

**THREE QUESTIONS CONCERNING REID'S MORAL
EPISTEMOLOGY**

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	ii
Chapter 1: Background into Problems in Reid’s Moral Epistemology	1
1. The Rational Principles of Action and the Moral Sense	2
1.1 Mechanical, animal, and rational principles of action	2
1.2 A Problem with Reid’s Account of the Moral Sense	9
2. Moral Facts and Moral First Principles in Reid’s Moral Philosophy	13
2.1 What is the nature of a moral fact for Reid?	14
2.2 What is a moral first principle for Reid?	17
2.3 Reid’s set of moral first principles	21
3. How Does Reidian Moral Intuition and Moral Perception Give us Moral Knowledge?	29
3.1 Reidian ordinary sense perception	29
3.2 Reidian moral perception	35
3.3 Objections to Reidian moral perception	38
3.4 Reidian moral intuition	40
Chapter 2: The Nature of the Moral Sense.....	47
1. Background	48
2. Reid as a Moral Intuitionist.....	56
3. Reid and Moral Perception	65
3.1 Evidence for Reidian moral perception	65
3.2 Objection: Reid uses two distinct senses of ‘perceive’	71
4. Which Moral Epistemology Does Reid Endorse?	75
4.1 Reid as strictly being a moral intuitionist	75
4.2 Reid as strictly being a moral perceptionist	80
4.3 Reid as being neither a moral intuitionist nor a moral perceptionist	86

4.4 Reid as being both a moral intuitionist and a moral perceptionist.....	91
Chapter 3: Reidian Moral Facts and Reidian Moral First Principles	97
1. The Nature of Moral Facts for Reid	98
2. Moral First Principles	110
2.1 Moral first principles as being self-evident in the narrow sense	110
2.2 Moral first principles as being self-evident in the broad sense.....	117
3. The Set of Moral First Principles	123
3.1 A problem with Reid’s list of moral first principles	123
3.2 Amending Reid’s list of moral first principles and the Golden Rule.....	127
3.3 Adding to Reid’s list of moral first principles	138
Chapter 4: Reidian Moral Perception and Reidian Moral Intuition	145
1. Reidian External Sense Perception	146
1.1 The three ingredients of Reidian external sense perception	146
1.2 Original and acquired Perception.....	153
1.3 Signs as appearances and qualities.....	156
2. Reidian Moral Perception	158
2.1 How Reidian moral perception works	158
2.2 Why Reid’s account is a form of moral perception	166
3.1 Objection one: The causal objection.....	171
3.2 Objection two: Reidian moral perception is not a genuine case of perception.	177
3.3. Objection three: Reidian moral perception is too limited	185
4. Putting Everything Together: Reidian Moral Intuition and Reidian Moral Perception	
.....	187
4.1. Summarizing Reidian moral perception	187
4.2 Reidian moral intuition	188
4.3 An objection to Reidian moral intuitionism.....	197
4.4. Why both moral intuition and moral perception?	203
Chapter 5: Conclusion	208

1. A Review of the Positions Defended	208
1.1 Review of Chapter 2	208
1.2 Review of Chapter 3	212
1.3 Review of Chapter 4	219
2. Other Issues in Reidian Moral Philosophy	226
2.1 The role of emotions in Reidian moral judgment	227
2.2 The problem of moral conflicts	229
2.3 Mackie and supervenience	233
Works Cited	236
VITA	242

Chapter 1: Background into Problems in Reid's Moral Epistemology

Reid's moral philosophy is vague or unclear in several respects. I contend that the vagueness and lack of clarity is problematic since it makes Reid's moral philosophy difficult to evaluate. One such problem concerns how to best interpret Reid's moral epistemology. In my dissertation, I argue for what I think is the most plausible interpretation of Reid's moral epistemology; in doing so, this interpretation answers three broad questions concerning the nature of Reid's moral philosophy: (1) What is the best way to interpret Reid's account of the moral sense, the faculty by which we make moral judgments and obtain moral knowledge? (2) What is the nature of moral reality for Reid? and (3) How does the moral sense provide one with knowledge of moral reality? In addition to answering these questions, I address some objections one might raise against my interpretation and Reid's moral philosophy in general. While I do not argue for the soundness of Reid's positions, I aim to put forth an interpretation that accurately reflects what I think Reid intends to claim as well as provide what I think makes his positions the most philosophically plausible.

In this introductory chapter I briefly outline what I will discuss in the chapters to come: In **Section 1**, I discuss the issues I will cover in chapter 2. In doing so, I specifically focus on Reid's account of the moral sense. I point out that Reid is either vague or unclear about how the moral sense is supposed to work, and I briefly discuss four ways one might interpret Reid's account of this faculty. In **Section 2**, I cover the material that will be explained at length in chapter 3. Accordingly, I discuss the nature of moral reality for Reid. In doing so, I discuss the difference between what Reid calls moral first principles and other moral facts that do not constitute first principles. I also

note that Reid's list of moral first principles is incomplete in a problematic sense, and briefly explain how Reid might overcome this problem. Then in **Section 3**, I discuss the material that will be covered in chapter 4. Here, I explain how exactly the moral faculty provides us with knowledge of various moral facts and discuss a number of objections one might raise against my interpretation.

1. The Rational Principles of Action and the Moral Sense

1.1 Mechanical, animal, and rational principles of action

In this section, I explain Reid's principles of actions; in doing so, I explain Reid's rational principles of action and focus on Reid's claim that one's notion of duty is a rational principle of action. Having explained such principles, I then proceed to explain Reid's view that we know our moral duty by way of our moral sense, a faculty that ultimately provides us with moral knowledge. I claim that Reid's description of the moral sense is vague or unclear and so is open to at least four different interpretations. While in this section I do not argue for what I think is the strongest interpretation (both philosophically and what has the strongest textual support), I provide the reader with a brief overview of each possible interpretation, and will postpone a more thorough discussion of the issue until chapter 2. However, before explaining Reid's account of the moral sense, some background into Reid's moral philosophy will be helpful, and so it is to this background this chapter now turns.

In his *Essay on the Active Powers of Man* (hereafter, *EAP*), Reid discusses at length what he calls principles of action. Such principles explain the various factors that influence or motivate (or should influence or motivate) one's actions or behaviors. Reid

breaks down principles of actions into three categories: (1) mechanical principles of action; (2) animal principles of action; and (3) rational principles of action. Mechanical principles are broken down into two categories: instincts¹ and habits², such as a baby's instinct to swallow food or an adult's bad habit of biting his nails.

Animal principles of action include appetites³, desires⁴, affections⁵, and passions⁶.

¹ Reid characterizes an instinct as, "a natural blind impulse to certain actions, without having any end in view, without deliberation, and very often without any conception of what we do" (*EAP* 3.1.2, p. 78). For instance, breathing and swallowing seems to be instinctual. A child does not learn how to breathe or swallow through education or habit. He or she just performs such actions right from birth. Moreover, other examples of instincts include a bee's ability to make a honeycomb of certain dimension or a mature salmon's disposition to swim back to its original place of birth to spawn.

² Reid defines a habit as "a facility of doing a thing, acquired by having done it frequently" (*EAP* 3.1.3, p. 88). Unlike instincts, we are not, independent of experience or training, disposed to perform certain actions. Instead, a habit is formed after we repeatedly perform certain actions; through experience and repetition, we eventually become disposed to perform certain actions. In which case, while both habits and instincts are dispositions to perform certain actions, the crucial difference is that a habit is acquired through training and experience while instincts do not require training, learning, or frequent repetition. Examples of habits include waking up at 4:44 am each day or a dog returning to his master upon his master whistling at him.

³ For Reid, appetites have two components: (1) an uneasy sensation, which is more or less an unpleasant feeling like feeling hungry or weary. To the degree one has an uneasy sensation, (2) one has a desire to eliminate the uneasy feeling. Accordingly, if one feels very hungry or exhausted, one will have a strong desire to eat or rest (*EAP* 3. 2.1, p. 92-93).

⁴ Reid's account of desire seems quite different than modern-day usage: first, unlike appetites, Reid thinks desires are not accompanied with an uneasy sensation. Second, unlike appetites, they are not temporary (e.g., one's hunger ends after he eats) but constant. Reid thinks that only three things fit into his definition of desire: the desire for power, the desire for esteem, and the desire for knowledge. Further, to some extent, such desires are common to both humans and animals. For instance, males in a herd of cattle constantly battle for the highest rank both amongst themselves and new entrants into the herd. The same goes for humans, especially concerning areas where leadership and rank play a significant role (e.g., corporations and the military) (*EAP* 3.2.2, p.99).

⁵ According to Reid, one (whether animal or human) has a benevolent affection when he, in some sense, desires the good (or positive well-being) of some other individual (whether animal or human), and one has a malevolent affection when he, in some sense, desires the bad (or negative well-being) of some individual (*EAP* 3.2.3, p. 108).

⁶ Passion is simply the degree to which we feel an appetite, desire, or affection. As Reid states,

I shall, by the word passion mean, not any principle of action distinct from those desires and affections before explained, but such a degree of vehemence in them, or in any of them, as is apt to produce those effects upon the body or upon the mind which have been above described (*EAP* III. 3.6, p. 136)

Reid, then, does not use 'passion' in the same sense as Hume. Hume lumps all desires, affections, and appetites under the category of passions, whereas Reid states that there are crucial differences that make such things distinct.

Since both humans and animals have instincts, habits, appetites, desires, affections, and passions, mechanical principles of action and animal principles of action are possessed by both.⁷

However, rational principles of action only apply to creatures with the capacity to reason:

The rational principles of action in man, which have that name, because they can have no existence in beings not endowed with reason, and, in all their exertions, require not only intention and will, but judgment or reason. (*EAP* 3.3.1, p. 152)

The rational principles of action, then, apply to creatures like humans, for humans have the capacity to use reason in deciding which actions to perform. Furthermore, Reid claims there are two rational principles of action:⁸ (1) to perform actions that bring about our good upon the whole and (2) to do our duty:

The ends of human actions I have in view, are two, to wit, what is good for us upon the whole, and what appears to be our duty. They are very strictly connected, lead to the same course of conduct, and cooperate with each other; and, on that account, have commonly been comprehended under one name, that of reason. But as they may be disjoined, and are really distinct principles of action, I shall consider them separately. (*EAP* 3.3.1, p.154)

⁷ The difference between Reid Mechanical Principles of Action and his Animal Principles of Actions is somewhat obscure. They are similar in so far as creatures with either the capacity to reason or not to reason can have their actions or behaviors influenced by them, and so both humans and animals are influenced by such principles of actions. However, reason can of course. The difference is that Mechanical Principles do not require intention or will, whereas Animal Principles require intention and will. What Reid means by intention or will is a complicated topic that extends beyond the scope of this chapter. However, one way to get a grip on the difference is that (1) one intends or wills to do something if he performs an action because it will satisfy some goal or achieve some end. For example, one eats in order to achieve the end of satisfying his hunger, or one defeats his political enemies in order to achieve his goal of obtaining high political power. In contrast, (2) one does not intend or will to do some action if he or she performs that action not because it will achieve some goal or end. For instance, on Reid's account, if someone performs an action out of instinct, he or she did not perform that action in order to achieve some goal, but simply because he or she was naturally disposed to perform that act. Similarly, if one does something out of habit, say bites his nails, he or she does so not to achieve some goal but simply because he or she developed the disposition to impulsively perform such an act.

⁸ I understand such principles to constitute the reasons by which rational people sometimes choose to act. Accordingly, while people act in certain ways in virtue of having certain habits, instincts, or desires, sometimes—at least for Reid—people exercise their reason, and when they do so they make their decisions (at least in part) on the basis of what is good for them overall or what appears to be their duty.

The first principle suggests that a rational individual should decide to perform actions that will increase his or her overall long-term happiness or well-being.⁹ Accordingly, a rational individual should not evaluate actions solely on the basis of whether they bring about short-term happiness, but instead should evaluate whether such actions bring about greater happiness over the long haul. For example, while it might make one happier in the short-term to spend the night binge-drinking instead of studying, it is presumably in one's long-term best interest to study instead of binge-drinking. Accordingly, Reid thinks it is practically rational (i.e., rational in the sense that it helps us obtain our ends or goals) to perform actions that will ultimately bring about more overall long-term happiness, and so a rational individual should apply principle (1) when deciding which action or course of action to pursue:

To prefer a greater good, though distant, to a less that is present; to choose a present evil, in order to avoid a greater evil, or to obtain a greater good, is, in the judgment of all men, wise and reasonable conduct; and when a man acts the contrary part, all men will acknowledge, that he acts foolishly and unreasonably....

