-value

indifferent relation between the mind and its objects which accompanies every other mental operation. For every belief, judgment, conclusion, surmise, desire, or analysis there is an accompanying act of conception or apprehension in which the mind simply holds or entertains a particular object (or aspect of an object) without making a commitment to its existence or to its own truth or falsity.

II

Unlike the term *idea*, *conception* is not a technical term in Hume's work. Norman Kemp Smith remarks that Hume uses it to refer to "all perceptions that are cognitive in character". On the other hand, it is clear from the *Treatise* as well as the *Enquiry* that imaginative fancies, as well as errors and unphilosophical probabilities, are to be included in the class of conceptions. Analyses of the tradition of the way of ideas indicate that Hume had at his disposal the very technical discussions of conception (as notion or simple apprehension) of imported as well as domestic scholasticism, to which Hume refers only very briefly.¹⁹ It is generally assumed that a preference for treating technically of ideas rather than conceptions is due to the influence of Locke on the language and subject matter of seventeenth and eighteenth century logic and epistemology,²⁰ a view that Reid to a certain extent shares (E 8, I.i). After Locke, conception in two forms inherited from the seventeenth century – as act of conceiving and as content for such an act – became one of several possible constructions for the term *idea*. (19)

Three features regularly appear in Hume's explicit remarks on conception: (1) he refers to it for the most part as "mere conception" or "simple conception", (2) it appears most often as that which is *different from* conviction, or belief in the existence of objects, and (3) when it is distinguished from such belief, Hume calls it, variously, the "loose and indolent reveries of a castle-builder", as "idle", and as "fictions" or "illusions". Mere conception, like the "perfect" ideas, is entirely "faint" and "languid". It has a similarly impoverished influence on the passions. Neither transfers any force and vivacity to related ideas. Conception, like the faint ideas, involves no commitment to the existence of its object. (21)

Hume's statements concerning conception press in two opposing directions. These directions can be stated as two claims: (1) Conception is an essentially valued power or mental event, and it is restricted to two values, credulous and incredulous; (2) Conception is an essentially neutral or suspended power or mental event, and it is susceptible of several non-neutral modifications, which may fall (roughly) into two classes, credulous and incredulous. Hume does not make these claims explicitly, and nor would he, I think, accept either of them alone. Here I will only summarize the valenced sense of conception, which I will call Conception (1), and focus primarily on the neutral sense (Conception (2)).

Belief and Disbelief: Conception (1)

Hume's larger project in Book I, Part iii of the *Treatise* is to establish, as he later refers to it in the *Enquiry*, the nature and limits of our knowledge of "matters

of fact", or of anything "beyond the present testimony of our senses, or the records of our memory". The difficulty, as well as the solution Hume proposes, lies in the fallibility of this sort of knowledge:

For as there is no matter of fact which we believe so firmly, that we cannot conceive the contrary, there would be no difference between the conception assented to, and that which is rejected, were it not for some sentiment, which distinguishes the one from the other. ²²

The majority of Hume's remarks on our conclusions concerning matters of fact follow this formulation. Whether we say ultimately that there is a particular impression or sentiment which attends each lively idea, or that these ideas are merely "different to the feeling" from those which are faint and languid, it is clear that we are to understand that there are only two possible classes into which such conclusions can fall, namely, assent (with the feeling), and dissent (without). Here appear, then, in the presentation of this problem of our conclusions about facts, the two primary features of conception (1), the essentially valued: we either assent or reject, and we do so upon the presence or the absence, respectively, of a certain sentiment. We are confronted by the task of determining the true state of things, between a factual situation and that which would contradict it, e.g., between a billiard ball which moves upon its being struck by a second ball, and a ball which remains at rest upon being struck in just the same way, ²³ which 'side' of the issue engages our conviction, and which our incredulity. Because we must consider facts and their contraries, the decision is binary: we determine whether *a* or *not-a*, as an *idea*, is livelier than its contrary, and is sufficiently lively to approach the status of our *impressions*:

The effect, then, of belief is to raise up a simple idea to an equality with our impressions, and bestow on it a like influence on the passions. This effect it can only have by making an idea approach an impression in force and vivacity. (...) Belief, therefore, since it causes an idea to imitate the effects of the impressions, must make it resemble them in these qualities, and is nothing but a *more vivid and intense conception of any idea*. (T 119-120)

It is reasonably clear from Hume's descriptions of it that at least in this respect conception has two forms, one which is attended by or associated with a feeling of superior force, vivacity, vigour, firmness, solidity, *et cetera*, and a second from which this feeling or sentiment is entirely absent. An idea is *either* lively, being the same to the feeling as an impression of memory or sense, *or* it is not attended with a sufficient degree of force and vivacity. Where our criterion consists simply in the presence or absence of some quality or feature, the object of our judgment can have only two values.

