

Thomas Reid 1

1. Reid on the “Ideal System” (3.5): The hypothesis:2.2; and where it leads: 2.3-2.5, 3.6-3.8

a. The Epistemological Argument: 15.9:

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: 18.4:

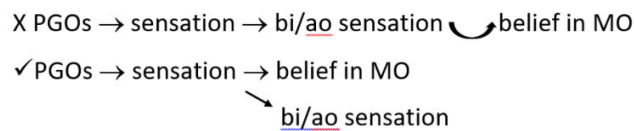
1. Matter is conceivable to us only as resembling the sensations and [sensory] ideas in our minds
2. Matter cannot resemble the sensations and [sensory] ideas in our minds
So, C. Matter is not conceivable to us.

c. Reid’s Reaction, without the details of his alternative, yet: In each case, Reid accepts the second premise: 15.9, 18.4. 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 (18.5, 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



--Signs: 27.9-28.2

--Artificial vs. Natural Signs: 28.3, 4.7

--Three Kinds of Natural Signs: 9.2-9.8

--The Case of Hardness, continued: 8.3-8.8, 10.3-10.4

--The Epistemological Argument Defeated??

b. The content of our belief in matter

--Reid’s “experimentum crucis”: 15.7; Result reported at 19.8

--The Case of Hardness: 7.1-8.3

--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”: 7.8-8.1, 9.9-10.0, 21.9-22.1

Next time: The Epistemology of Perception

New reading: a few pages (bottom of p. 326 thru p. 331), section II.B of my “Reid’s Anti-Sensationalism and His Realism,” *The Philosophical Review* 98 (1989): 313-348; available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2185022>

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.