Thus, I think it appears, that to pursue what is good upon the whole, and to avoid what is ill upon the whole, is a rational principle of action, grounded upon our constitution as reasonable creatures. (*EAP* 3.3.2, p.156-157)

The first principle of action, then, states that if someone is a rational person, he should (or will) choose to perform actions that serve his or her overall best interests.¹⁰

However, while the first principle states that a rational person should choose to perform actions that serve his overall best interest, the second principle maintains that a

⁹ I should perhaps point out that it is not always clear whether Reid thinks the rational principles are descriptive (i.e., they describe human behavior) or prescriptive (i.e., they prescribe what humans ought to do). As I briefly suggest in chapter 2, I think that such principles are likely to be prescriptive for Reid.

¹⁰ To me, it is not entirely clear whether Reid thinks rational principles describe how people actually act or prescribe how people should act. I do not pursue this issue in great length, but in chapter 2, I briefly suggest that the textual evidence supports the interpretation that Reid thinks such rational principles are prescriptive rather than descriptive.

rational person with a sense of honor should choose to perform actions simply because it is morally right (or obligatory) to do so. The second rational principle is what I will call the *principle of duty*. According to Reid, if someone has a notion of his duty and is a person of honor (where a person of honor is understood to be someone whose moral character is such that he performs what duty or obligation prescribes simply because it is the right thing to do and not because doing so serves his overall best interests),¹¹ he will choose to perform (or at least have some disposition to perform) actions prescribed by duty, and he will do so simply because it is what is most honorable to do. As Reid states,

I take it for granted, therefore, that every man of real honor feels an abhorrence of certain actions, because they are in themselves base, and feels an obligation to certain other actions, because they are in themselves what honors requires, and this, independently of any consideration of interest or reputation.

...This principle of honor, which is acknowledged by all men who pretend to character, is only another name for what we call a regard to duty, to rectitude, to propriety of conduct. It is a moral obligation which obliges a man to do certain things because they are right, and not to do other things because they are wrong. (*EAP* 3.3.5, p.170)

Reid, accordingly, claims that most people with a sense of honor will find certain actions morally good and others morally bad, and that such people will not simply perform such actions as a means to promoting their self-interest. Moreover, I also do not think it is too much of a stretch to assume that Reid thinks a person of honor will also strive to develop

¹¹ As Reid states,

I presume it will be granted, that in every man of real worth, there is a principle of honour, a regard to what is honourable or dishonourable, very distinct from his regard to his interest. (*EAP* 3.3.5, p. 170)

And,

Ask the man of honour, why he thinks himself obliged to pay a debt of honour? The very questions shocks him. To suppose that he needs any other inducement to do it but the principle of honour, is to suppose that he has no honour, no worth, and deserves no esteem. (171)

morally virtuous character traits.

Now one might think that the actions prescribed by (1) and (2) may sometimes conflict, for the course of action that increases my overall long-term happiness may not be morally praiseworthy or morally good. For example, cheating in school may help me graduate and get a high-paying job, and obtaining such a job would likely make me quite happy in the long-run; however, cheating seems morally wrong. It seems, then, actions that serve our best interests are not always morally permissible. Nonetheless, despite such possibilities, Reid does not think (1) and (2) will lead to such conflicts:

...What is good for us upon the whole, and what appears to be our duty. They are very strictly connected, and cooperate with each other; and, of that account, have commonly been comprehended under one name, that of reason. (*EAP* 3.3.1, p.154)

And also,

Although these be really two distinct principles of action, it is very natural to comprehend them under one name, because both are leading principles, both suppose the use of reason, and, when rightly understood, both lead to the same course of life. They are like two fountains whose streams unite and run in the same channel. (*EAP* 3.3.5, p. 173)

For now, I leave aside whether Reid has a strong argument supporting his claim that the actions prescribed by (1) and (2) do not conflict.¹² Instead, I explore the question

¹² Reid's argument for this claim seems very Aristotelean. Aristotle claims that a life of virtue leads to a life of happiness and flourishing (what Aristotle would call *eudemonia*). For Aristotle, a life spent pursuing merely power, wealth, or sensual pleasure are likely to lead to unhappiness, at least in the long run. Similarly, Reid states that a life performing morally right actions (or doing one's moral duty) simply because they are right makes one happier:

And as no man can be indifferent about his happiness, the good man has the consolation to know, that he consults his happiness most effectually, when, without any painful anxiety about future events, he does his duty. (*EAP* 3.3.4, p.168)

If Reid is right, then the two rational principles of action would not conflict, for doing one's moral duty (the second rational principle of action) will increase one's overall happiness in the long-run. Of course, there are clear differences between the moral positions of Aristotle and Reid. For one, Aristotle is a virtue ethicist, whereas Reid is not. However, despite such differences, I merely claim that Reid's argument for the claim that self-interest and duty do not conflict seems similar to Aristotle's.

concerning how Reid thinks we come to know our duty—or how we learn what is morally right, wrong, obligatory, etc.

Reid claims that one's moral sense (Reid also refers to the moral sense as one's conscience or moral faculty) informs that individual of his moral duty:

...That, by an original power of the mind, which we call conscience, or the moral faculty, we have the original conceptions of right and wrong in human conduct, of merit and demerit, of duty and moral obligation, and our other moral conceptions; and that, by the same faculty, we perceive some things in human conduct to be right, others to be wrong;....(*EAP* 3.3.6, p.180)

The moral sense is a belief-forming faculty (a faculty that enables us to form moral beliefs) that has two primary functions. First, it makes moral judgments¹³, and so helps the individual obtain moral knowledge (i.e., an understanding of what is morally right or wrong, praiseworthy or blameworthy). Second, it makes the individual feel a certain emotional response to his or her judgment:

Our moral judgments are not like those we form in speculative matters, dry and unaffecting, but, from their nature, are necessarily accompanied with affections and feelings...

...But we approve of good actions, and disapprove of bad ones; and this approval and disapproval turns out on analysis to include not only a moral judgment on the action but also some affection—favourable or unfavourable—towards the agent, and some feeling in ourselves. (*EAP* 3.3.7, p.180)

For example, if someone judges that it is wrong to steal from the cookie jar, that individual will feel some disfavor (or disapprobation as Reid would put it) towards the

¹³ In recent conversations with Professors Marina Folescu and in an article by Rebecca Copenhaver (2014), they have indicated that when Reid says that a faculty makes a judgment, he uses 'judgment' in a sense not typically used today. For Reid, a faculty makes a judgment when it presents some proposition as being true. For instance, consider one's faculty of vision. In visual experience, the individual is presented with all sorts of propositions—e.g., 'grass looks green', 'there is a cat by my car', 'it is raining outside'. In many cases, these propositions seem to be true. Accordingly, when Reid says that a faculty makes a judgment, he is merely claiming that the faculty presents the individual with a proposition that seems to be true. Regarding moral judgment, the moral sense presents the individual with moral propositions that seem true.

individual who performs (or may perform) the theft as well as some negative feeling in himself or herself (e.g., disgust).

1.2 A Problem with Reid's Account of the Moral Sense

As described above, the moral sense is a faculty that not only makes moral judgments, but is also a faculty that triggers certain emotions responses in the individual (which emotions will be triggered depends on whether that individual judges an action to be morally right or wrong). Now how the moral sense provides one with moral knowledge is unclear, for Reid is ambiguous about what kind of faculty is the moral sense. On the one hand, as will be shown, he identifies the moral faculty as being one and the same thing as one's conscience, where (at least according to my understanding) a conscience is typically understood as a type of rational or non-external sensory faculty.¹⁴ On the other hand, as will be shown, he says the moral faculty is analogous to our external sense faculties. Such passages suggest that the moral faculty is either similar to or is to be identified with being a type of external sense faculty. As will soon be shown, there is evidence supporting both interpretations.

At this point, I pause to raise and address a concern that may arise with my approach to interpreting Reid. I admit that many of the concepts and terms I define and explain may not have been recognized by Reid or his contemporaries. The worry is that I risk forcing certain concepts and views on Reid that he would neither recognize nor accept. I admit that my approach faces this worry, and I will make a considerable effort to

¹⁴ What it means for a faculty to be an internal faculty is admittedly vague. As I understand its meaning, it is simply a faculty through which we form beliefs from the arm-chair instead of directly through perceptual experience. For instance, my belief that $2+2=4$, that it rained yesterday, or that a bachelor is an unmarried man all our beliefs formed from the arm-chair (i.e., beliefs we form through reason, contemplation, memory, introspection); in contrast, my belief that grass is green, it is hot outside today, or that Albany is the capital of New York are beliefs formed by perceptual experience.

define certain terms and concepts in a manner I believe Reid would recognize and accept. However, there are certain passages in Reid that I find obscure. In such instances, I will try to interpret Reid in a way that his views are made clear and more plausible. In doing so, I risk using philosophical concepts that would not be recognized by Reid. Nonetheless, my goal is to provide interpretations that are not only consistent with Reid's views, but also accurately reflect his own positions.

That concern aside, as will now be shown, there is textual evidence supporting interpretations that Reid thinks the moral sense is more like a non-perceptual, rational faculty. In several passages, Reid equates the moral sense with one's conscience:

As we rely upon the clear and distinct testimony of our eyes, concerning the colours and figures of the bodies about us, we have the same reason to rely with security upon the clear and unbiased testimony of our *conscience*, with regard to what we do to what we ought, and ought not to do. In many cases, moral worth and demerit are discerned no less clearly by the last of those natural faculties, than figure and color by the first. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.179)

And,

I call these [moral] first principles, because they appear to me to have in themselves an *intuitive* evidence I cannot resist. I find I can express them in words. I can illustrate them with words. I can illustrate them by examples and authorities, and perhaps can deduce one of them from another; but I am not able to deduce them from principles that are more evident...

Similarly, our moral judgment, or conscience, grows to maturity from an imperceptible seed planted by our Creator. When we have become able to contemplate the actions of other men, or to reflect on our own actions coolly and calmly, we begin to see in them the qualities of honest and dishonest, honourable and base, right and wrong, and to feel the sentiments of moral approval and disapproval. (*EAP* 5.1, p.277)

In such passages, the moral sense seems to be construed as a faculty unlike one's external sense faculties (e.g., one's five senses). Accordingly, the moral sense is described as something more like an intellectual faculty (e.g., a faculty that engages in *a priori*

reasoning or intuition) or a faculty of reason.¹⁵ According to such passages, we do not see moral rightness or wrongness the same way we see that grass is green or that it is raining outside (i.e., as a perception mediated by our external sense faculties).¹⁶ On this reading of Reid, the moral sense is a faculty that, by way of *a priori* reasoning or intuition, judges that certain general or particular actions are morally wrong or morally right. Further, such a reading strongly favors understanding Reid as claiming that the moral sense is either a rational or intellectual faculty (or at least something very close to it).

However, in other passages. Reid says the moral sense is similar to one's external sense faculties:

By our external senses we have not only the basic conceptions of the various qualities of bodies, but also the basic judgments that this body is spherical, that that one is blue, and so on. And by our moral faculty we have not only the basic conceptions of right and wrong in conduct of merit and demerit in characters, but also the basic judgments that this action was right and that one wrong, that this character has worth and that one has demerit. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.176)

...whatever is immediately *perceived* to be just, honest, and honorable, in human conduct, carries moral obligation along with it, and the contrary carries demerit and blame; and from those moral obligations that are immediately perceived, all other moral obligations must be deduced by reason. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.179)

In these passages, Reid claims that by the moral sense we perceive moral rightness and moral wrongness. Given Reid's use of 'perceive', it seems Reid is claiming that, by the moral sense, one sees that a certain act is morally wrong or morally right either like or

¹⁵ For sake of clarity, I understand *a priori* reasoning as: (1) the process through which we obtain knowledge of some proposition P through reason and independently from prior experience, and (2) external sense experience is in some sense insufficient in enabling one to obtain knowledge of P. In contrast, there is *a posteriori* reasoning. I understand *a posteriori* reasoning as the process through which one obtains knowledge of some proposition P by way of an experience or set of experiences, and such experiences is in some sense sufficient for enabling one to obtain knowledge of P.

¹⁶ Of course, as even Reid says, there are close similarities to what he calls moral perception to external sense perception. Accordingly, even philosophers who claim Reid thinks the moral sense is an internal sense faculty (something like a faculty of intuition), there would still be some similarities between these two kinds of perception.

similar to how one sees that grass is green or that it is raining. In which case, the moral sense bears close similarities to an external sense faculty, such as one's sense of sight or touch.

