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8 Reid on Memory and the Identity of Persons

This essay is a discussion of Reid's views on memory and the identity of persons through time. These topics are closely related, although there has been, and still is, a serious controversy about the exact nature of the relation. John Locke, on the one hand, made the case for what has come to be called the "Memory Theory of Personal Identity," according to which the identity of persons through time is *constituted* by the memory that a person has of his or her past actions, experiences, and so forth. Thomas Reid, on the other hand, thought this was absurd, and argued for the thesis that the relation between memory and identity is simply of an *evidential* nature: Memory gives a person evidence that he or she is the same person as the person who did, or experienced some thing at some previous time.

The first section is a discussion of Reid's views regarding memory as a source of knowledge, while the second considers his views on personal identity through time. In both sections, I will pay special attention to two features of Reid's thought. The first feature is that there are, as Reid says, things that are "obvious and certain" with respect to memory and personal identity. Unlike Descartes, Reid doesn't start by methodically doubting everything that seems obvious and certain. Rather, he endorses the principle that what seems obvious and certain is innocent until proven guilty. That is, what seems obvious and certain may legitimately be accepted as a starting point for philosophical reflection until it is shown that such acceptance is irrational, unjustified, or unwarranted. This endorsement is at least part of what makes Reid a common sense philosopher.

The second feature I will pay attention to is that Reid holds that there are certain things with respect to memory and personal identity that are "unaccountable." Reid firmly rejected skepticism with

respect to a variety of topics; nonetheless, he was convinced that there are a great many things that we cannot explain, many things that are unaccountable. Instead of filling these gaps in our knowledge with bold conjectures or unproved hypotheses, Reid preferred to acknowledge ignorance in these cases.

1. MEMORY AS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE

One of the things that Reid holds is obvious and certain with regard to memory is that "by memory we have an immediate knowledge of things past" (EIP III.i: 253). At least two remarks should be made about this statement. First, Reid says here that memory is a source of *knowledge*; elsewhere, though, he says that memory occasions *belief*.[1] However, this should not be taken to indicate an inconsistency, for unlike Descartes, Locke, and Hume, Reid held that knowledge is a species of, and is not to be contrasted with, belief.[2]

Second, Reid says that memory is a source of *immediate*, or as he says elsewhere, "intuitive" knowledge (EIP III.iii: 258). Although the expression "immediate knowledge" can mean various things, Reid uses it primarily to denote *knowledge that does not result from reasoning.* So, my (distinctly) remembering that I had a grapefruit for breakfast this morning yields what Reid calls "immediate knowledge" of this fact. This remembering yields immediate knowledge only in the sense that my current knowledge of this fact isn't the result of reasoning.

Another thing that Reid holds is obvious and certain is that memory has an object: "The object of memory, or thing remembered, must be something that is past" (EIP III.i: 254). This implies that memory, like perception, but unlike sensation, requires an act/object analysis. In every case of remembering, there is an object that is remembered and an act of remembering that object.[3] Moreover, Reid contends that the object of memory must be "something that is past." Now understood strictly and literally, what Reid says here is not true. You may remember something that is the case *now* (e.g., your present telephone number) or even something *yet to come* (e.g., that the concert will begin tomorrow at 8:15 p.m.). But this need not refute Reid's claim. For, as Reid says when speaking more carefully, to remember these things you must have learned about them at some previous time.[4] When interpreted in a charitable fashion, then, we can

understand Reid's claim that memory is of things past to say that the objects of memory are past, present, or future things about which we have learned in the past.

Reid, we've seen, holds that memory has objects. It is worth emphasizing that there are two quite different ways to think about the objects of memory. Consider the memory reports included in lists A and B respectively:

List A
Jack remembers himself climbing Mt. Everest.
Mary remembers her former telephone number being 63.89.30.
The Queen remembers the fall of Byzantium.

List B
Jack remembers that he climbed Mt. Everest.
Mary remembers that her telephone number is 63.89.30.
The Queen remembers that Byzantium fell.