"Mere Conception": Conception (2)

In order to make the case that such a neutral sense of conception is part of Hume's argument, I will present an integrated set of characteristics which are indications that Hume is relying on conception (2) in his exposition of his theory of belief. Included in this set are the following: the description of the state of the imagination prior to the formation of belief, the role Hume accords an idea in belief as a *part* merely, and finally the fact that belief in no way alters either the object or the fact that we conceive that object as existent. The integration of this set of characteristics is due to their collective implication in something which is part of Hume's definition of belief, namely, that belief is conception which *has been modified*, which is the same thing, Hume implies, as to say that belief is a *particular manner* of conception (T 94-98). It will become clear how each characteristic is entailed in this construction of belief, and is integral to Hume's sense of conviction as a modification of "mere conception".

In order to begin the case for conception (2), let us return for a moment to Hume's presentation of his doctrine concerning ideas in general, for it is there that we find the shape of conception (2) that appears in several different contexts. In the *Treatise*, ideas have two different manifestations which are very closely related to the two senses of conception I am pursuing: first, ideas are distinguished from impressions by their poverty of force and vivacity, and have a single value, namely, they do not engage our conviction, and we do not, on the strength of their presence alone, believe in the existence of their objects. They constitute one value of a two-valued system which includes only impressions (as forceful and vivacious) and ideas (as lacking force and vivacity). Second, ideas themselves are divisible into and susceptible of modification to two values, namely, those ideas that have been raised to the status of belief and assent (attended with force and vivacity), and "unenlivened" ideas – those from which we dissent, and which are exactly like ideas in the first sense. Although there is no unambiguous textual foundation for the claim that conception and idea are *completely* synonymous terms in the *Treatise*, or in any of Hume's other writings, *some* of his pronouncements concerning his theory of ideas and of belief rest upon an understanding that he intends that they refer to the same thing. Instances abound wherein he appears to interchange them as names for the same act or object; they are contrasted with impressions and the lively ideas of belief in precisely the same way; twice he appears to set them in apposition:

... however those ideas may be varied to the feeling, there is nothing ever enters into our *conclusions* but ideas, or our fainter conceptions. (T 625)

... belief only modifies the idea or conception, without producing any distinct impression. (T 627)

Also, when Hume inquires into the possibility of an idea of existence in general, conjoined with "simple conception", as the source of our belief in the existence of some objects and not others, he considers and finally rules out the possibility of

mere conception attended by a *new* idea, *i.e.*, an idea of existence *per se*, as though our conception of the object were the original idea. Finally, the two appear to have the same reference in both the definition of belief that Hume develops, and in his references to belief subsequently: belief is a “lively idea”, according to its definition (T 96), and it is also a “firm conception”, a “firmer conception”, and a “peculiarity of conception” (T 626-27).

Part of the difficulty in determining precisely what Hume means by conception is that he did not, as I mention above, develop it as a technical term, and also that, as I am arguing here, in spite of the importance of such a notion in his theory, most of the doctrine surrounding it is half-submerged in his explicit discussions of other issues, or entirely disguised in his theory of ideas. Nevertheless, I think that the class of ideas and the class of conceptions overlap considerably in Hume’s discussions, to the point at which they are partially synonymous, and certainly to the point at which they share ambiguities. In this I depart from Norman Kemp Smith’s view that conception is applied to “all perceptions that are cognitive in character”, insofar as I hold that those “loose” and “idle” conceptions – in no way cognitive themselves – are equally part of the sense of the notion as are the “firm” conceptions of belief, and additionally that Hume is not clearly of the opinion that impressions are kinds of conception.