The upshot is that there seems to be at least four ways of understanding how the moral sense works: (1) the moral faculty is a faculty of intuition (or faculty of reason), and so one obtains some basic¹⁷ moral knowledge by way of a *priori* reasoning and the rest of our moral knowledge is inferentially based on this basic knowledge.¹⁸ Or (2), the moral faculty is an external sense faculty, and so one obtains some moral knowledge by way of external sense experience, (for example, one sees rightness and wrongness the same way he sees that grass is green), while the rest of our knowledge is inferred from this basic moral knowledge.¹⁹ Or (3) the moral sense is a hybrid faculty, one that is in some respects an intellectual faculty (or faculty of reason), and in other respects is an external sense faculty.²⁰ According to this interpretation, some of our basic moral

¹⁷ By basic knowledge, I mean that there are some propositions that are not known in virtue of being inferred from other propositions one already knows. I understand that according to moral intuitionism and moral perception account of moral knowledge, basic moral knowledge includes the propositions that are intuited or perceived.

¹⁸ At least several philosophers treat Reid as committing to some version of intuitionism. Roeser (2010) claims that “[rarely] is Thomas Reid included in discussions of intuitionism even though his moral epistemology is fully intuitionist” (3). Roeser maintains that on Reid’s view, not only do we intuit general moral principles but non-basic, or particular, moral principles as well. Further, Copenhaver (2014) maintains that the moral sense is not an external sense faculty, but instead an internal sense faculty—a faculty akin to a faculty of reason or intuition. While Cuneo (2007) and Davis (2006) do not interpret Reid as strictly committing to moral intuitionism, both maintain that aspects of Reid’s moral philosophy are intuitionistic. Cuneo interprets and defends Reid’s account concerning how his version of moral intuitionism can explain the intimate link between moral judgments and moral motivation. Davis claims that “Reid’s account of the progress of moral judgment is a form of moral intuitionism. Moral beliefs arise immediately and non-inferentially from a consideration of non-moral facts” (69). Moreover, Davis also states that “Reid’s moral epistemology shares key features with the intuitionism defended by Ross (1963) and Huemer (2006)”.

¹⁹ Despite saying Reid’s moral philosophy resembles moral intuitionism, Cuneo and Davis also mention that Reid provides an account of moral perception that has many similarities to his account of external sense perception.

²⁰ When interpreting Reid, it is important to realize that the terms used by Reid may be used in a different sense than how current-day philosophers use such terms. Further, some of the terms used by current-day philosophers would seem alien to Reid and his contemporaries. In which case, it is important not to apply

knowledge is obtained by way of this hybrid faculty, while the rest of our moral knowledge is inferred from this basic knowledge. Option (4) is that the moral sense is neither an intellectual faculty nor like an external sense faculty, albeit it bears some similarities to both kinds of faculties. In Chapter 2, I will argue for (3). In doing so, I will provide textual evidence that supports both (1) and (2), as well as contemporary insights as to why one might think (4) is plausible.²¹ However, I will argue that (1), (2), and (4) either have severe philosophical or interpretative problems (or both),²² and so ought to be rejected. I then proceed to argue that (3) avoids the problems faced by (1), (2), and (4); in virtue of avoiding such problems, it provides the more plausible interpretation (at least textually) than either (1) or (2) or (4). For now, I will postpone a thorough discussion of this issue until Chapter 2. Having discussed what kind of faculty is the moral sense, I now proceed to discuss what kinds of moral facts the moral sense gives us knowledge of.

2. Moral Facts and Moral First Principles in Reid's Moral Philosophy

In this chapter, my aim is to answer three questions: (1) What is a moral fact for Reid? (2) what is a moral first principle for Reid? And (3) should Reid's list of moral first

philosophical positions to Reid that Reid himself would either not understand or accept. In the proceeding chapters, I will make a strong attempt to interpret Reid's positions using terminology that he himself would understand and accept. However, in the case where Reid's own positions are too obscure, incoherent, or philosophically implausible, I may try to understand his positions in a manner that makes them clearer, coherent, and perhaps more philosophically plausible. In doing so, while I might use terms unfamiliar to Reid and his contemporaries, I will attempt to provide an interpretation that is at least consistent with (many of) Reid's philosophical commitments, or provide an interpretation that I think Reid would likely accept as reflecting his own philosophical views.

²¹ It is not clear that anyone clearly endorses this option. However, such an interpretation may be appealing if you think Reid's views should not be categorized into some contemporary position; for many of these positions would have been alien to Reid (and his contemporaries) at this time.

²² I define a textual problem as one that mischaracterizes or misrepresents a position stated in an author's text. In contrast, a philosophical problem concerns whether a claim made by an author is improbable, false, or derived from fallacious reasoning. Accordingly, even if an interpretation does not have any textual problems, it may still have philosophical problems.

principles be amended? Regarding the first question, I understand Reid as thinking that moral facts are non-natural and objective facts, some of which are either particular in nature (e.g. Jones should not steal from Smith's cookie jar, or the hoodlums should not light the cat on fire) or general in nature (e.g., one should not steal or cause unnecessary pain and suffering to sentient creatures); further, some of these moral claims constitute what Reid calls the first principles of morals. Second, as I will show, there are at least two ways to understand what constitutes a Reidian first principle, and I will ultimately argue that one of these ways has more textual support. I find the third question to be the most challenging, as even Reid himself admits that his list of moral first principles is incomplete. I nonetheless suggest how Reid might answer this last question.

2.1 What is the nature of a moral fact for Reid?

First, having explained what kind of faculty is the moral sense, I think it is important to discuss what kinds of facts the moral sense gives us knowledge of. For one might reasonably press the following concern: Even if we understand what kind of faculty is the moral sense, it is still unclear how such a faculty is supposed to work; presumably, it is supposed to help us obtain knowledge of moral reality, yet it is a mystery how such a faculty does so. However, before discussing how the moral faculty helps us obtain moral knowledge, I discuss what kinds of facts are moral facts for Reid; I do so largely because I think the discussion concerning how the moral faculty works will be much clearer if we already understand the nature of moral facts for Reid. Accordingly, I now turn to discussing what Reid takes moral facts to be.

Reid states that moral facts are necessarily so. As Reid states, regarding moral

first principles (what a moral first principle is exactly will be discussed shortly):

What is true or false in morals, or in matters of taste, is necessarily so. For this reason, I have ranked the first principles of moral and of taste under the class of necessary truths. (*EIP* 6.6, p.495)

Cuneo (2014) maintains that for Reid moral first principles are not necessarily true in an absolute sense; that is, they are not ‘true no matter what’— ‘all unmarried men are bachelors’ would be an example of such a necessary truth. Given the meaning of the sentences terms, the statement would always be true. Instead, Cuneo thinks moral first principles are necessary in a relative sense. A fact is relatively necessary if it is true relative to a set of specified conditions. For example, water freezes at 0 degrees Celsius is necessarily true relative to a set of natural conditions and laws about the world—water will freeze at this temperature in any world or scenario where these conditions and laws exist.

Now I think there are is a crucial problem with Cuneo’s account: mainly that it is too ambiguous since it seems like any metaphysically contingent proposition could be necessarily true relative to a set of conditions; in which case, it is not clear how moral principles would be necessary in any interesting or non-trivial sense. For instance a metaphysically contingent fact such as ‘Albany is the capital of New York’ would also seem to be necessary relative to certain conditions obtaining: The condition could just be the fact that Albany is the capital of New York; accordingly, it seems that, necessarily, if Albany is the capital of New York, then Albany is the capital of New York. And it seems we can show that any metaphysically contingent fact is necessary relative to similar conditions. In which case, it is unclear how Cuneo is not committed to the view that all metaphysically contingent facts are relatively necessary. However, I will discuss in

chapter 2 a way in which Cuneo might amend his interpretation. Briefly, the solution is to maintain that moral principles are nomologically necessary (or in some sense nomologically necessary) in a way similar to how certain laws of nature (if there are any) are sometimes understood as being nomologically necessary.

Furthermore, I will show that only moral first principles are necessarily true in this nomological sense. As I will show, there are facts about human nature (e.g., humans being rational, autonomous agents capable of experiencing happiness and suffering) that make it the case that certain moral principles apply or obtain. Also, as I will also show, thinking of moral first principles as being nomologically necessary has important implications for how we think about Reid's moral epistemology overall. Ultimately, I will show that Reid thinks we know moral first principles by intuition alone, but that we can also obtain moral knowledge by way of moral perception—such knowledge could include some basic or foundational propositions, albeit such propositions would not count as moral first principles.

Further, as stated by Reid, moral facts are non-natural²³. They are non-natural in so far as they are neither identical with nor reducible to various natural facts or properties in the world. Roughly put, I understand natural facts as those that are the proper domain of the natural sciences—i.e., they are the facts we observe in chemistry, psychology,

²³As Reid states,

There are many important branches of human knowledge, to which Sir Isaac Newton's rules of Philosophizing have no relation, and to which they can with no propriety be applied. Such are Morals, Jurisprudence, Natural Theology, and the abstract Sciences of Mathematics and Metaphysics; because in none of those Sciences do we investigate the physical laws of Nature. There is therefore no reason to regret that these branches of knowledge have been pursued without regard to them. (*AC*, p.186)

biology, physics, and all the rest).²⁴ To put the idea using Ridge's (2014) phrasing,

Most often, 'non-naturalism' denotes the metaphysical thesis that moral properties exist and are not identical with or reducible to any natural property or properties in some interesting sense of 'natural.

In sum, I maintain that Reid thinks moral facts are non-natural and objective and that moral first principles—rather than non-first principles (e.g. particular judgments)—are nomologically necessary.

2.2 What is a moral first principle for Reid?

With Reid's account of the nature of moral facts in hand, I proceed to talk about what Reid means when he maintains that something is a moral first principle.²⁵ As mentioned earlier, I will argue that moral first principles are in some sense nomologically necessary. For Reid, the primary characteristic of a moral first principle is that it is self-evident and in some sense epistemically foundational or basic:²⁶

²⁴ I grant that this definition of non-naturalism is quite vague. However, the debate over the difference between naturalism and non-naturalism is quite extensive, and I lack the time and space to provide a complete overview of the literature. Accordingly, I will simply provide a quick definition in order to provide the reader with a rough and ready idea of what it means for a moral fact to be non-natural. Further, I do not think any of the arguments I make rest on having a perfectly crisp account of moral non-naturalism, and so I will not investigate the issue much further.

²⁵ While I provide a complete list of Reid's moral first principles in chapter 3, here are some examples of Reid's moral first principles:

What is in no degree voluntary, can neither deserve moral approbation nor blame. (*EAP*, 5.1, p. 271)

Men may be highly culpable in omitting what they ought to have done, as well as in doing what they ought not. (271)

We ought to prefer a greater good, though more distant, to a less; and a less evil to a greater. (272)

In every case, we ought to act towards another, which we would judge to be right in him to act towards us, if we were in his circumstances and he in ours; or, more generally, what we approve in others, that we ought to practice in like circumstances, and what we condemn in others we ought not to do. (274)

²⁶ I take Reid as being an epistemic foundationalist. Broadly construed, foundationalism is the view that

[it] was long ago demonstrated by Aristotle, that every proposition to which we give a rational assent, must either have its evidence in itself, or derive it from some antecedent proposition. And the same thing may be said of the antecedent proposition. As, therefore, we cannot go back to antecedent propositions without end, the evidence must at last rest upon propositions, one or more, which have their evidence in themselves, that is upon first principles. (*EIP* 6.7, p. 685)

There are other propositions which are no sooner understood than they are believed. The judgment follows the apprehension of them necessarily.... There is no searching for evidence; no weighing arguments; the proposition is not deduced or inferred from another; it has the light of truth in itself, and has no occasion to borrow it from another. Propositions of the last kind, when they are used in matters of science, has commonly been called axioms; and on whatever occasion they are used, are called first principles, principles of common sense, common notions, self-evident truths. (*EIP* 6.4, p.593)

And specifically concerning moral first principles,

Morals, like all other sciences, must have first principles, on which all moral reasoning is grounded. In every branch of knowledge where disputes have been raised, it is useful to distinguish the first principles from the superstructure. They are the foundation which the whole fabric of the science leans; and whatever is not supported by this foundation can have no stability. In all rational belief, the thing believed is either itself a first principle, or it is by just reasoning deduced from first principles. (*EAP* 5.1, p. 269)

Accordingly, Reid thinks moral first principles are not only self-evident, but also in some sense epistemically foundational. However, as pointed out by Van Cleve (2004, 2015), there are two ways we might understand Reid's account of self-evident: in a narrow sense and in a broad sense. According to the narrow sense of 'self-evident', a proposition P is

some beliefs are self-justified, or at least not justified in virtue of being deduced or inferred from other justified beliefs. As Fumerton (2010) succinctly puts it, "the foundationalist's thesis in short is that all knowledge and justified belief rest ultimately on a foundation of noninferential knowledge or justified belief." Self-justified beliefs ultimately provide the foundation by which other non-self-justified beliefs are justified. The following passage is evidence that such principles are foundational for Reid:

In every branch of knowledge where disputes have arisen, it is useful to distinguish the first principles from the superstructure. They are the foundation on which the whole structure of the science rests, and anything that isn't supported by this foundation can't be stable. In all rational belief, the thing believed is either a first principle or something inferred by valid reasoning from first principles, (*EAP* 5.1, p.270)

self-evident just in case P is immediately known and P seems evident to someone in virtue of that someone understanding or grasping P. Accordingly, (1) P being immediately known and (2) P being believed in virtue of being understood or grasped are individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for P being a first principle. For example ‘all married men are bachelors’ or ‘a square has four sides of equal length’ might be self-evident in this narrow sense: one immediately believes such propositions upon understanding or grasping their content.