The objects on list A are of a varied nature – they are experiences, states of affairs and events. What Jack, on list A, is reported to remember is having undergone a certain experience, the experience of climbing Mt. Everest. The objects of memory on list B, by contrast, are propositions. What Jack is reported to remember on list B is *that he climbed Mt. Everest.* For convenience's sake, we may refer to the types of report included in list A as *objectual memory reports*, and those included in list B *propositional memory reports.* Of note for our purposes is the way in which objectual and propositional memory reports can diverge. It is possible, for example, that Jack remembers that he climbed Mt. Everest without being able to remember himself climbing Mt. Everest. In order for us accurately to ascribe to Jack the memory of climbing Mt. Everest, it must be the case that he remembers what the experience of climbing that mountain was like. But this is not required for us accurately to ascribe to Jack the memory that he climbed Mt. Everest.[5]

What did Reid take to be the objects of memory? In order to find out, let us consider a memory report of his own, as well as his own comments on it:

I remember the transit of Venus over the sun in the year 1769. I must therefore have perceived it at the time it happened, otherwise I could not now

remember it. Our first acquaintance with any object of thought cannot be by remembrance. Memory can only produce a continuance or renewal of a former acquaintance with the thing remembered. (EIP III.i: 254–5)

Reid describes the object of his own act of remembering with the words "the transit of Venus over the sun in the year 1796." On the face of it, this is not a propositional memory report; Reid doesn't report that he remembers *that Venus made a transition over the sun in 1769*. Rather, he reports that he remembers *Venus's transit over the sun in 1769*. The object of what Reid says he remembers, then, is an event. It should be added that this is not an idiosyncratic example of a memory report on Reid's part; by far and away, Reid's usual manner of stating memory reports is objectual in character. And this, I suggest, gives us reason to believe that Reid thinks of memory as being objectual in nature.

In order to understand Reid's thought more fully on this matter, we need to consider something else that Reid holds is obvious and certain, namely, that "[m]emory is always accompanied with the belief of that which we remember": "in mature years, and in a sound state of mind," Reid says, "every man feels that he must believe what he distinctly remembers, though he can give no other reason of his belief, but that he remembers the thing distinctly" (EIP III.ii: 254).

What is particularly interesting about this passage is that Reid doesn't identify the act of remembering something with the act of believing something; *remembering* is a phenomenon distinct from *believing something on the basis of remembering* (or, for short, *having a memory belief*). Moreover, Reid says that memories come in different degrees of vivacity. These two points suggest that it is possible, in Reid's view, to remember something without a memory belief following in its wake. Suppose – to borrow an example from Carl Ginet[6] – you are asked what your telephone number was twenty years ago and, although you are very uncertain of it, give the correct number, say, 63.89.30. Then we would not want to say that you have the memory belief that your former telephone number is 63.89.30, although we would want to say that you remembered your former telephone number. The reason the memory belief didn't form in this case is that the remembering wasn't distinct enough.

When we put these points together, the following picture of Reid's thought emerges. Memory has objects. These include events such

as the transit of Venus over the sun in 1769, states of affairs such as your former telephone number's being 63.89.30, and past actions and experiences such as your climbing Mt. Everest. The memory of these objects can be more or less distinct. When the memory of these objects is above a certain threshold of distinctness (and the agent remembering is of sound mind), beliefs are elicited. For example, since Reid's remembering the transit of Venus over the sun in 1769 is above this threshold, he believes that Venus made a transit over the sun in 1769. So, given that Reid distinguishes *remembering* from *believing something on the basis of remembering*, and also holds that believing is a propositional attitude, we should say that for Reid the objects of remembering are not propositions, but objects such as events, states of affairs and experiences; the objects of beliefs formed on the basis of rememberings, by contrast, are propositions. Otherwise put, what Reid calls memories are those types of item picked out by style A reports, while beliefs formed on the basis of memory are those types of item picked out by style B reports.

Let me now point to a final feature of the quotation from Reid that we have been exploring. What this quotation indicates is that Reid not only subscribes to the thesis that distinct memory is always accompanied by belief, but also subscribes to the stronger thesis that to remember distinctly a past or currently existing object entails that that object exists or existed at some time. Reid's example of the transit of Venus testifies to this: He says that he could not have remembered the transit of Venus had he not actually perceived the transit of Venus. Generalizing over this case, we can say that Reid endorsed the following principle:

(A) S's distinctly remembering p entails p's existence

– where S is a person of sound mind, and p is a variable for objects such as events, states of affairs, etc., that exist or existed at some time.