Among the several implications of this claim, it is what I must call the speculation about conception based upon Hume’s explicit utterances concerning ideas which concerns us at this point in the argument. The difference between the two manifestations of ideas outlined above, *viz.* (i) as they are *distinguished* from impressions, and (ii) as they are *susceptible of distinction* into lively and unenlivened ideas, is easily discernible also as the difference between the two ways of viewing conception. As one of two possible values, ideas distinguished from impressions (i) correspond to the “faint and languid” half of conception (1), the essentially valued sense of conception. As themselves distinguishable into lively and unenlivened forms (ii), ideas are exactly similar to the neutral but modifiable conception (2). The correspondence is quite clear from Hume’s own language in the *Treatise*, especially in his discussions of belief. ²⁴

In his initial account of the formation and properties of belief, Hume provides us with a description of the imagination, here in its capacity as the power to order and re-order ideas with absolute freedom, as it is before the modification imposed upon its ideas by our conviction. In this Hume’s notion of conception is very similar to Reid’s: ²⁵

We may mingle, and unite, and separate, and confound, and vary our ideas in a hundred different ways; but ‘till there appears some principle, which fixes one of these different situations, we have in reality no opinion. (T 96)

Although it is possible to read the expression “have no opinion” as a claim that we *neither assent nor dissent* from these situations, that is, we have no opinion one way

or the other, believing or disbelieving, we find that in the same passage Hume in effect defines opinion, along with belief, as assent, *i.e.*, as a lively idea (T 96). This definition narrows the sense of opinion to include assent only, to the exclusion of dissent, so that the passage above appears to say that we *dissent from* every combination and disjunction produced by the imagination until and unless “there appears some principle, which fixes one of these situations”. On this account alone, then, we cannot conclude that the conceptions which come and go in the libertine imagination are neutral, or have the nature of conception (2), but rather that they are either those of which we would be incredulous, or those which we would believe, a situation which is much closer to the sense of conception (1).

However, Hume is much more explicit about the status of these ideas in the imagination in the section entitled *Of the probability of chances*, where he begins his exposition of the degrees of evidence and of the various kinds of knowledge these degrees sustain. Hume distinguishes here three primary classes: knowledge proper, from the comparison of ideas, proofs, based upon relations of cause and effect which have never been controverted, and probabilities, which, as he says, “are still attended with uncertainty” (T 124). The inadequacy of probability is due to our experience of rare, occasional, or frequent contradictions of a particular matter of fact. In proofs such a contradiction never occurs; the degree of probability which attends our more uncertain conclusions depends upon the frequency and persistence of those contradictions. Frequent contradictions amount to a “probability of chances”, while those contradictions we never or only occasionally encounter, generate a “probability of causes”, one species of which amounts to proof. The feature of Hume’s argument which interests us here is the condition he designates as necessary for our experience of these contradictions in matters of fact. This condition is the *indifference* of the mind, and it is essential because, as Hume puts it, chance is simply the negation or contradiction of a cause. ⁽²⁶⁾

Why this indifference is essential to the “negation of a cause” is better grasped through a closer look at the nature of a cause. Although at this point in his analysis Hume has not yet presented us with a definition of CAUSE, I believe it is helpful to call one to mind, from the later discussion of the idea of necessary connection:

A CAUSE is an object precedent and contiguous to another, and so united with it, that the idea of the one determines the mind to form the idea of the other, and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other. (T 170)

This is Hume’s second definition, the one he calls “philosophical”, which is more appropriate to a discussion of conception than is his definition of it as a “natural relation”. Notice that the “negation” of a cause so defined would entail a disruption of the determination of the mind to form an idea upon encountering either an impression or another idea related to the first. Hume declares that the influence of chance on the mind is the reverse of that of causation, which we can see when we consider cause under the preceding definition. The experience of contrariety disrupts

and weakens the determination of the mind to form one thing upon an encounter with another. Furthermore,

'tis essential to it, to leave the imagination perfectly indifferent, either to consider the existence or the non-existence of that object, which is regarded as contingent. (T 125)

This indifference, further, is an essential quality of our mental life:

A cause traces the way to our thought, and in a manner forces us to survey such certain objects, in such certain relations. Chance can only destroy this determination of the thought, and leave the mind in *its native situation of indifference*; in which, upon the absence of a cause, 'tis instantly re-instated.²⁷