On the other hand, under the broad sense of self-evident, a proposition P is self-evident just in case P seems evident “not on the basis of support from other propositions believed or known” (Van Cleve, 4). Here, P being immediately known is both necessary and sufficient for P being a first principle. Both perceptual and non-perceptual beliefs might be self-evident in this sense: For example, in perceptual experience, one might immediately believe that grass is green or that something smells foul.

Reid at times talks as if moral first principles are self-evident in the narrow sense:

I call these first principles, because they appear to me to have in themselves an intuitive evidence which I cannot resist. I find I can express them in other words. I can illustrate them by examples and authorities, and perhaps can deduce one of them from another; but I am not able to deduce them from other principles that are more evident. (*EAP* 5.1, p. 276)

According to this passage, a self-evident belief is one that has “an intuitive evidence which [one] cannot resist”. I take this statement as meaning that when the individual understands or grasps a proposition’s meaning, he or she will have an irresistible urge or compulsion to believe it.²⁷ If Reid accepts this account of a self-evident belief, then it seems first principles (moral or otherwise) are those that are not only immediately

²⁷ Cuneo (2013), for instance, interprets this as being Reid’s view concerning moral first principles.

believed or known, but believed or known upon being grasped or understood.

However, in other places, Reid appears to describe moral first principles as being self-evident in the broader sense; for Reid describes a moral first principle as something much different than a proposition that is believed (or known) simply in virtue of understanding the meaning of its grammatical structure and terms:

It is no less natural to a man trained in society, and accustomed to judge of his own actions and those of other men, to perceive a right and a wrong, an honorable and a base, in human conduct; and to such a man, I think, the principles of morals I have above mentioned will appear self-evident. (*EAP* 5.1, p.277)

The truths immediately testified by the external senses are the first principles from which we reason regarding the material world, and from which all our knowledge of it is deduced. The truths immediately testified by our moral faculty are the first principles of all moral reasoning, from which all our knowledge of our duty must be deduced. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.176-177)

whatever is immediately *perceived* to be just, honest, and honorable, in human conduct, carries moral obligation along with it, and the contrary carries demerit and blame; and from those moral obligations that are immediately perceived, all other moral obligations must be deduced by reason. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.179)

These passages do not say anything implying that a proposition is self-evident if one believes it in virtue of understanding or grasping its content. Instead, the claims each makes about first principles is much weaker. In the first passage, Reid says that we just see certain moral propositions as self-evident, particularly when we observe the conduct of others. On this reading, a self-evident proposition need not be grasp or understand.

Accordingly, Reid seems to be using ‘self-evident’ in its broader sense.²⁸

²⁸ Let me point out that even if Reid claims that one cannot help but believe first principles, such a claim does not imply that we know such propositions simply in virtue of understanding their contents; for example, I might feel an urge or compulsion to believe all kinds of perceptual propositions, such as grass is green or that it is cold outside, and I might believe such propositions independently of other propositions I already believe or know. Further, it seems likely that I simply cannot help but believe that grass is green or that it is cold outside. The important upshot is that ‘self-evident’ would not exclusively apply to principles believed through intuition, but can also apply to principles known by way of perceptual experience. Now if Reid has this notion of ‘self-evidence’ in mind, then moral first principles can be known through both perceptual experience and intuition (both rational and physical).

In the second and third passages, Reid states that truths immediately perceived are moral first principles. As stated in these passages, Reid seems to claim that a proposition being immediately or non-inferentially believed or known is sufficient for that proposition being a first principle. Such an account describes first principles as falling under the broad sense of self-evident.

As I will show in chapter 3, how we understand Reid's notion of self-evidence has important implications for how we understand his moral theory as a whole. Ultimately, I will argue that even though Reid is unclear about what makes a first principle self-evident, we nonetheless have good reasons for thinking that moral first principles are self-evident in the narrow sense, where one believes such principles in virtue of understanding or grasping their contents. For I think the claim that moral first principles are self-evident in the narrow sense fits better with Reid's claim that moral first principles are nomologically necessary. Moreover, I will show that such first principles can only be known by way of moral intuition. However, this interpretation is compatible with the view that some basic or foundational moral knowledge can be known by way of moral perception. For now, I postpone a thorough explanation and defense of these claims until this dissertation's third chapter.

2.3 Reid's set of moral first principles

Having explained Reid's account of the nature of moral facts and the nature of moral first principles, I proceed to discuss Reid's own set of moral first principles. I point out that Reid's list of moral first principles is problematic because it fails to provide any plausible

moral principle that can help one determine moral rightness, wrongness, duty, obligation, etc. For instance, Reid places the Law of the Prophets (otherwise known as the Golden Rule) on his list of moral first principles. In short, the Law of the Prophets states that we ought to treat people as we would like to be treated if we were in there circumstances. As Reid writes,

It is a first principle of morals that we ought not to do to another, what we should think wrong to be done to us in like circumstances. If a man is not capable of perceiving this in is cool moments, when he reflects seriously, he is not a moral agent, nor is he capable of being convinced of it by reasoning. (*EAP* 5.1, p. 177)

So, for example, if I want to determine whether I should give money to a homeless person, I put myself in the homeless person's shoes and consider whether I would want others to give money to me.

The problem with the Law of the Prophets (hereafter, the Golden Rule) is that we can imagine people with very strange or perhaps evil desires and preferences, and we would not want such people to treat others the way they would like to be treated. For instance, we can imagine a masochist who wants pain inflicted upon him. Yet it seems counterintuitive that this persons should treat others the way he would like to be treated. So as it stands, the Golden Rule is problematic. Yet if Reid thinks this principle provides the standard by which we should determine rightness, wrongness, etc., then it seems Reid's list of moral first principles is problematic; for what good is a set of moral principles that fails to provide practical ethical guidance?

I consider two ways in which Reid might address this concern. First, Reid could bite the bullet and maintain that the Golden Rule ultimately provides the standard by which one can determine moral rightness, wrongness, duty, etc. Perhaps he could maintain that while the Golden Rule has its problems, so does any moral principle (e.g.,

consider the objections typically raised against utilitarianism and Kant's categorical imperatives); we just need to amend the Golden Rule to make it more plausible. That Reid might think the Golden Rule provides a way to determine moral rightness and wrongness is evident in the next passage, where he says this principle comprehends other moral principles (especially those pertaining to justice and the virtues):

It covers every rule of justice—no exceptions. It covers the relativized duties, both the ones arising from the more permanent relations of parent and child, master and servant, magistrate and subject, husband and wife and those arising from the more temporary relations of rich and poor, buyer and seller, debtor and creditor, benefactor and beneficiary, friend and friend, enemy and enemy.

...It comprehends every duty of charity and humanity, and even of courtesy and good manners. Indeed, we don't have to force or stretch it to get it to cover even to the duties of self-government. Everyone approves in others the virtues of prudence, temperance, self-control and fortitude, so he must see that what is right in others must be right in himself in similar circumstances. (*EAP* 5.1, p.177-178)

On my reading, 'comprehends' means that all other moral principles (including those concerning duties and obligations) are ultimately applications of or in some sense based on the Golden Rule. For instance, consider the principle that we should not lie. This prohibition on lying is ultimately an application of or based on the Golden Rule: lying is wrong, ultimately, because we would not like to be lied to if we were in another person's shoes. The upshot is that Reid ultimately thinks that the Golden Rule provides the standard by which we can determine moral rightness, wrongness, duty, obligation, etc.

However, as I show in chapter 3, there are problems with this interpretation. First, it conflicts with Reid's claim that a system of morals is not like a system of geometry, where upon first knowing a few basic mathematical axioms or principles, we can then apply such axioms or principles to particular cases (*EAP* 5.2)²⁹. Accordingly, the previous

²⁹ In this passage, Reid states that,

interpretation makes it sound as if Reid thinks that upon knowing the Golden Rule, we can apply the Golden Rule when deducing more particular principles or making particular moral judgments. Moreover, according to this interpretation, we need not intuit any other action-guiding moral principles, as we merely need to apply the Golden Rule to particular cases. Yet *EAP* 5.2 maintains that we need not always apply the Golden Rule in every case in order to know what we ought to do.

The problem, then, is this reading of ‘comprehends’ conflicts with the view that Reid is a moral intuitionist. In Chapter 2, I provide further textual support for the view that Reid is at least partly a moral intuitionist. However, if moral intuitionism (broadly construed) is the view that there are multiple foundational (or fundamental or basic) action-guiding moral principles, then according to the first strategy, Reid is not a moral intuitionist; for Reid would just maintain that there is one all-encompassing moral principle (i.e., the Golden Rule) from which all other moral principles are derived. Reid’s moral theory would then be similar to that of Mill’s or Kant’s, as there would only be one all-comprehensive moral principle from which all other principles are derived. Maybe Reid is not a moral intuitionist, but, as pointed out by many philosophers (see chapter 2), I think there is too much textual support in favor of the position that his moral philosophy is at least partly intuitionistic.

The second problem with this interpretation is that it conflicts with claims Reid

A system of morals isn’t like a system of geometry, where the later parts get their evidentness from the earlier ones, and a single chain of reasoning is carried on from the beginning, so that if the arrangement is changed the chain is broken and the evidentness is lost. It’s more like a system of botany or mineralogy, where the later parts don’t depend for their evidentness on the earlier ones, and the whole arrangement is made to aid understanding and memory, not to make things evident. (*EAP* 5.2, p.281)

makes elsewhere. In the following passage, Reid maintains that, like the Golden Rule, the principles of justice, and the principles of benevolence are believed by any rational or competent moral agent:

It is a first principle of morals that we ought not to do to another, what we should think wrong to be done to us in like circumstances. If a man is not capable of perceiving this in is cool moments, when he reflects seriously, he is not a moral agent, nor is he capable of being convinced of it by reasoning.

From what topic can you reason with such a man? You may possibly convince him by reasoning, that it is his interest to observe this rule; but this is not to convince him that it is his duty. To reason about justice with a man who sees nothing to be just or unjust; or about benevolence with a man who sees nothing in benevolence preferable to malice, is like reasoning with a blind man about colour, or with a deaf man about sound. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.177-178)

The concern is that the principles of justice and benevolence seem to be treated as moral first principles; for in this passage, I understand Reid as claiming that a rational or competent moral agent will believe such principles in virtue of grasping or understanding them. As stated earlier, one feature of a moral first principle is that one feels some urge or compulsion to believe such principles in virtue of grasping or understanding them. However, if the Golden Rule comprehends all principles concerning rightness, obligation, or duty, then it should also comprehend the principle of justice and benevolence, which are principles of rightness, obligation, etc. This passage, accordingly, suggests that Reid thinks there are other moral first principles concerning moral rightness or wrongness besides the Golden Rule.

Accordingly, I think it is too quick to assume that, for Reid, the Golden Rule comprehends all other principles concerning rightness or obligation. Further, regarding the first problem, it seems Reid is committed to the view that some moral beliefs (including perhaps beliefs in other moral first principles) are known without having been inferred from some more basic or fundamental moral principle, such as the Golden Rule.

The issue now concerns how to reconcile Reid's claim that the Golden Rule is the most comprehensive despite there being additional moral principles, especially principles concerning rightness, wrongness, duty, and obligation, some of which might be known independently from being deduced from the Golden Rule. However, as I will show in chapter 3, I think there is a way to consistently maintain that (1) the Golden Rule comprehends all other principles of rightness, wrongness, etc. (2) that the principles of justice and benevolence could also be moral first principles.