From this it follows that Reid is committed to the thesis that it is self-contradictory to speak of incorrect memories.[7] However, this is a strong claim that is likely to provoke two objections.

The first objection has its roots in ordinary language: "It is not unusual," it might be said, "for people to say such things as 'I remember there were four people in the room,' when in fact there were five, and 'I remember visiting Salt Lake City over the weekend,' when the visit took place only during the middle of the week. These are cases of

incorrect memory, and what we call in ordinary language 'incorrect memories.' Hence, Reid is wrong to claim that there are no incorrect memories, and (A) is false."

Reid doesn't explicitly address the issue of incorrect memories, but we can identify in his work two strategies of reply. One strategy of reply can be discerned in his discussion of the problem of the so-called "fallacies of the senses" – a discussion that immediately precedes his treatment of memory.[8] In this discussion, Reid says that to understand so-called misperceptions, we must distinguish *what is seen* from *what is believed on the basis of what is seen*. A large array of so-called perceptual errors, suggests Reid, are not errors with respect to what is seen, but errors with respect to what is believed on the basis of what is seen. In such cases, these beliefs are rashly formed, or suffer from other deficiencies such as being outweighed by counterevidence. Likewise, we have seen that Reid distinguishes *what is remembered* from *what is believed on the basis of remembering.* This suggests that some so-called incorrect memories can be thought of as beliefs formed too hastily on the basis of what is remembered or formed in the teeth of excellent countervailing evidence. What we have in this type of case is not an incorrect memory, but a deficient belief formed on the basis of remembering.

Another strategy of reply that can be gleaned from Reid's analysis of the fallacies of the senses involves distinguishing *seeming perceptions* from *genuine perceptions*.[9] In Reid's view, some cases of perceptual misrepresentation are not a matter of forming deficient beliefs on the basis of perception, but of being subject to what we might call "perceptual mimics." Likewise, we can distinguish *seeming memories* from *genuine memories*. Some cases of inaccurate memory are not beliefs formed in an inappropriate way on the basis of remembering, but are "memory mimics." Reid's position can thus allow that not all seeming memories – even particularly vivid ones – are genuine memories. Granted, having this distinction in hand may be of little help when trying to determine in one's day-to-day experience whether some mental episode is a genuine case of memory. Nevertheless, the success of the second strategy (along with the first) leaves (A) untouched.

The second objection to (A) is broadly Humean in character, and runs as follows: "Granted, distinct memory is always accompanied by a memory belief. But Reid gives us no account of why or how this

happens. And in the absence of such an account, we have no reason to regard memory as reliably giving rise to true memory beliefs."

Reid's response to this skeptical charge can be gathered from the following quotations:

> Why sensation should compel our belief of the present existence of a thing, memory a belief of its past existence, and imagination no belief at all, I believe no philosopher can give a shadow of reason, but that such is the nature of these operations; they are all simple and original, and therefore inexplicable acts of the mind. (IHM II.iv: 28)

And

> I think it appears, that memory is an original faculty, given us by the Author of our being, of which we can give no account, but that we are so made.
>
> The knowledge which I have of things past by my memory, seems to me as unaccountable as an immediate knowledge would be of things to come; and I can give no reason why I should have the one and not the other, but that such is the will of my Maker. I find in my mind a distinct conception, and a firm belief of a series of past events; but how this is produced, I know not. I call it memory, but this is only giving a name to it; it is not an account of its cause. I believe most firmly what I distinctly remember; but I can give no reason of this belief. It is the inspiration of the Almighty that gives me this understanding.
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> When I believe the truth of a mathematical axiom, or of a mathematical proposition, I see that it must be so: Every man who has the same conception of it sees the same. There is an evident and necessary connection between the subject and the predicate of the proposition; and I have all the evidence to support my belief which I can possibly conceive.
>
> When I believe that I washed my hands and face this morning, there appears no necessity in the truth of this proposition. It might be, or it might be not. A man may distinctly conceive it without believing it at all. How then do I come to believe it? I remember it distinctly. This is all I can say. This remembrance is an act of my mind. Is it possible that this act should be, if the event had not happened? I confess I do not see any necessary connection between the one and the other. If any man can shew such a necessary connection, then I think that belief which we have of what we remember will be fairly accounted for; but if this cannot be done, that belief is unaccountable, and we can say no more but that it is the result of our constitution. (EIP III.i: 255–6)

