

Thomas Reid

1. Reid on the “Ideal System” (3.5): -The hypothesis:2.2: “Nothing is perceived but what is in the mind which perceives it...”: should perhaps add “immediately” before “perceived”?
-where that hypothesis leads: 2.3-2.5, 3.5

a. The Epistemological Argument: 13.8:

1. If we cannot by reasoning infer the existence of matter from our sensations, then we [should not believe that / are not justified in believing that / do not know that] matter exists

2. “We cannot by reasoning infer the existence of matter from our sensations”
So, C. We [should not believe that / are not justified in believing that / do not know that] matter exists

b. The Inconceivability Argument: 16.3:

1. Matter is conceivable to us only as resembling the sensations and [sensory] ideas in our minds

2. Matter cannot resemble the sensations and [sensory] ideas in our minds

So, C. Matter is not conceivable to us.

c. Reid’s Reaction, without the details of his alternative, yet: In each case, Reid accepts the second premise: 13.8, 16.4. To avoid the conclusion, then, he feels we must reject the first premise, which is underwritten by the role that the “ideal system” gives to sensations in perception. But Reid finds no argument for these commitments aspect of the ideal system (16.3, 2.2), and seeks an alternative account of perception and the role of sensations in it.

2. The Psychology of Perception

a. The Process by which we come to have the belief: Sensations as “signs”

--How it doesn’t go (and how Reid thought that his predecessors thought the process did go, and/or must go, if we are to arrive at a justified belief in MOs); How it does go

X PGOs → sensation → bi/ao sensation → belief in MO

✓ PGOs → sensation → belief in MO

↙ bi/ao sensation

--Signs: 23.7

--Artificial vs. Natural Signs: 23.8, 4.7

--Three Kinds of Natural Signs: p. 9

--The Case of Hardness, continued: 8.2-8.7, 10.3

--The Epistemological Argument Defeated??

b. The content of our belief in matter

--Reid’s “experimentum crucis”: 13.5; Result reported at 17.8-17.9

--The Case of Hardness: 7.1-8.2

--the Inconceivability Argument Defeated

--**Secondary Qualities**, and our perception and conceptions of them: 6.3-6.9, esp. 6.6

--Hume’s two arguments-Hume’s *Enquiry*, sect. 2, 6th par., pp. 11.7-12.6; and see the first passage from the letter on the back of this page

--Why We Don’t Believe in a “Double Existence”: passing over and “confounding”:

Reid: 7.8-8.1, 9.9-10.0

3. The Epistemology of Perception

- a. Innocent-Until-Proven-Guilty Epistemology & Reid's Initial Reply to Skepticism: 20.6
- b. Reid's Response to the "Thorough and Consistent Sceptic": 14.3 ("nothing to say"), 3.9-4.1 (a 4th thing to say), 20.8-21.6 (three things to say)
- c. Reid's Response to the "Semi-Sceptic" (14.3, 20.7, (20.8)) and his "Addition to the Sceptical System" (14.0-14.2)
- d. Putting it together: 3 options on our initial stance
- e. Reid's Influence on Late 20th Century Religious Epistemology

4. Response to Hume on Induction: 32.3-34.4

- a. The "Inductive Principle" (26.3): How We Learn from Experience
- b. Parallels between Induction and Testimony as ways that we learn from experience, via the Inductive Principle vs. the "Principle of Credulity" (last paragraph on p. 26)
- c. Reid's Treatment of Hume (25.7-26.3); Comparison of Reid with Hume

From Hume's 4 July 1762 letter to Hugh Blair about Reid:

First, As far as I can judge, there seems to be some Defect in Method; at least, I do not find the Subject open up gradually, and one part throwing light upon another. The Author digresses frequently: For instance, under the Article of Smelling, he gives you a Glimpse of all the Depths of his Philosophy. . .

I think, the Author affirms I had been hasty, & not supported by any Colour of Argumen[t] when I affirm, that all our Ideas are copy'd from Impressions. I have endeavour'd to build that Principle on two Arguments. The first is desiring any one to make a particular Detail of all his Ideas, where he woud always find that every Idea had a correspondent & preceding Impression. If no Exception can ever be found, the Principle must remain incontestable The second is, that if you exclude any particular Impression, as Colours to the blind, Sound to the Deaf, you also exclude the Ideas.

Locke, Hume, and Reid on Liberty

I believe all of these philosophers accept the determinism wrt nature (i.e., at least wrt events that don't involve voluntary actions by agents) that Hume expresses at p. 54.6: *It is universally allowed, that matter, in all its operations, is actuated by a necessary force, and that every natural effect is so precisely determined by the energy of its cause, that no other effect, in such particular circumstances, could possibly have resulted from it.*

When do we act freely?