The final issue I discuss in chapter 3 concerns how one might add to Reid's list of moral first principles, as Reid himself admits that his list of moral first principles may be incomplete:

In this chapter...I propose to point out some of the first principles of morals; I don't claim to give a complete list. (*EAP* 5.1, p.270)

The question then is whether Reid has provided us with any clues as to which principles should be included in his list of moral first principles. Let me note, however, that I do not think his failure to provide a complete list of first problems is necessarily a problem for his position. Accordingly, one might take his project to be rather modest: to provide an account about how we obtain moral knowledge; discovering which principles complete the set of moral first principles would be another project altogether.³⁰

I think such a move is common in other areas of philosophy, particularly non-moral epistemology. For instance consider an epistemological foundationalist. For an

³⁰ I should point out that I think for any moral intuitionist, discovering each first or basic foundational principle is itself a daunting task, and to my knowledge there is not much agreement about which moral principles complete the set of such basic foundational principles. For instance, Audi thinks there are 10 such principles, while Ross goes back and forth between there being 5 or 7 such principles. So while it is certainly a worthwhile project to uncover each foundational moral principle, it should not be surprising that intuitionists either fail to do so or disagree with one another about moral principles are foundational.

epistemological foundationalist, one project is to defend the claim that there is a set of propositions that are in some sense self-evident or self-justified; such propositions are believed or known, but not in virtue of being inferred from or based on other propositions one believes or knows. Now there are at least two questions such a project might try to answer: (1) how do we know (or come to know) such foundational propositions? and (2) what exactly are these foundational propositions? However, one might successfully answer (1) without answering (2). Yet, even if one does not provide a complete list of the foundational propositions, it does not necessarily mean the foundationalist's position is less plausible; for we might still have good reasons for being a foundationalist even if we do not know every foundational principle. Similarly, even if we do not know every moral first principle, it does not mean we lack justification for thinking there are foundational or basic moral first principles.

This issue aside, I now briefly consider how Reid might amend his list of moral first principles. Admittedly, I do not have anything new to add to this issue, but I find that Cuneo (2014) has something substantive to say on the matter, and so I will discuss his view at length, clarifying or elaborating on his view where necessary. Cuneo, accordingly, indicates that Reid's list of moral first principles is incomplete, but thinks we have good reason to treat Reid's principles of justice as being moral first principles. That Reid might think the principles of justice are first principles is evident in the following paragraph:

We may observe, that as justice is directly opposed to injury, and as there are various ways in which a man may be injured, so there must be various branches of justice opposed to the different kinds of injury.

A many may be injured, first, in his person, by wounding, maiming, or killing him; secondly in his family, by robbing him of his children, or any way injuring

those he is bound to protect; thirdly, in his liberty, by confinement; fourthly, in his reputation; fifthly, in his goods or property; and lastly, in the violation of contracts or engagements made with him. (*EAP* 5.5, p.312-313)

Now Cuneo thinks we have good reason to believe the principles of justice should be included among Reid's list of moral first principles. According to Cuneo, why such principles should be added is evident in passages where Reid says that a rational, morally competent individual will assent to a set of propositions (what Cuneo calls the moral fixed points). Such propositions include the first principles of morals, the principles of justice, and the principles of benevolence. As Reid states,

It is a first principle of morals, that we ought not to do to another, what we should think wrong to be done to us in like circumstances. If a man is not capable of perceiving this in his cool moments, when he reflects seriously, he is not a moral agent, nor is he capable of being convinced of it by reasoning.

From what topic can you reason with such a man? You may possibly convince him by reasoning, that it is his interest to observe this rule; but this is not to convince him that it is his duty. To reason about justice with a man who sees nothing to be just or unjust; or about benevolence with a man who sees nothing in benevolence preferable to malice, is like reasoning with a blind man about colour, or with a deaf man about sound. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.177-178)

If any man could say with sincerity, that he is conscious of no obligation to consult his own present and future happiness; to be faithful to his engagements, to obey his Maker, to injure no man; I know not what reasoning, either probable or demonstrative, I could use to convince him of any moral duty. As you cannot reason in mathematics with a man who denies the axioms, as little can you reason with a man in morals who denies the first principles of morals. The man who does not, by the light of his own mind, perceive some things in conduct to be right, and others to be wrong, is as incapable of reasoning about morals, as a blind man is about colours. Such a man, if any such man ever was, would be no agent. (*EIP* 7.2, p.551-552)

In these passages, Reid says that if one does not assent to moral first principles, the principles of justice, or the principles of benevolence, he or she is not a moral agent. Such an individual is in some sense morally defective—the same way someone who fails to grasp mathematical axioms is in some sense intellectually defective. Psychopaths (or rational amoralists), egoists, and perhaps young children or intellectually immature adults

are possible candidates for those who lack moral agency. Cuneo maintains that there is a set of principles that he refers to as the moral fixed points. He interprets Reid as claiming that any rational or competent moral agent will believe or assent to these fixed points upon understanding or grasping their contents. For now, I leave aside the details of his argument. The crucial point, however, is that we have some way to identify whether a principle counts as a moral first principle: if a competent moral agent assents to a proposition upon sufficiently grasping it, that proposition should be considered a first principle.

3. How Does Reidian Moral Intuition and Moral Perception Give us Moral Knowledge?

In chapter 4, I explain how the Multiple Process View—what I call the interpretation where Reid might endorse that we obtain moral knowledge in either of two ways: by moral intuition and moral perception—is supposed to work. In section 1, I start by discussing Reid's account of ordinary sense perception, for it bears close similarities to his account of moral perception, or so I claim. In the second section, I describe how I believe Reid's account of moral perception is supposed to work. In section three, I raise and respond to three objections to the interpretation that Reid is at least partly a moral perceptionist. Lastly, in section 4, having discussed at length how moral perception might work for Reid, I close by considering how Reid's moral intuitionism might be best understood.

3.1 Reidian ordinary sense perception

As I argue in chapter 2, one such way Reid thinks we obtain moral knowledge is by way

of moral perception, where moral perception is understood as a type of external sense perception. According to such a view, one literally sees or perceives an action's moral features or individual's moral qualities. Now perhaps a good way to understand how Reidian moral perception functions is to first see how Reidian ordinary sense perception functions; for as will be shown, both moral perception and ordinary sense perception function similarly for Reid.

For Reid, perception in general involves three ingredients, which are (1) sign, (2) conception, and (3) judgment/belief. Regarding (1), signs are indicators of some quality or object in the external world:

I have called our sensations signs of external objects, finding no terms that express better the function that nature has assigned to sensations in perception and the relation they have to their corresponding objects. (*IHM* 6.21, p.108)

For Reid, signs are often sensations, and I understand a sensation as the way some quality or object looks, smells, tastes, sounds, or feels. For instance, a red sensation is simply the visual appearance of red, while a sensation of a rose's smell might be a certain pleasant odor. For Reid, in external sense experience, one's sense faculties are affected in certain ways by external objects and qualities, which in turn leads to that individual experiencing certain sensations. For example, in one's visual experience of a red rose, one's vision modality is affected in certain ways, which leads to the individual having red sensations.

Concerning (2), sensations in turn evoke or suggest a conception of some quality or object. Reid describes a conception in the following passages:

In bare conception there can't be either truth or falsehood, because conception neither affirms nor denies. Every judgment, and every proposition by which judgment is expressed, must be true or false; and truth and falsehood—using those terms in their proper sense—can belong to nothing but judgments or propositions that express judgments. . . . (*IHM* 6.1, p.161)

It is impossible to perceive an object without having some notion or conception

of the thing we perceive. We can indeed conceive an object that we don't perceive; but when through our external senses we perceive the object we must have some conception of it at the same time....(*EIP* 2.5, p.50-51)

Here, in the first passage, Reid describes a conception as a state where someone neither affirms nor denies a proposition. Moreover, in the second passage, Reid describes a conception as not only being an essential component of perceptual experience but also as a state where one has a mental notion (or simple apprehension)³¹ of some quality or object. For instance, when experiencing a red sensation, one will have a conception of the quality of red, which is to say that he has a mental notion of or that he apprehends the color red.

Upon having a conception of some quality or object, he or she will also have an irresistible and immediate judgment/belief that the color red exists. That Reid thinks such a judgment is irresistible is suggested by the following passage:

In perception we have not only a more or less clear notion of the perceived object but also an irresistible belief that it exists. (*EIP* 2.5, p. 51)

Furthermore, our perceptions can be either, what Reid calls, original or acquired. Original perceptions are those we have that do not require any requisite experience or training:

Some of our perceptions by the senses could be called 'original' or 'basic', because they don't require any previous experience or learning; but ever so many more of our perceptions are acquired or learned, and are the fruit of experience. (*IHM* 2.21, p. 125)

Our perception of many primary qualities (e.g., motion and hardness) and some

³¹ The notion of simple apprehension comes from Russell. As I understand Russell's use of the term, one simply apprehends some object or quality X if he or she has some intellectual understanding or grasp of X but does not affirm or deny X's existence. For example, one has a simple apprehension of a unicorn if he or she in some sense grasps or understands the concept of a unicorn; however, one might apprehend a unicorn without affirming or denying that a unicorn exists.

secondary qualities (e.g., colors) are in many cases original.³² For Reid, humans are constituted such that when they have sensations of, say, certain colors or of something being hard, they will form a conception of and an immediate belief/judgment that such qualities exist in their environment.

However, as indicated by the previous passage, many of our perceptions are acquired, meaning that in order to have such perceptions we must have some requisite experience or training:

Our perceptions are of two kinds: some are natural and original, others are acquired and the result of experience. When I perceive that this is the taste of cider and that of brandy, this is the smell of an apple and that of an orange, this is the noise of thunder and that the ringing of bells, this is the sound of a coach passing and that the voice of a friend, these perceptions and others like them are not original; they are acquired. (*EIP* 6.20, p.104-105)

For Reid, one example of an acquired perception is our auditory perception of a horse-drawn coach. Without proper experience, when we hear the clappity-clap sound of a horse-drawn coach, we will not recognize that sound as being that of a horse-drawn coach. However, through experience, one's auditory faculty matures. Eventually, when one hears the clappity-clap, he or she will form a conception of the sound of a horse-drawn coach and make an immediate judgment that the clappity-clap sound is that of a horse-drawn coach. Or to use a modern-day example, a novice birder may look into a tree and see something as being a bird. Noticing its shape and orange and black feathers, he consults his bird manual and infers that he sees an oriole. However, through experience, his bird-identification skills improve, and he eventually becomes an expert birder. As

³² Concerning our perception of primary qualities, Reid states that:

the perception that I have by touch of the hardness and softness of bodies, of their extension, shape and motion, isn't acquired; it is original.

such, he develops the capacity to visually and non-inferentially perceive certain birds as being orioles (or robins, or warblers, or finches, etc.). Moreover, such a perception is immediate in that the birder need not make any inference when judging that he sees an oriole. He simply sees the bird as being an oriole.

Moreover, for Reid, even one's visual perception of an object's three-dimensionality is also an example of an acquired perception:

Thus, when I look at a globe that stands before me, all I perceive by the original powers of sight is something that is circular and variously coloured. The visible figure has no distance from the eye, isn't convex, and has only two dimensions; even its size is incapable of being measured in inches, feet, or other linear measures. But when I have learned to perceive the distance from the eye of each part of this object, this perception gives it convexity and a spherical shape, adding a third dimension to the two that it had before. (*EIP* 6.23, p. 116)

Reid thinks that we originally perceive an object's two dimensionality or what he calls its "apparent figure". Take for example one's perception of a spherical ball. For Reid, we are constituted such that we only originally see it as round; while through our sense of touch we perceive it as being three-dimensional, visually seeing it as being a three-dimensional sphere takes experience. Accordingly, through our sense of touch, we originally perceive its three dimensionality.³³ However, through experience, we learn to associate the spherical object we perceive by touch as being the same as the two-dimensional circle we perceive by sight. Eventually, we acquire the perceptual ability to immediately visually perceive it as being a three-dimensional spherical object.

Furthermore, in agreement with Cuneo (2003) and Copenhaver (2014), signs,

³³Reid claims that we can perceive an object's three-dimensionality, or real figure, by our faculties of touch or feeling. Through experience, we learn that, say, the object we perceive as being spherical by touch is the same object we visually perceive as being round. Eventually, we develop the capacity to visually perceive the object as being a three-dimensional spherical object.

specifically in acquired perception, are not always sensations. They interpret Reid as claiming that that primary (e.g., hardness, extension, motion) and secondary qualities themselves (e.g., colors, smells, sounds, shapes) and appearances—broadly understood—can be signs in acquired perception. Like in original perception, such signs suggest or evoke a conception of an object or quality and an immediate judgment or belief that the object or quality exists. For instance, the appearance of a circle might suggest (or evoke) a conception of a sphere and also suggest (or evoke) an immediate judgment or belief that something spherical exists in one’s perceptual environment. Or an object’s shape and colorization might suggest a conception of an oriole or a warbler, as well as an immediate judgment or belief that such a bird exists in one’s environment.