Reid affirms in these passages that memory is "unaccountable," by which he means three things: First, that we don't know why distinct

memory, in contrast with, e.g., imagination, is always accompanied by belief; second, that we don't know why it tends to give rise to *true* beliefs; and, third, that we cannot establish that memory beliefs are true.

Not all beliefs, it should be noted, are, in Reid's view, unaccountable; nor are all questions as to how or why true beliefs arise without answer. Belief in necessary truths such as mathematical truths is Reid's example to illustrate this. Someone may believe that $2 + 2 = 4$ because he *sees that it must be so*. In (some) mathematical propositions, says Reid, there is a necessary and evident connection between the subject and the predicate of the sentence expressing the proposition, a connection that can be "seen." This "seeing" is the evidence that supports one's belief in the mathematical proposition and, hence, (when all goes well) accounts for the formation of it.

Memory belief, by contrast, stands without the evidential support of such "seeing" and is therefore *un*accountable in at least two senses. We cannot discern any necessary connection between (i) a memory belief and a remembering and (ii) a memory belief and the object remembered. When someone remembers that he washed his hands and face this morning he sees no necessary connection between (i) this memory and the belief that he washed his hands and (ii) the belief that he washed his hands and the event that consisted in his doing so. Because we cannot discern a necessary connection between these things, there is, suggests Reid, no account (save the will of God) of the formation of this belief.[10]

But it hardly follows from this, says Reid, that we should be skeptical about whether memory is reliable. Contrary to what Hume suggests in numerous places,[11] our not being able to explain why or how a putative faculty works in a certain way has no bearing on whether we have such a faculty or whether it is reliable. The knowledge we have of things by way of memory, Reid says, is the "result of our constitution" – a constitution that Reid repeatedly emphasizes is the product of a benevolent Maker and, thus, fundamentally reliable.

Nevertheless, it is tempting to object that, in this case, Reid is calling certain things unaccountable when they are really not. Reid might be correct to say that we have no account of why certain mental episodes are accompanied by memory beliefs or why these beliefs are generally true. But, in this passage, Reid has offered no reason for thinking that we cannot justify the reliability of memory. So, it might

be said: "There are various types of evidential bases for a belief. There is the type that Reid has identified – that of *seeing that the proposition under consideration must be true.* Reid has shown that a memory belief doesn't rest on *that* evidential basis. He's also shown we cannot discern a necessary connection between the object remembered and the memory belief formed. But there may be alternative types of evidential basis on which a memory belief rests. If so, there is a sense in which memory beliefs *can* be given an account of."

Reid anticipates this objection. In one passage he describes (and rejects) such an alternative:

> Perhaps it may be said, that the experience we have had of the fidelity of memory is a good reason for relying upon its testimony. I deny not that this may be a reason to those who have had this experience, and who reflect upon it. But I believe there are few who ever thought of this reason, or who found any need of it. It must be some rare occasion that leads a man to have recourse to it; and in those who have done so, the testimony of memory was believed before the experience of its fidelity, and that belief could not be caused by the experience which came after it. (Ibid.)

The alternative evidential basis for memory belief that Reid considers here is a favorable track record. The idea is that we have a reason to believe that our memory beliefs are mostly true because we have inductive evidence that distinct memories typically yield true memory beliefs.