L, H: Basically, when your action effectively follows your willing to perform it. You're free wrt a prospective action if you will in fact do it if you will to do it, but will not do it if you will not to do it. On an action you have performed, it's free if you did it because you willed to do it, and would not have done it if you had willed not to do it.

But to act freely, doesn't one's will have to be, not only efficacious, but free?

L, H: I don't even know what you mean by talking about the will being free or not

OK, try this: Can one act freely if one is determined to will and then to act as one does by events over which one has no control?

L, H: Yes, one can. Look, all events are determined, including one's willings (volitions).

What's needed for freedom is that these causal pathways from events over which you clearly have no control to your actions pass through your willings in such a way that the crucial conditionals hold (L: and perhaps also that these pathways display certain characteristics, but these advanced restrictions on freedom-allowing pathways of course do not require that one's willings and then actions not be ultimately determined by events over which one has no control). When you think about it, it would be a problem if you were *not* determined to will and to act as you do.

Locke, pp. 15-18:

14. Liberty belongs not to the will. If this be so, (as I imagine it is,) I leave it to be considered, whether it may not help to put an end to that long agitated, and, I think, unreasonable, because unintelligible question, viz. Whether man's will be free or no? For if I mistake not, it follows from what I have said, that the question itself is altogether improper; and it is as insignificant to ask whether man's will be free, as to ask whether his sleep be swift, or his virtue square

20. Liberty belongs not to the will. . .

21. But to the agent, or man. To return, then, to the inquiry about liberty, I think the question is not proper, whether the will be free, but whether a man be free.

24. **Liberty is freedom to execute what is willed.** This, then, is evident, That a man is not at liberty to will, or not to will, anything in his power that he once considers of: liberty consisting in a power to act or to forbear acting, and in that only. For a man that sits still is said yet to be at liberty; because he can walk if he wills it. A man that walks is at liberty also, not because he walks or moves; but because he can stand still if he wills it. But if a man sitting still has not a power to remove himself, he is not at liberty; so likewise a man falling down a precipice, though in motion, is not at liberty, because he cannot stop that motion if he would. . . .

27. Freedom. . . **In this, then, consists freedom, viz. in our being able to act or not to act, according as we shall choose or will.**

29. What determines the Will. . . [T]he will being nothing but a power in the mind to direct the operative faculties of a man to motion or rest as far as they depend on such direction; to the question, What is it determines the will? the true and proper answer is, **The mind**. . . . If this answer satisfies not, it is plain the meaning of the question, What determines the will? is this,—What moves the mind, in every particular instance, to determine its general power of directing, to this or that particular motion or rest? . . .

[*It's here that our key question arises: Can one act freely if the mind is (if one is) determined to will as it does (as one does)? And Locke's answer seems to be: yes]

49. To be determined by our own judgment, is no restraint to liberty. This is so far from being a restraint or diminution of freedom, that it is the very improvement and benefit of it; it is not an abridgment, it is the end and use of our liberty; and the further we are removed from such a determination, the nearer we are to misery and slavery.

Hume, p. 63:

But to proceed in this reconciling project with regard to the question of liberty and necessity; the most contentious question, of metaphysics, the most contentious science; it will not require many words to prove, that all mankind have ever agreed in the doctrine of liberty as well as in that of necessity, and that the whole dispute, in this respect also, has been hitherto merely verbal. For what is meant by liberty, when applied to voluntary actions? We cannot surely mean, that actions have so little connexion with motives, inclinations, and circumstances, that one does not follow with a certain degree of uniformity from the other, and that one affords no inference by which we can conclude the existence of the other. For these are plain and acknowledged matters of fact. By liberty, then, we can only mean *a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will*; that is, if we chuse to remain at rest, we may; if we chuse to move, we also may. Now this hypothetical liberty is universally allowed to belong to every one, who is not a prisoner and in chains. Here then is no subject of dispute.

Reid, p. 2:

By the Liberty of a Moral Agent, I understand, a power over the determinations of his own Will.

If, in any action, he had power to will what he did, or not to will it, in that action he is free. But if, in every voluntary action, the determination of his will be the necessary consequence of something involuntary in the state of his mind, or of something in his external circumstances, he is not free; he has not what I call the Liberty of a Moral Agent, but is subject to Necessity.

Wait, are you saying that when an agent acts freely, their willing to do the action is uncaused?

R: No, the volition is caused by the agent, exercising the active power that it has to produce such volitions (and then actions).

OK, but then isn't the agent's causing of the volition itself caused by some prior event, so that we can trace the pathway of causes back to events outside the agent's control?

R: No, the agent/substance causes that volition (and then the action), but is not determined by earlier events to do so (in cases of free action). Agents have the power to produce these volitions (and then actions) in a way that is not determined by prior events, nor is this causing reducible to event-event causal relations.