To see how such qualities or can function as signs of things, consider some of the examples discussed in the above passages: Certain sounds qualities suggest that there is a stage-coach passing by; the appearance of a circle suggests that an object is three-dimensional. As indicated in the above passages, each of these perceptions are acquired, and the signs in these perceptions seem to be something other than sensations.³⁴ I raise this issue in large part because I believe Reidian moral perception will involve signs that

³⁴ I think there is strong textual evidence supporting the claim that Reid thinks sensations do not always function as signs in acquired perceptions. Perhaps Reid would not agree with my reading that certain sounds or tastes are signs of stage-coaches and cups of brandy, respectfully. Nonetheless, Reid is clear that sometimes qualities and appearances can be such signs:

In all our senses, the acquired perceptions are many more than the original, especially in sight. By this sense we perceive originally the visible figure and color of bodies only, and their visible place: but we learn to perceive by the eye, almost everything which we can perceive by touch. The original perceptions of this sense, serve only as signs to introduce the acquired. (*IHM*, 6.20, p.170)

...from the visible appearance as a sign, I immediately proceed to the belief that the object is half a mile distant. Then this distance, together with the visible magnitude, signify to me the real magnitude...of a man on horseback[in the distance]....(*IHM* 6.22, p.184)

are not sensations.

3.2 Reidian moral perception

With Reid's general account of perception in hand, we are now in a position to understand how Reidian moral perception works. To understand how it works, it should first be noted that in some passages Reid maintains that our perception of moral reality is similar to our perception of an individual's various mental properties. Consider the following passage:

The signs in natural language are features of the face, gestures of the body, and modulations of the voice; the variety of which is suited to the variety of the things signified by them. Nature hath established a real connection between these signs, and the thoughts and dispositions of the mind which are signified by them; and nature hath taught us the interpretation of these signs; so that, previous to experience, the sign suggests the thing signified, and creates the belief of it. (*IHM* 6.19, p.190)

For Reid, various facial expressions, behaviors, and tones of voice function as signs of an individual's mental features. For instance, one's behavior might function as a sign that an individual is intelligent, sad, or angry. Or one's tone of voice might signify whether that individual is angry or sad. For sake of argument, I am going to assume that some of these perceptions are immediate (broadly construed) and that Reid would agree that they are immediate. My grounds for making this assumption is that if Reid thinks we can immediately identify which sheep is which among a flock, then it is not too far a stretch to say that we can immediately perceive someone as being intelligent, sad, or angry.

Other passages support the interpretation that Reid thinks that one's behavior, tone of voice, and facial expressions can function as reliable signs of that individual's mental properties:

A man's wisdom is known to us only by the signs of it in his conduct; his eloquence by the signs of it in his speech. In the same manner we judge of his virtue, of his fortitude, and of all his talents and qualities of mind.

Yet it is to be observed, that we judge of men's talents with as little doubt or hesitation as we judge of the immediate objects of sense....(*EIP* 6.6, p.)

In natural language the signs are features of the face, gestures of the body and modulations of the voice; and the variety of these is suited to the variety of the things signified by them. Nature has established a real connection between these signs and the thoughts and mental dispositions that they signify; and nature has taught us how to interpret these signs, so that independently of experience the sign suggests the thing signified and creates the belief in it. A man on a social occasion can, without doing good or evil, behave himself gracefully, civilly, politely, or, on the contrary, meanly, rudely and impertinently, without uttering a word! We see the disposition of his mind by their natural signs in his face and his behavior, in the same way that we perceive the shape and other qualities of bodies by the sensations that nature has connected with them. (*IHM* 6.24, p. 117-118)

In both of these passages, it seems Reid begins to state that we can perceive one's moral qualities or character traits, such as whether someone is virtuous, brave, rude, polite, mean, or impertinent. Here the important point is that similar to how by various signs we can perceive someone's mental features, we can also perceive an individual's moral qualities. Moreover, Reid maintains that "we judge of men's talents with as little doubt or hesitation as we judge of the immediate objects of sense". I take this passages as Reid maintaining that there are moral perceptions and that such perceptions function in a manner similar to our perception of an individual's mental qualities or properties (e.g., intelligence, sadness, anger, etc.).

Before proceeding, let me make two general points. First, this view I am attributing to Reid is controversial and faces a severe criticism: the worry is that Reid actually thinks we perceive certain behaviors and the like and then infer that someone is virtuous or vicious or that one's actions exhibit's morally relevant characteristics. Accordingly, we do not really see one's morally relevant qualities; we just infer that they possess some moral quality after observing their behavior. I respond to this objection at

length in chapter 4. Second, I think that in addition to perception of one's moral character traits, I think, at least on Reid's account, we can also perceive certain actions and behaviors as morally right, wrong, etc. I also explain this point at length in chapter 4.

So far, I have described Reidian moral perception as involving signs that are appearances and perhaps certain qualities (e.g., tones of voice); I take such appearances to be facial expressions, behaviors, and actions; I also take certain tones of voice to be signs of various moral features as well—for example, a menacing voice could be a sign of someone's vicious character traits, while a kind-sounding voice could be a sign of one's virtuous character traits (see *EIP* 6.6; p.503–4, *EIP* 6.6; *IHM* 6.24, p. 117-118; and *IHM* 6.19, p.190), as these are passages where Reid characterizes signs in moral perception as such). Furthermore: Like with non-moral perception, such signs evoke a conception and immediate judgment or belief. The conception, I presume, is of a certain action or behavior being morally right, wrong, etc., or that of an individual possessing a certain morally relevant character trait. Additionally, Reidian moral perception is accompanied by an immediate judgment or belief that some action or behavior is morally wrong, right etc., or that some individual possesses a certain character trait. At least, I take it that such conceptions and beliefs or judgments are ingredients in moral perception.

That Reid thinks so is evident in the following passage:

...by an original power of the mind, which we call conscience, or the moral faculty, we have the conceptions of right and wrong in human conduct, or merit and demerit, of duty and moral obligation, and our other moral conceptions; and that, by the same faculty we perceive some things in human conduct to be right and others to be wrong. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.180)

Here, Reid maintains that our moral conceptions are obtained or formed by our moral faculty, and that by this faculty we perceive rightness and wrongness in human conduct.

If I am right that Reid endorses some version of moral perception, then I do not think it is much of a stretch to maintain that such moral conceptions are ingredients in moral perception and that moral perception involves a moral judgment or belief.

Having shown that signs, conceptions, and belief or judgment are ingredients in Reidian moral perception, I want to now further clarify how exactly Reid's view is a form of moral perception. In doing so, I maintain that, the following three conditions are necessary and jointly sufficient for a perception to count as a form of moral perception (at least moral perception broadly understood).

- (1) a moral perceptual belief is non-inferential; it is not formed on the basis of other beliefs one might hold.
- (2) the content of the moral perception must be a perceptual seeming state; it must perceptually seem to the individual that the hoodlums' actions are morally wrong.
- (3) in moral perception, the wrongness, rightness, etc., of an action must constitute part of the representational content of the perception. To be a moral perception, accordingly, the perception itself must have a certain phenomenal character.

Admittedly, this is a very broad notion of a moral perception, but I think any account of moral perception must meet these three conditions. In which case, if Reid thinks we have moral perceptions, then his view must at least satisfy these three conditions. In chapter 4, I discuss at length why I think Reid's account of moral perception meets each of these conditions, and so counts as a genuine account of moral perception.

3.3 Objections to Reidian moral perception

Also in chapter 4, I discuss and respond to three objections to my interpretation that Reid's moral epistemology is at least partly moral perceptionist. The first worry is that

Reid's view is subject to what is sometimes called the causal objection. The objection maintains that if moral facts are non-natural, and so not the sort of facts we can discover through empirical methods, it is not clear how individuals and moral properties can have the right sort of causal connection required for perception to occur. In showing how Reid might respond to the causal objection, I draw largely from contemporary sources, particularly (Cuneo 2003), Audi (2008, 2014) and McBrayer (2009). I argue that Reid could plausibly maintain the following: moral qualities are in some sense emergent or resultant qualities; they exist in virtue of other non-moral properties existing. It is such non-moral properties in which the perceiver is causally connected. In chapter 4, I spell out further this objection, a possible response to this objection, and provide textual support that Reid might make such a response.

The second worry concerns the objection that, by Reid's own account, Reidian moral perception is not a genuine case of external sense perception. The criticism derives from Van Cleve's example of a husband coming home and seeing his wife's keys on the table; upon seeing such keys, the husband has a perception that his wife is home. However, it is hard to say that the husband externally perceives that his wife is home—he might see the keys, but he does not visually see his wife. Similarly, one might argue that Reidian moral perception functions in the same way as the husband's perception in this example. If so, then it is also doubtful that Reidian moral perception is really a form of external sense perception.

I also respond to this objection at length in chapter 4. In short, I maintain that there is a relevant difference between Reidian moral perception and the husband's perception of his wife; it is this difference that ultimately shows why Reidian moral

perception is a genuine instance of external sense perception, while the husband's perception is not.

The final worry is that Reid's account of moral perception seems quite limited. For, on Reid's own account, such perception only seems to provide us with epistemic access to an individual's moral properties. As such, it is not clear whether Reid thinks it provides us with epistemic access to an action's wrongness, rightness, etc. I have two responses to this concern. First, Reid could easily extend his account of moral perception to include cases where one perceives an action as being morally wrong, right, etc. Second, there are some textual passages that strongly suggest that Reid thinks we perceive certain actions or behaviors as being morally wrong, right, etc.

3.4 Reidian moral intuition

Having argued for how moral perception works for Reid, it is important to note that moral perception alone cannot be the only way Reid thinks we obtain moral knowledge. For as I argued in Chapter 3, Reid thinks we have additional moral knowledge besides that of particular moral propositions—e.g., 'the hoodlums' action is morally wrong' or 'Smith should not steal from Jones's cookie jar'. Reid thinks that we have knowledge of general moral propositions—e.g., that we should not steal, murder, or lie. Some of these propositions are moral first principles, which are necessarily true (albeit in a nomological sense) and known immediately in so far as one has a compulsion or irresistible urge to believe them in virtue of understanding or grasping their contents. Accordingly. In chapter 4, I further motivate the claim that Reid is a moral intuitionist and suggest how moral intuitionism might work for Reid.

However, the difficulty in explaining Reid's account of moral intuition is that he is vague about how we obtain moral knowledge (it is this very vagueness that motivated my interpretation that Reid might think we obtain moral knowledge through two distinct processes). Nonetheless, I think that given what he says, we have good reason to think his moral epistemology is partly intuitionistic. For instance, he often refers to the moral sense as being the same thing as one's conscience, and, as I argue in chapter 2, to say that my conscience says x is wrong or y is right is not much different (at least in any interesting sense) than to say that I intuit that x is wrong or y is right. As I show in chapter 4, I think Reid is committed to a number of positions that further indicate that his position is intuitionistic. The basic idea is that given Reid's own account of moral properties and moral first principles, it seems likely that he has to be committed to some version of moral intuitionism. Furthermore, that Reid seems to maintain that his moral epistemology is a form of intuitionism in the following passage:

If man be endowed with such a faculty, there must be some things which, by this faculty, are immediately discerned to be right, and others to be wrong, and, therefore, there must be in morals, as in other sciences, first principles which do not derive their evidence from antecedent principles, but may be said to be intuitively discerned. (*EIP* 7.2, p.479)

Ultimately, I take Reidian intuition to be a non-perceptual, non-mnemonic, and non-introspective process or way of obtaining knowledge of moral reality. Moreover, I take an intuition to be an intellectual seeming state, which are the sorts of states we have when we think about a mathematical or logical axiom or ponder a philosophical riddle from our armchairs. Moreover, in such intellectual seeming states, some proposition P seems to be true, and P's seeming to be true

does not depend on any inference from other beliefs; Ps seeming to be true is simply the result of thinking about P.

Again this is a very broad account of Reidian intuition. If anything, it is too minimalist of an account of Reid's view. Nonetheless, I think it suffices to show how Reid thinks we might obtain some moral knowledge by way of intuition. On the one hand, it accounts for how one might know moral first principles: x is a first principle if upon grasping x it intellectually seems to you that x is true and it is also the case that the principle is necessarily true in a nomological sense. Of course, I do not think everyone who believes x will understand it as being necessarily true in this sense—e.g., children or non-reflective adults. However, one's failure to recognize a self-evident proposition as being necessarily true does not in any way imply that that proposition is not necessarily true.

On the other hand, I do not claim that Reid thinks only moral first principles are obtained by way of intuition. I presume a host of other moral beliefs can, at least in principle, be formed by way of intuition as well. Perhaps both particular and general moral facts could be known this way. For instance, one might think about a trolley problem and form the intuition that it is wrong to push the fat man onto the track; or after reading about a group of hoodlums lighting a cat on fire, one might have the intuition that their particular action was morally wrong. Feasibly, these could be instances where one has a moral intuition and the contents of these moral beliefs would not be self-evident propositions. As such, it seems certain moral beliefs can be formed by way of intuition and the content of such beliefs would not always be moral first principles.