Reid doesn't spell out this line of reasoning in any detail. Still, he makes a brief remark on the inductive track record procedure that is of utmost philosophical significance. This procedure, Reid indicates, can only be successful if the reliability of memory can be established by a line of reasoning that nowhere involves or presupposes the reliability of memory.[12] But this is impossible, suggests Reid, because it cannot be shown that memory is reliable without presupposing the reliability of memory. It is possible for B to check the reliability of A's memory. And it is possible for C to check B's memory. But this process cannot go on indefinitely. At some point, some agent in this chain of verification must presuppose the reliability of *his own* memory, if only while running a credit check on someone else's memory. As Reid says: "The operations of reason, whether in action or in speculation, are made up of successive parts. The antecedent are the foundation of the consequent, and without the conviction

that the antecedent have been seen or done by me, I could have no reason to proceed to the consequent, in any speculation, or in any active project whatever" (EIP III.iv: 262). If that's right, there is a kind of circularity involved in any attempt to run a credit check on memory. Although the circularity is not the most direct kind of logical circularity – the track record argument doesn't have among its premises the proposition that memory is reliable – the reliability of memory is assumed in both generating and assessing the evidential force of the premises of the argument.[13]

I have claimed that it is Reid's view that we cannot offer a noncircular justification for the reliability of memory. I have also claimed that it is Reid's view that we cannot discern how or why memory works as it does. It is this latter claim in particular that distinguishes Reid's views from those of Locke and Hume. What Locke claims is that remembering something is a matter of "ideas" being before our mind and furthermore that "our ideas [are] nothing, but actual Perceptions in the Mind, which cease to be anything when there is no perception of them. . . . "[14] Spelled out a little more, Locke's account of the workings of memory comes to this: Memory is "the Power to revive again in our Minds those Ideas which, after imprinting, have disappeared, or have been, as it were, laid out of Sight . . . and this is Memory, which is as it were, the storehouse of our *Ideas*."[15] This Lockean account, Reid points out, is unacceptable as it implies two incompatible claims: (i) to remember is to revive in our minds certain ideas, and (ii) ideas cease to exist when they are not perceived. Reid says in reply that "[i]t seems to me as difficult to revive things that have ceased to be anything, as to lay them up in a repository, or to bring them out of it. When a thing is once annihilated, the same thing cannot be produced" (EIP III.vii: 284). Moreover, Locke's account is too broad insofar as it fits certain mental goings on that definitely are not cases of remembering: "I see before me the picture of a friend. I shut my eyes . . . and the picture disappears. . . . I have the power to turn my eyes again towards the picture, and immediately the perception is revived. But is this memory? No surely; yet it answers the definition as well as memory itself can do" (EIP III.vii: 285).

Hume's account of the workings of memory fares no better. Among other things, the thesis that the only items we are directly acquainted with are ideas in our minds gives rise to skepticism: "since

ideas are things present, how can we, from our having a certain idea presently in our mind, conclude that an event really happened ten or twenty years ago, corresponding to it?" (EIP III.vi: 290).[16] Hume's answer is that this cannot be done. His theory of ideas, then, leads to scepticism about memory beliefs. Reid regards this result as a *reductio* of the Humean theory. Better than having an obviously wrong account of memory is to acknowledge that one doesn't know why or how memory works the way it does.

II. THE IDENTITY OF PERSONS THROUGH TIME

I now turn to the topic of personal identity. One way to enter Reid's thought on this matter is to review his criticism of how Locke construed the relation between memory and personal identity. As mentioned at the outset of this essay, Locke endorsed a version of what is often called the "Memory Theory of Personal Identity," according to which, in Reid's summary of it,

> personal identity, that is, the sameness of a rational being, consists in consciousness alone, and, as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person. So that, whatever hath the consciousness of present and past actions, is the same person to whom they belong. (EIP III.vi: 275–6)[17]

To properly understand what is said here, three clarifications are in order. In the first place, Locke's expression "consciousness of past actions" must be taken to mean "memory of past actions." Moreover, to say that personal identity "consists in consciousness" is to claim that *what makes it the case* that a person at time t2 is identical with, say, the person who climbed Mt. Everest at an earlier time t1 is that person's remembering at t2 that he climbed Everest at t1, when in fact he did climb Everest. Finally, in this context, "remembering" something admits of two interpretations. It can mean *occurrently* remembering or *being able* to remember some thing. Locke, suggests Reid, can be read as espousing either view.