His language here is very strong: the indifference of the mind is *native* to it. Elsewhere in the *Treatise* we have difficulty in determining whether all of the objects to which we do not assent are in fact objects of dissent, as may be the case with the absence of opinion noted earlier, or whether there is a state of mind which is neither here nor there, as it were, in which we are *indifferent*, for the moment at least, to the existence or non-existence of the object. In the case of the probability of chances it is quite clear that in the absence of a determination, the mind is not in a state of disbelieving its objects *en masse*, but is instead merely or simply *conceiving* some of them, while at the same time *conceiving and believing* or *conceiving and disbelieving* others. These "mere conceptions" may at some point be subject to a modification, or a "fixing", (T 96) that will transform them into beliefs, or perhaps into notions of whose objects we are incredulous, but they themselves are essentially neutral relations to the objects of thought. Finally, there is one last piece of evidence for this "native indifference" of the imagination:

(I)n reasonings....concerning matters of fact....the imagination is free to conceive both sides of the question. (T 95)

The sides to which Hume refers are incredulity and belief, the two valences for conception that are admissible in his investigation into the nature of belief. In these passages there begins to appear the hybrid of conception (1) and (2) which I believe is actually the nearest to the notion Hume is advancing: conception is *first* free and indifferent to actual matters of fact, and is *then* influenced by its associations and thereby transformed into two forms, and two only, that is, belief and disbelief.

Another indication of Hume's reliance on conception (2) appears in the first lines of his opening discussions of belief:

The idea of an object is an essential part of the belief of it, but not the whole. We conceive many things, which we do not believe.²⁸

His task here is to analyze and examine what he calls the "*component parts of our reasonings concerning cause and effect*" (T 82), which are three: the original impression, the idea of the related object, and the transition between the two (T 84). It is the idea of the related object that is our focus here. Hume has already established, earlier in the *Treatise*, that our conception of an object is identical to our conception of it as existing, and that there is nothing in the one which is not in the other. Having said this, Hume finds that he needs to determine exactly what distinguishes a conception of objects and of their existence from the belief in their existence. Positing the idea or conception as *part* of this belief, he proceeds to inquire into what is added to the conception in order to produce the modification he terms *belief*. First ruling out the possibility that the alteration lies in the superaddition of some idea to our original idea of the object, he then introduces his claim, discussed above, that their only difference lies in the varying degrees of force and vivacity which attend them, and that for this reason they are, for us, "different to the feeling". Although the account of the causes of this difference is the subject of some uncertainty, even for Hume, one aspect of the position persists unaltered through all of his emendations and retractions. It is as follows: the conception or idea (a) is only *part* of the total package denominated belief, (b) must be modified or otherwise transformed in order to become belief, and (c) without that modification or transformation, that is, without the addition of the feeling or a degree thereof, the idea or conception is an essentially credulity-neutral mental relation. These conclusions depend, I believe, on the fact that in our conviction of the existence of an object, we *also* simply conceive or *entertain* it, where this conception is construed as a component of a modular notion of belief.

III

Reid's theory of belief is concerned almost entirely with perceptual belief, which, for the purposes of this comparison with Hume's theory, comprehends both Reid's contingent first principles (E VI.v) and the particular claims of perception (E II.xx).²⁹ Perception, as we have seen, includes both a conception and a belief in the existence of its object. Because we can inquire neither into the causes of the conception nor into the causes of the belief, both are for Reid therefore beyond question. They are (30) fallible³⁰ but without the positive, non-speculative manifestation of doubt or uncertainty in the practical application of a belief,³¹ they are immediately evident (31) to the common sense of mankind.³² From this follows Reid's view that perceptual belief, in the form of particular perceptions and of first principles of contingent truths, is axiom-like or axiomatic (E 140, II.xx).³³ Paul Vernier argues that for Reid (32) what is innate here is not, however, the conceptions themselves but rather a disposition to form them³⁴ so that Reid's concurrence with Locke's repudiation (34) of innate ideas is not inconsistent.³⁵ This kind of distinction might lead one to (33) locate the warrant Reid provides for perceptual belief with the circumstances of

our creation or with "the common sense of mankind"³⁶ Vernier, however, argues further that the actual warrant for our perceptual beliefs lies in the fact that "there are no reasonable grounds for doubting them"³⁷