However, there are a number of objections to the claim that intuition provides us with knowledge of moral reality. One such objection concerns how we can obtain moral knowledge when moral properties are supposedly casually inert. The idea is that moral properties such as wrongness, rightness, etc. are supposed to be non-natural, at least according to Reid. Since they are non-natural, they are likely to be outside of time and space. Since they are outside of time and space, it is not clear how such properties could enter into any type of causal relationship with those who attempt to obtain knowledge of them (particularly since such individuals exist in time and space). This concern is similar to the causal objection against moral perception, and so a variant of the causal objection also surfaces as a problem for moral intuitionism.³⁵

An example will illustrate the problem. Consider a case of ordinary sense experience. For instance, suppose there is a Ford Mustang parked in my driveway, and I form the belief that this is so. My capacity to know this proposition is largely due to the fact that there is a Ford Mustang in my driveway and that this object is causing in me (by way of affecting my perceptual faculties in certain ways) a type of perceptual experience of there being a Ford Mustang in my driveway. However, it is not clear how moral properties, being non-natural, could cause such an experience, where such an experience is understood as an intellectual state where some moral proposition seems true. I might form beliefs about moral reality, but in so far as various components of moral reality could not cause my beliefs about it, it seems that such beliefs would at best be accidentally

³⁵ This variant of the causal objection against moral intuitionism comes from Huemer (2005).

true. Yet, a belief formed accidentally, even if true, does not seem to be the sort of belief that one knows.

I think there are multiple responses to this objection. In chapter 4, I discuss one such objection at length. The basic idea of this responses is that there seems to be other kinds of things that are casually inert and yet we think it is highly plausible that we have knowledge of such things. For instance, various mathematical and logical facts are not causally efficacious, and yet it seems plausible that we know that $2+2=4$. Accordingly, similar to how we have knowledge of various non-moral causally inert things, so might we have moral knowledge of moral reality.

Having explained how moral perception and moral intuition might work for Reid, I close this chapter by discussing one final objection to my interpretation. My interpretation maintains that Reid may think we obtain moral knowledge through both moral intuition and moral perception. The final objection challenges what motivation Reid might have for thinking we perceive moral reality if in fact moral intuition (and inferences from intuited beliefs) alone is sufficient at enabling the individual to obtain any kind of moral knowledge.

Now according to my interpretation, in addition to intuiting moral first principles, Reid might also think that we intuit moral non-first principles. Accordingly, we might have intuitions about particular cases such as trolley problems or even a particular event (I read about the hoodlums' behavior in the newspaper and during time form the intuition that their behavior is morally wrong). In which case, it seems that for any true moral fact, such a moral fact can in principle we known by way of intuition. For we can consider any

particular case, and in virtue of having an intuition about that case, make an accurate moral judgment. The problem, then, is that it seems like moral perception is not necessary for obtaining moral knowledge about even particular cases. Moral intuition alone (and inferences based on our intuited moral beliefs) is sufficient for obtaining moral knowledge of both first principles and particular moral cases (or any moral facts that are not moral first principles). Why then does Reid need to add moral perception to his moral epistemology if it is unnecessary to do so? Doing so seems to only make his moral epistemology unnecessarily complicated.

However, I think there are multiple ways to respond to this concern. First, maybe an ability to perceive moral reality is redundant since all moral knowledge can in principle be obtained by way of intuition. Nonetheless, Reid says what he says, and he stresses that 'perception' is what occurs when our external sense faculties interact with the world in certain ways. Accordingly, I am merely taking what Reid says and seeing how his account of moral intuition and moral perception might work for him.

Second, it does not seem absurd to think we might obtain moral knowledge through two distinct processes; for it seems we also obtain types of non-moral knowledge through two distinct processes. For example, we can imagine a meteorologist who can just look at the sky and see that it is about to rain; yet this same meteorologist can look at some data and perhaps infer or form the intuition that it is going to rain. Or an auto mechanic can perceive (by sound or sight) that there is something wrong with a car; yet presumably this same mechanic can also intuit what is wrong with the car. In which case, it does not seem absurd that one might be able to obtain the same knowledge through two distinct processes.

Third, the capacity to obtain moral knowledge through two distinct processes could actually be beneficial; for there may be aspects of moral reality we can only know by way of perception. In which case, moral perception could sometimes provide an advantage to the individual. And presumably, the capacity to intuit moral reality alone is insufficient in enabling the individual to obtain moral knowledge in such cases. Any rate, I discuss these responses at length in chapter 4.

Finally, in chapter 5 I finish the dissertation by first summarizing the points made in chapters 2-4. I then quickly present three additional objections one might raise either against Reid's moral epistemology in general or my interpretation of Reid's moral epistemology. While I do not evaluate these additional objections at length, I point them out as possible future research projects.

Chapter 2: The Nature of the Moral Sense

Reid claims that the moral sense is a faculty that enables us to obtain moral knowledge.³⁶ However, the problem is that it is unclear what kind of faculty is the moral sense. On the one hand, Reid describes the moral sense as being something like a faculty that intuits moral truths. On the other, he describes it as being something like an external sense faculty. According to Reid's own account, then, the moral faculty may function similarly to our external sense faculties (e.g., the five senses) or our reasoning faculties (e.g., our capacity to intuit or make various deductions or inferences): our external sense faculties enable us to obtain knowledge of the material, external world; our reasoning faculties enable us to intuit, for instance, mathematical or logical axioms. Similarly, our moral faculty enables us to obtain knowledge of moral reality (e.g., various moral principles). The task, then, is understanding whether Reid thinks the moral faculty is (or more like) an external sense faculty or is (or more like) a reasoning faculty—e.g., a faculty of intuition. Ultimately, understanding Reid's view on this matter will help explain how Reid thinks we obtain moral knowledge: For if the moral sense is (or is more like) an external sense faculty, then it would seem Reid thinks we obtain moral knowledge through some type of external sense experience; or if the moral sense is (or more like) a rational faculty, then it would seem Reid thinks we obtain moral knowledge through something like intuition.

³⁶ Reid says as much when he says:

by an original power of the mind, which we call conscience, or the moral faculty, we have the conceptions of right and wrong in human conduct, of merit and demerit, of duty and moral obligation, and our other moral conceptions; and that, by the same faculty, we perceive some things in human conduct to be right, others to be wrong; that the first principles of morals are the dictates of this faculty.... (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.180)

Accordingly, the goal of this chapter is to get clear on Reid's view on how we obtain moral knowledge. I consider four possible interpretations as to how one might interpret Reid's account of how the moral sense enables one to obtain moral knowledge), and I will ultimately argue that Reid could be interpreted as claiming that we obtain moral knowledge in two distinct ways: First, we can think of the moral sense as a faculty by which we intuit moral reality; second, another possibility is that the moral faculty is best understood as an external-sense faculty, one that gives us moral knowledge by way of perception. I call the interpretation that Reid possibly thinks we can obtain moral knowledge through these two distinct ways the Multiple-Process View.³⁷

1. Background

I start by providing some general background about Reid's moral philosophy. In *EAP*, Reid discusses what he calls the principles of action. Roughly, the principles of action explain the various factors that either determine or motivate (or should motivate) the actions of humans or animals. Common to both animal and humans are the mechanical and animal principles of action. Given the goal of this chapter, it is not necessary to explain these principles in much detail. However, in chapter 1, I provided a brief overview of these principles, and so I direct the reader there if he or she desires more information about them. For the purposes of this chapter, what Reid calls the rational principles of action is most relevant, and so I will solely focus on them.

³⁷ I should point out that I do not think the moral sense is a hybrid faculty that has the dual role of making moral perception and moral intuitions. Instead, as I will later show in this chapter, I think the best way to get a grip on Reid's moral epistemology is to maintain that he thinks we obtain moral knowledge through two distinct processes: moral intuition and moral perception.

The rational principles are rational since they only apply to creatures endowed with the power of reasoning.³⁸ Moreover, I am unclear about whether these principles are prescriptive (they tell one what he or she ought to do), or descriptive (they describe how rational people actually act), or in some sense both. The issue warrants more discussion than I give it here, but I put it aside largely because it extends beyond the scope of this chapter. Nonetheless, the following passage suggests that such principles are prescriptive:

I will endeavor to shew, that, among the various ends of human actions, there are some, of which, without reason, we could not even form a conception; and that, as soon as they are conceived, a regard to them is, by our constitution, not only a principle of action, but a leading and governing principle, to which all our animal principles are subordinate, and to which they ought to be subject. (*EAP* 3.3.1, p.153)

Here, Reid says that the animal principles ought to be subject to the rational principles. I take this as meaning that in many cases where our animal impulses (e.g., desires) pull us in one direction, we should apply the rational principles to see whether this direction is the way we should go.

As stated by Reid, there are two rational principles of action:

The ends of human actions I have in view, are two, to wit, what is good for us upon the whole, and what appears to be our duty. They are very strictly connected, lead to the same course of conduct, and cooperate with each other; and, on that account, have commonly been comprehended under one name, that of reason. But as they may be disjoined, and are really distinct principles of action, I shall consider them separately. (*EAP* 3.3.1, p.154)

For purposes of flow, I will refer to the first principle as *the principle of our overall good*.

Roughly, the principle states that a rational person should decide to perform actions on the basis of whether they will make him better off in the long-run. For instance, suppose

³⁸ As Reid states:

These I shall call rational principles; because they can exist only in beings endowed with reason, and because, to act from these principle, is what has always been meant by acting according to reason, (*EAP* 3.3.3, p. 153)

Jones must decide whether to party or spend the evening studying for the next day's exam. In the short term, it might be in his best interest to party, as doing so is more pleasurable than studying. However, in the long run, studying for the exam will lead to a better exam score, which may lead to a number of beneficial future consequences: entrance into a better graduate school, which leads to a better job, which leads to more pleasant living conditions, and so on; presumably such consequences will, in the long run, make him better off overall. The principle of our overall good suggests that a person should consider the long-term effects of his actions and pursue (or at least try to) actions that are better for him in the long-run.³⁹

The second rational principle is what I will call the *principle of duty*. This principle states that someone who has a sense of honor should perform actions that duty prescribes. The principle of duty, however, is probably best described as a principle of honor. I take a person of honor (at least in Reid's sense) to be someone who not only acts in accordance with what duty prescribes, but performs his or duty because it is the right thing to do and not simply because doing so serves his or her overall best interests. For according to Reid, if someone has a notion of his duty and is a person of honor, he will choose to perform actions prescribed by duty, and he will do so simply because it is what

³⁹ In Reid's words:

To prefer a greater good, though distant, to a less that is present; to choose a present evil, in order to avoid a greater evil, or to obtain a greater good, is, in the judgment of all men, wise and reasonable conduct; and when a man acts the contrary part, all men will acknowledge, that he acts foolishly and unreasonably....

Thus, I think it appears, that to pursue what is good upon the whole, and to avoid what is ill upon the whole, is a rational principle of action, grounded upon our constitution as reasonable creatures. (*EAP* 3.3.2, p.156-157)

is most honorable to do.⁴⁰ For example, someone might ask Smith why he wants to do what duty prescribes; for Reid, Smith's answer (if he is an honorable person) will simply be that he does so because it is honorable to do so. As Reid states:

Ask the man of honour, why he thinks himself obliged to pay a debt of honour the very question shocks him. To suppose that he needs any other inducement to do it but the principle of honour, is to suppose that he has no honour, no worth, and deserves no esteem. (*EAP* 3.3.5, p. 170)

Moreover, the principle of our overall good and our principle of duty are rational principles because only individuals endowed with reason could determine which actions serve his or her overall good and only such individuals could form a conception of duty (or a notion of what their duty amounts to) or decide to perform their duty from a sense of honor.⁴¹

Furthermore, I take it that a person who has a conception of duty and is a person of honor will not only perform his or duty because it is the right thing to do (and not

⁴⁰In Reid's words:

I take it for granted, therefore, that every man of real honor feels an abhorrence of certain actions, because they are in themselves base, and feels an obligation to certain other actions, because they are in themselves what honors requires, and this, independently of any consideration of interest or reputation. ...This principle of honor, which is acknowledged by all men who pretend to character, is only another name for what we call a regard to duty, to rectitude, to propriety of conduct. It is a moral obligation which obliges a man to do certain things because they are right, and not to do other things because they are wrong. (*EAP* 3.3.5, p.170)

⁴¹Perhaps one way to understand the nature of Reidian principles of actions is to think of them as motives that at least partially explain why people perform the actions that they do. At least, this is how I understand Yaffe's (2004) interpretation of such principles. According to his interpretation, animal motives like desires can at least partially explain why people perform certain actions (*EAP* 4.4, p.213-214): for example, Smith bought ice cream because he desired ice cream. Similarly, rational motives would include a regard to our overall good and our sense of honor (*EAP* 4.4, p.214-215). One who acts in accordance with such rational principles are at least partially motivated to act in certain ways because doing so either promotes his or her overall good or is what duty describes. However, as Yaffe points out, Reid does not think our motives (especially our strongest motives) ultimately cause our behavior. As I understand Reid, humans have active power, which ultimately enables them to be the efficient causes of their behavior (at least in many cases). While individuals act on motives, it is in many instances their exertion of active power that ultimately causes their behavior.

because it serves our self-interest) but will also establish and cultivate morally virtuous character traits. For Reid seems to think it is part of honorable person's nature (or disposition) that he or she will do so:

I take it for granted, therefore, that every man of real honour feels an abhorrence of certain actions, because they are in themselves base, and feels an obligation to certain other actions, because they are in themselves what honour requires, and this, independently of any consideration of interest or reputation. (*EAP* 3.3, p.170)

In this passage Reid does not explicitly say that an honorable person will cultivate a virtuous character; yet since Reid says that such a person will choose to perform or refrain from performing certain morally relevant actions, I do not think it is too much of a stretch to assume that such a person will also desire to cultivate a character disposed to perform or refrain from performing certain morally relevant actions.