Against the second interpretation of Locke, Reid offers two sorts of counterexample. The first counterexample shows that what we can call the "potential memory" interpretation of Locke has "strange consequences" (EIP III.vi: 276). Says Reid, "if the intelligent being may lose the consciousness of the actions done by him, which is surely possible, then he is not the person that did those actions"

(ibid.). So, according to Locke's theory, were Gerald Ford such that he could not remember that he was Nixon's vice-president, then he would not be the same person as the man who was Nixon's vice-president. This implication of the theory is absurd, and indicates that an agent's identity isn't, as Locke suggests, constituted by his ability to remember certain things:

> It is . . . true, that my remembrance that I did such a thing is the evidence I have that I am the identical person who did it. . . . But to say that my remembrance that I did such a thing . . . makes me the person who did it, is, in my apprehension, an absurdity too gross to be entertained. . . . For it is to attribute to memory . . . a strange magical power of producing its object . . . [and this] appears to me as great an absurdity as it would be to say, that my belief that the world was created, made it to be created. (EIP III.vi: 277 and III.iv: 265)

Another, related, absurd consequence of the theory is that a person may at the same time be and not be the person that did a certain deed. Reid illustrates the point by means of the well-known Brave Officer Paradox:

> Suppose a brave officer to have been flogged when a boy at school, for robbing an orchard, to have taken a standard from the enemy in his first campaign, and to have been made a general in advanced life: Suppose also, which must be admitted to be possible, that when he took the standard, he was conscious of his having been flogged at school, and that when he was made a general he was conscious of his taking the standard, but had absolutely lost the consciousness of his flogging.
>
> These things being supposed, it follows, from Mr LOCKE's doctrine, that he who was flogged at school is the same person who took the standard, and that he who took the standard is the same person as he who was made a general. Whence it follows, if there be any truth in logic, that the general is the same person with him who was flogged at school. But the general's consciousness does not reach so far back as his flogging, therefore, according to Mr LOCKE's doctrine, he is not the person who was flogged. Therefore the general is, and at the same time is not the same person with him who was flogged at school. (EIP III.vi: 276)

Reid's point is that identity is transitive, and that Locke's theory, absurdly, implies the denial of this.

Reid's final objection to Locke's view is best understood as having the occurrent memory interpretation of Locke's theory as its target. The objection hinges on a principle that Reid says he takes for granted.

I take it for granted that all the thoughts I am conscious of, or remember, are the thoughts of one and the same thinking principle, which I call *myself*, or my *mind*. Every man has an immediate and irresistible conviction, not only of his present existence, but of his continued existence and identity, as far back as he can remember. (EIP I.ii: 42)

Two thoughts are present here. Reid contends that thoughts and remembrances do not exist all by themselves but require a "bearer," which he calls a "self," or, as I will call it, a *person*. This contention puts Reid in opposition to Hume, who held instead that persons are "bundles" of thoughts ("a succession of ideas and impressions without any subject" (IHM II. vi: 32)). To be sure, Reid is aware of the fact that he gives no argument for this thesis. Reid held, however, that this thesis is so obvious that it *cannot* be argued for. In his own words: "if any man should demand a proof, that sensations cannot be without a mind, or sentient being, I confess I can give none; and that to pretend to prove it, seems to me almost as absurd as to deny it" (IHM II.vi: 32).

Second, Reid maintains that we irresistibly believe that we have "continued existence and identity," where "uninterrupted existence is . . . necessarily implied in identity" (EIP III.iv: 262, 263). Reid, then, means to endorse the following principle:

(P1) Object O at t2 is identical with an object at t1, only if O has uninterruptedly existed during the time interval between t1 and t2.

Reid endorses (P1) but again acknowledges that it cannot be proved that persons have uninterrupted existence:

If any man . . . should demand a proof that he is the same person to-day as he was yesterday, or a year ago, I know no proof can be given him: He must be left to himself, either as a man that is lunatic, or as one who denies first principles, and is not to be reasoned with.