Reid's resistance to demands for a pedigree for the conception and belief and his designation, if we accept Vernier's reading, of their warrant in the fact that they are "beyond reasonable doubt"³⁸ have two consequences for Hume's perspective on Reid's theory. First, conception in any manifestation, from perception to fantasy, functions as an unproblematically achieved relation between the mind and its objects. Questions concerning the specificity of the object, the origin of that specificity as it appears in conception, and the access the mind has to its objects in this relation are all resolved for Reid, at least in the abstract, in advance. Second, the specificity of a particular conception does not determine whether or not that conception is accompanied by an act which involves a commitment to the existence of its object (and of the object of the conception). That is, there seems to be for Reid no relation – beyond their *de facto* coincidence – between a conception and, for example, a belief in the existence of its object. As I mentioned above, Reid's theory claims that the mind is disposed to take its sensations as signs of certain objects and thereupon form conceptions of those objects and at the same time also disposed to believe in the existence of those objects.³⁹

It is this coincidence of the unproblematic and unpedigreed character of conception, on the one hand, and the warrant provided to belief in the currency of an "absence of good reasons for doubt"⁴⁰ on the other, that lies, I believe, behind Hume's charge that Reid's theory takes us back to innate ideas. Hume's notion of conception, as I have argued above, functions as a conviction-neutral relation between the mind and its objects. It has, however, a pedigree in its ultimate origin in impressions and its transformation into the lively conception which Hume designates as belief depends vitally on its relations with impressions and other lively conceptions. In his own theory of belief, Hume is most concerned with the role of impressions and association in the enlivening of mere conception: conception – the conviction-neutral relation between the mind and its objects – depends for its transformation into belief on the proportion of instances in which a particular relation has been confirmed to those in which the relation has been disconfirmed.⁴¹ It is not only the absence of doubt but the affirmative enlivening of a particular conception which is essential to belief, on Hume's theory. Reid's rejection of both the requirement of a pedigree and of the relation of belief to lively and enlivening *relata* for Hume looks like an assertion of a kind of conception-and-belief by fiat, as it were, which is precisely the effect of a theory of innate ideas. Here, then, it appears that beyond Reid's reliance on a theory of notions or conceptions *simpliciter* it is his vision of the relation between conception and doubt in his theory of belief which may have provoked Hume's charge in the letter to Hugh Blair.

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- 1 P.B. Wood, "David Hume on Thomas Reid's *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, On the Principles of Common Sense: A New Letter to Hugh Blair from July 1762*", *Mind*, 1986, pp. 411-16.
- 2 John Wright, "Hume vs. Reid on Ideas: The New Hume Letter", *Mind*, 1987, p. 393.
- 3 Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry Into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, 6th edn., (Edinburgh: Bell & Bradfute et al, 1810), p. 30 (Chapter I, § 7).
- 4 Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (London and Glasgow: Richard Griffen and Company, 1854), pp. 94-95 (Essay II, ch. xii). Citations in the text as E.
- 5 Wright, "Hume vs. Reid", pp. 394-395. See also Reid, *Essays*, p. 10 (I.i).
- 6 Wright, "Hume vs. Reid", p. 394.
- 7 See for example Roger Gallie, "Hume, Reid and Innate Ideas: A Response to John P. Wright", *Methodology and Science*, vol. 22, no. 4 (1989), pp. 218-229; Norman Daniels, "On Having Concepts 'By Our Constitution'", in Stephen F. Barker and Tom L. Beauchamp, eds., *Thomas Reid: Critical Interpretations*, vol. 3, (Philadelphia: Philosophical Monographs, 1976), pp. 35-43.
- 8 See Reid, *Inquiry*, pp. 67-68 (II.viii) and pp. 110-116 (V.iii). See also Paul Vernier, *Skepticism and Perceptual Belief in the Philosophy of Thomas Reid*, unpublished dissertation, (Baltimore, 1976). "If we did not, by our innate powers, take such sensations as signs of objective qualities of a certain kind, the perception of physical objects could never get started." Vernier, *Skepticism*, p. 35.
- 9 "When I perceive a tree before me, my faculty of seeing gives me not only a notion or simple apprehension of the tree, but a belief of its existence . . . ; and this judgment or belief is not got by comparing ideas, it is included in the very nature of the perception itself." Reid, *Inquiry*, p. 471 (VII.iv).
- 10 "[T]he philosopher is impatient to know how his conception of external objects, and his belief of their existence, is produced. This, I am afraid, is hid in impenetrable darkness." Reid, *Essays*, p. 137 (II.xx).
- 11 Reid, *Inquiry*, pp. 75-76 (II.ix). See also Wright, "Hume vs. Reid", pp. 393-94.
- 12 Reid, *Inquiry*, pp. 119-120 (V.v). See also Daniels, "On Having Concepts", pp. 35-43.
- 13 See Keith Lehrer, "Reid on Evidence and Conception" in Matthew Dalgarno and Eric Matthews, eds., *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid*, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), pp. 121-144.
- 14 Reid, *Inquiry*, p. 472 (VII).
- 15 In opposition to the doctrines, respectively, of Hume and Descartes.
- 16 Reid, *Inquiry*, p. 115 (V.iii). See also Daniels, "On Having Concepts", pp. 39-40.
- 17 Reid, *Inquiry*, p. 38 (II.ii).
- 18 Reid, *Inquiry*, pp. 119-120 (V.v). See also Daniels, "On Having Concepts", pp. 35-43; Vernier, *Skepticism*, pp. 128-29.
- 19 Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume* (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1949), p. 107n.
- 20 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd edn., revised by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 97n. Citations in the text as T.
- 21 John W. Yolton, *Perceptual Acquaintance From Descartes to Reid*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 109-121.

- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 48.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 I argue elsewhere that there are in fact two distinct meanings of the term idea in Hume's *Treatise*, namely, as act of conception (here synonymous with conception) and as content of that act "Two Meanings of the Term 'Idea': Acts and Contents in Hume's *Treatise*" (forthcoming *Journal of the History of Ideas*).
- 25 See the summary in section I.
- 26 Hume is more explicit about Relations of Ideas in the Enquiry. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in L.A. Selby-Bigge, ed., *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 3rd. edn., revised by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 25-26.
- 27 Hume, *Treatise*, p. 125 (my emphasis).
- 28 Hume, *Treatise*, p. 94. Note here what appears to be another apposition of the terms 'conception' and 'idea'.
- 29 See Paul Vernier, "Thomas Reid on the Foundations of Knowledge and his Answer to Skepticism" in Barker and Beauchamp, *Thomas Reid*, pp. 14-24. Vernier lists several of the contingent first principles whose particulars it will be helpful to bear in mind in this comparison: that the things we perceive by our senses really exist and are as we perceive them, that with natural phenomena the future is likely to resemble the past, and that our thoughts belong to our selves. Vernier, "Thomas Reid", p. 15 (quoting Reid).
- 30 Reid, *Essays*, p. 325 (VI.vii); Vernier, "Thomas Reid", pp. 14-15.
- 31 Vernier, "Thomas Reid", p. 20.
- 32 Reid, *Essays*, p. 272 (VI.ii), attributing to common sense the office of judging things which are self-evident.
- 33 See also Reid, *Inquiry*, p. 40 (II.iii).
- 34 Vernier, *Skepticism*, pp. 25-26. See also Daniels, "Having Concepts", p. 41.
- 35 Reid, *Essays*, p. 329 (VI.vii).
- 36 Reid, *Inquiry*, p. 472 (VII.iv). Compare Reid, *Essays*, p. 7 (I.i). On this question of Reid's warrant for perceptual belief see Vernier's discussion of several possible interpretations based in Reid's texts. Vernier, "Thomas Reid", pp. 16-18.
- 37 Vernier, "Thomas Reid", p. 20.
- 38 Vernier, "Thomas Reid", p. 21.
- 39 Reid, *Inquiry*, pp. 49-50 (II.v); *Essays*, p. 331 (VI.vii, paraphrasing Buffier).
- 40 Vernier, "Thomas Reid", p. 20.
- 41 This is clear from his discussion of probability. Hume, *Treatise*, pp. 124-142. I have argued elsewhere that the mind's native situation of indifference is something Hume overlooks in his skeptical conclusion of *Treatise* I.iv.2, concerning the continued and distinct existence of the objects of our perception and about which Reid is very concerned. ("Content and Indifference in the Formation of Belief: Hume's Mistake in *Treatise* I.iv.2" (in submission)). My perception of the stairs, in the example of the porter, is merely interrupted, not disconfirmed, and so my belief in their existence is as well warranted as my inference from the present impression of an effect to the existence of its cause. See Hume, *Treatise*, p. 196.