Every man of sound mind, finds himself under the necessity of believing his own identity, and continued existence. The conviction of this is immediate and irresistible; and if he should lose this conviction, it would be a certain proof of insanity, which is not to be remedied by reasoning. (EIP I.ii: 42–3)

Given his endorsement of (P1), Reid is committed to the claim that the pain I now feel in my left arm is not identical with the pain I felt there yesterday. For, between now and yesterday, there has

been a time interval during which I was without that pain in my left arm. The two pains are, although sortally the same, numerically diverse. But the person who has the pain now, is the same person as the one who had the pain yesterday, for he uninterruptedly existed during that time interval. Reid endorses (P1) because he deems its denial to have deeply counterintuitive consequences: "That which hath ceased to exist, cannot be the same with that which afterwards begins to exist; for this would be to suppose a being to exist after it ceased to exist, and to have had existence before it was produced, which are manifest contradictions" (EIP III.iv: 263).[18]

According to Reid, Locke endorses (P1).[19] But the application of (P1) to the occurrent memory interpretation of Locke's theory reveals a problem: "Identity can only be affirmed of things which have a continued existence. Consciousness, and every kind of thought [memory included], is transient and momentary, and has no continued existence; and therefore, if personal identity consisted in consciousness, it would certainly follow that no man is the same person any two moments of his life" (EIP III.vi: 278).

Reid's polemic against the Memory Theory of Personal Identity sets the stage for a more general argument for the claim that persons are not identical with (or constituted by) their bodies. This more general argument rests on three claims that Reid holds are obvious and certain:

(P2) An object O has strict identity through time if it doesn't gain or lose parts.
(P3) Persons have no parts.
(P4) Persons have perfect identity through time.

(P2) rests on the distinction – defended by Joseph Butler before and Roderick Chisholm after him – between perfect and imperfect identity through time.[20] For something to have perfect identity over time, according to Reid, it cannot change parts. Whenever a thing changes parts, e.g., when a ship "has successively changed her anchors, her tackle, her sails, her masts, her planks, and her timbers" it may have "something which, for the conveniency of speech, we call identity" (EIP III.v: 266) – or imperfect identity. One good answer, then, to the question "Is this the ship that Stilpo built?" is "Yes, more or less." The ship that Stilpo built may thus be imperfectly identical with a particular ship that has over time successively changed her anchors,

masts, planks, etc. But the right answer to the question "Is this man named Demjanjuk the same person as Ivan the Terrible?" is either "Yes" or "No," not "More or less." The man named Demjanjuk either is or is not the same person as Ivan the Terrible, for persons, Reid contends, do not gain or lose parts. The reason for this is that persons *have* no parts. They are metaphysical simples: "all mankind place their personality in something that cannot be divided, or consists of parts. A part of a person is a manifest absurdity" since a person "is something indivisible and is what LEIBNITZ calls a *monad*" (EIP III.iv: 263–4). Consequently, Reid says, "identity, when applied to persons, has no ambiguity, and admits not of degrees, or of more and less" (EIP III.v: 267).

Reid offers no direct argument for (P3) or the claim that persons have no parts, but he points out the implausibility of its denial:

> When a man loses his estate, his health, his strength, he is still the same person, and has lost nothing of his personality. If he has a leg or an arm cut off, he is the same person he was before. The amputated member is no part of his person, otherwise it would have a right to a part of his estate, and be liable for a part of his estate, and be liable for a part of his engagements; it would be entitled to a share of his merit and demerit – which is manifestly absurd. (EIP III.iv: 264)[21]

In any case, when we combine these principles together with other plausible propositions, we have the ingredients for two closely related arguments for the claim that persons are not identical with their bodies. The first argument hinges on (P3), and says:

(1) Bodies have parts.
(P3) Persons have no parts.
(2) If object A has parts and object B does not, then objects A and B cannot be identical. (From Leibniz's Law)
(C) Therefore, persons are not identical with their bodies.

The second argument rests on (P4), and goes as such:

(3) If persons are bodies, then persons do not have perfect identity through time.
(P4) Persons have perfect identity through time.
(C) Therefore, persons are not identical with their bodies.

It goes without saying that, in the light of so-called "brain transplant" thought experiments in which part of a person's brain is

removed and transferred to a different body, many contemporary philosophers would not find (P3) and (P4) obvious and certain. The seeds of a Reidian reply to such cases can be found in Reid's critique of Locke, although I cannot enter that discussion here.[22] Instead, I shall close by indicating that Reid took it to be clear that (P3) and (P4) commit us to a form of dualism.[23] It is often said these days that dualism is the upshot of a theistic world view. This would be an accurate assessment of its place in Reid's thought. In Reid's view, God is a nonmaterial person in possession of active power for whose existence we have good evidence.[24] Accordingly, there was a precedent in Reid's view for the claim that at least one person is immaterial. And it was, to some degree, natural for a theist such as Reid to think that human persons are also immaterial. It is, however, especially important to note that Reid's dualism is not simply, or even primarily, driven by his theism. Reid held that the position that persons are not identical with their bodies is dictated by the best science of his day.[25] The best science of his day was Newtonian science, and Newton, as well as his followers, held that matter is inert or does not act. But, as Reid argued in the *Essays on the Active Powers*, persons *do* act – they have, as he says, active power. They are able to act because they are endowed with intelligence and freedom. Matter, by contrast, is without intelligence or freedom and, hence, cannot act. These ideas together suggest a third argument for (C):

(4) Human bodies are material objects.
(5) Matter has no active power (it is "essentially inert").
(6) Persons have active power.
(C) Therefore, persons are not identical with their bodies.

In conclusion, Reid's dualism is the vector resultant of various pressures – his claim that principles such as (P2)–(P4) are obvious and certain, his acceptance of theism, and his high regard for science.[26]

NOTES

1. See EIP III.i: 254.
2. Reid nowhere gives an explicit analysis of the concept of knowledge, but his view is plausibly thought of as being broadly reliabilist in character. See de Bary 2001.
3. Reid believed that no such analysis can be given of sensation. We cannot distinguish between, say, feeling pain in one's tooth and the object of

that act, namely, the pain in one's tooth. For, as Reid says, sensations consist in being felt. See IHM XI.xx.

4. See EIP III.ii: 254.
5. The difference I have in mind has an analogue in reports of perceptions. Jack may be said to see a cat on the mat, but he may also be said to see that the cat is on the mat. And it is possible to report the former truthfully but the latter falsely.
6. Ginet 1975: 147.
7. Malcolm 1963: 188 also notes that "remembering incorrectly" is self-contradictory.
8. EIP II.xxii.
9. See EIP II.xvii: 320.
10. Appealing simply to the will of God, however, doesn't amount to an "account" of memory as Reid thinks of an account. See Wolterstorff 2001: 49.
11. See especially EHU VII.
12. See Reid's remarks at EIP VI.v: 481ff.
13. Alston 1993 calls this kind of circularity "epistemic circularity."
14. E II.xx.2: 150.
15. Ibid.: 149–50.
16. This is a type of argument that John Greco calls a "No Good Inference" argument in his essay in this volume.
17. This is Reid's summary of E II.xxvii.9: 335.
18. Baruch Brody thinks that Reid's argument for P1 is a bad one. His summary of Reid's view is that "no object can have two beginnings of existence" and it is bad for the following reason: "If by 'beginning of existence' one means 'first moment of existence,' then an object with interrupted existence has only one beginning. If, however, one means 'first moment of existence after a period of nonexistence,' then objects with interrupted existence have two beginnings of existence, but there is nothing incoherent with that" (Brody 1980: 80). A Reidian reply to this would be that Brody's argument is, at best, directed against (P1) understood as a principle about imperfect identity.
19. EIP III.vi: 275.
20. See especially Butler 1975 and Chisholm 1976, Chap. 3.
21. A recent exposition of this thesis is Chisholm 1991.
22. EIP III.vi: 276.
23. Reid was convinced that the relation between body and person is clouded in mystery: "There appears to be a vast interval between body and mind; and whether there be any intermediate nature that connects them together, we know not" (EIP Preface: 11).
24. See LNT as well as EIP VI.vi.

25. See PRLS: 21, 48, 201–7.
26. For comments on an early draft of this essay, I thank John Greco, Joe Houston, Peter Schouls, and members of the Vrije Universiteit research group "Foundationalism and the Sources of Knowledge." For comments and advice on subsequent drafts, I am especially indebted to Terence Cuneo.