Now the following worry quickly surfaces for Reid: It seems that what is good for one overall may not be what is honorable. For example it seems possible that it is in my overall best interest to cheat on my taxes if I can get away with doing so; yet it seems quite dishonorable to partake in tax fraud. The problem is that it is not clear what a rational agent would do when such situations arise; for one principle says an individual ought to do what is best for him or her overall, while the other says that he or she should do what is honorable. Reid, however, maintains that such principles will not conflict.⁴²

⁴² According to Reid,

What is good for us upon the whole, and what appears to be our duty. They are very strictly connected, and cooperate with each other; and, of that account, have commonly been comprehended under one name, that of reason. (*EAP* 3.3.1, p.154)

And also,

Although these be really two distinct principles of action, it is very natural to comprehend them under one name, because both are leading principles, both

His reasoning seems to be that doing what is honorable or doing what is best for him or her overall will ultimately have the same result. Such a claim is controversial but I will not further consider it here, for the matter extends beyond the scope of this chapter (see footnote 8 of chapter 1 for a brief argument as to how Reid might motivate the claim that these principles will not prescribe conflicting actions). For now, I proceed to briefly explain what the moral sense is for Reid and how Reid thinks we come to know our duty.

Accordingly, as a moral sense theorist, Reid thinks we obtain knowledge of our duty by the moral sense. Reid describes the moral sense as follows:

by an original power of the mind, which we call *conscience*, or the moral faculty, we have the conceptions of right and wrong in human conduct, of merit and demerit, of duty and moral obligation, and our other moral conceptions....(*EAP* 3.3.6, p.180)

By original, I take it that Reid thinks people are naturally constituted to have this faculty; one does not acquire a moral sense through experience or training, though it can be improved through such mechanisms.⁴³ Further, the moral sense is a belief-forming faculty. Similar to how our external sense faculties provide us with information about the mind-external material world, our moral sense provides us with information about moral reality. Our visual faculty presents us with information about how things look; our

suppose the use of reason, and, when rightly understood, both lead to the same course of life. They are like two fountains whose streams unite and run in the same channel. (*EAP* 3.3.5, p. 173)

⁴³ Reid states that,

...like all our other powers, it [conscience] comes to maturity by insensible degrees, and can be much aided in its strength and vigour by proper culture. All the human faculties have their infancy and state of maturity. (*EAP* 3.3.8, p.186)

auditory faculties present us with various sounds; similarly, our moral sense faculty provides us with information about moral reality.⁴⁴

Furthermore, the moral sense's sole function is not simply to help the individual form moral beliefs. For Reid, the moral sense has two components: First, as stated already, it has what Cuneo (2006) calls an intellective component, which is the feature of the moral sense that makes judgments⁴⁵ and enables us to form moral beliefs. Second, it has an affective component. This component is triggered, so to speak, when someone makes a moral judgment:

Our moral judgments are not like those we form in speculative matters, dry and unaffecting, but, from their nature, are necessarily accompanied with affections and feelings...

It was before observed, that every human action, considered in a moral view, appears to us good, or bad, or indifferent. When we judge the action to be indifferent, neither good nor bad, though this be a moral judgment, it produces no affection or feelings, any more than our judgments in speculative matters. (*EAP* 3.3.7, p. 180)

⁴⁴ I also understand one's external sense faculties and various non-external sense faculties as being original as well. Moreover, just as one's moral sense can be improved through training and experience (and perhaps corrupted through such mechanisms as well), so can these other original belief-forming faculties as well. For instance, one might be disposed to form all sorts of perceptual beliefs about basic qualities and objects. Yet, over time, one's, say, visual faculties can become so refined that they do not just see, for instance, a bird, but see the bird as a warbler.

⁴⁵ It is important to note that Reid may have two different notions of judgment. The first notion is how 'judgment' is typically understood: a state where one affirms or denies a proposition. To judge is simply to say that you believe some proposition is true or false. For example, in judging that grass is green, you are believing that grass is green.

However, the second notion of 'judgment' does not refer to a state where one affirms or denies some proposition. Instead, it refers to a state where some proposition is represented as being true, but the individual neither affirms nor denies its truth. For example, to judge that grass is green just means that the proposition 'grass is green' is represented as being true. Here, a judgment is simply a testimony, so to speak, of a belief-forming faculty. Grass looking green is a testimony of one's vision faculty. In this case, it is ultimately up to the individual to accept or deny vision's testimony.

I admit that I am not sure which notion of 'judgment' Reid has in mind each time he talks about moral judgment. Copenhaver (2014) and Folescu (2015) maintain that Reid uses the second notion. I think their interpretation is plausible. In which case, for sake of clarity and consistency, whenever I talk about 'Reidian' moral judgment, I will be using this second notion of 'judgment'.

As this passage suggests, Reid thinks that upon making a moral judgment, we will have an emotional response. What does this emotional response amount to? Reid says the following:

But we approve of good actions, and disapprove of bad; and this approbation and disapprobation, when we analyze it, appears to include, not only a moral judgment of the action, but some affection, favourable or unfavourable, towards the agent, and some feeling in ourselves. (*EAP* 3.3.7, p. 180)

The emotional response, then, is two-fold. First, one experiences a particular feeling towards the individual who performs the act; second, the individual experiences a certain moral feeling that is not aimed at any one.⁴⁶ Regarding the first emotional response, Reid thinks that if we judge some action to be morally right or praiseworthy, we will feel approbation towards the agent we believed performed a morally right act; or if we judge the action to be morally wrong, we will feel disapprobation towards the agent who performed this action. Regarding the second, the individual will feel some positive emotion within himself (e.g., pride or esteem) if he approves of the act, but will feel some negative emotion (e.g., contempt or disgust) if he disapproves of it.

Reid, accordingly, commits to the existence of what Roeser (2001 and 2009) calls cognitive emotions. Such emotions are complex states constituted by a moral judgment and involve a feeling of approbation or disapprobation toward the person who performed the action as well as an experience of certain negative or positive feelings within the individual who made the judgment. Such cognitive emotions include anger, guilt,

⁴⁶ I presume one can make a judgment and feel a concomitant emotion towards all kinds of agents, and not just agents who are nearby in one's environment (e.g., in close spatial or visual proximity). I think such moral emotions can be felt towards fictional or hypothetical agents, agents faraway, agents from history, and even towards one's self—e.g., when one judges that he acted rightly, he might feel a sense of approval towards himself.

outrage, and sympathy. They are cognitive in so far as they are constituted by a judgment that is either true or false (or a judgment whose content is a moral proposition).

Moreover, on Roeser's interpretation, neither the judgment nor the feeling is prior to the other. For instance, suppose I judge that someone acted wrongly; for Reid, judging that he has done something wrong and the feeling of approbation (as well as the negative feeling I experience) occur simultaneously.

So far, I have merely provided a brief overview of Reid's account of the moral sense. A number of questions arise with Reid's account, three of which are: what kind of faculty is the moral sense? How does the moral sense help us obtain knowledge of moral reality? And what is the nature of this moral reality? The nature of moral reality for Reid will be discussed at length in chapter 3; the question concerning how the moral sense provides us with such knowledge will be addressed in chapter 4. For now, I address the issue concerning what kind of faculty is the moral sense. More precisely, I am concerned with whether the moral sense is a faculty that gives us knowledge by way of intuition, or by way of external sense experience, or perhaps in some sense both. I now proceed to clarify what I mean when I say a faculty gives us knowledge by way of intuition and I then explain why one might think Reid's moral sense is really a faculty of intuition.

2. Reid as a Moral Intuitionist

The question I now consider is what kind of faculty is the moral sense. The standard distinction is that a belief-forming faculty is either an *a priori* faculty or an *a posteriori* faculty. An *a priori* faculty is one that provides us with knowledge of some proposition by using the processes of rational intuition or deduction (forms of *a priori* reasoning),

and such processes are the necessary or sufficient means by which we know that proposition. Accordingly, experience is neither necessary nor sufficient in enabling us to know such propositions. Basic mathematical or logical axioms may be instances of propositions known *a priori*.

In contrast, an *a posteriori* faculty (broadly construed) is a faculty that provides one with knowledge of a proposition through experience (e.g., perceptual experience, introspection). For example, my knowledge of various mind-external facts (e.g., grass being green, the sound of a bee's buzzing) are learned through perceptual experience. I now briefly explain one type of moral theory that claims we know some moral facts solely by intuition (moral intuitionism).

There is widespread debate about what exactly is an intuition or an intuited belief, but I will not go into the debate here, for my goal is not to defend any account about the nature of intuitions. However, as I will show, some philosophers think Reid is a moral intuitionist, and so it is important that I give the reader some basic idea of what moral intuitionism is. Broadly speaking, moral intuitionism is simply the view that some of our moral beliefs are intuited, and that some of these intuited moral beliefs provide the epistemic foundation by which all other moral beliefs are justified. Such intuited beliefs are what one might call self-justified, or not justified in virtue of being inferred or deduced from other justified beliefs. Instead, such beliefs are justified in virtue of being in some sense self-evident; upon grasping or understanding the content of some proposition, one immediately believes it (precisely what it means for a belief to be self-evident for Reid will be discussed in Chapter 3).

Before explaining which philosophers think Reid is a moral intuitionist, let me first pause and point out that there are two different notions of intuition. On the one hand, there are *rational intuitions*. Such intuitions occur when one grasps the meaning of a proposition and immediately believes it. Here, such propositions are known *a priori*, and such propositions may include those concerning mathematical, logical axioms, and perhaps some moral principles as well. So far, I have made it seem as if moral intuitionism is committed to the view that we know some moral propositions through *a priori* intuition. However, I do not want to restrict moral intuitionism to such a commitment; for there is another kind of intuition: what Baeler (1998) calls *physical intuition*.⁴⁷

In short, a physical intuition is an intuition one has in virtue of having prior experiences. Perhaps an example will clarify what a physical intuition amounts to: We can imagine an experienced architect who looks at a building and has an intuition that its foundation is poorly constructed. It just seems to her that the building will collapse. For over time, she has acquired the ability to detect when a building is built well or poorly. It seems she forms her belief by way of intuition, but past experiences were required for her to have this intuition. Her intuition is not *a priori*, but instead the result of *a posteriori* experience.

Because of this distinction between rational and physical intuitions, I do not want to assume moral intuitionism claims only rational intuitions are reliable sources of basic, foundational moral knowledge. In which case, I do not assume Reidian moral

⁴⁷ I owe Peter Markie for pointing out this distinction to me.

intuitionism (if Reid is a moral intuitionist) commits to there being only rational moral intuitions as reliable sources of moral knowledge.

Furthermore, I also wish to understand the content of a moral intuition rather broadly. Accordingly, I will understand a moral intuition as an intellectual seeming state (a state where some proposition seems true) where some evaluative or moral proposition seems to be true.⁴⁸ Such a seeming state is not the sort one has when he or she externally perceives some objects as, for instance, being green; neither is it the sort of seeming state one has when he remembers or introspects.³ My purpose for thinking of moral intuitions as intellectual seeming states is that I think such seeming states could be the content of both rational intuitions and physical intuitions. In chapter 4, I will discuss why I take Reid to think that the content of intuitions are intellectual seeming states. But for now, I construe the content of a moral intuition in this broad sense.

As previously stated, several philosophers treat Reid as committing to some version of moral intuitionism. Roeser (2010) claims that “[rarely] is Thomas Reid included in discussions of intuitionism even though his moral epistemology is fully intuitionist” (3). Roeser maintains that on Reid’s view we intuit moral principles, some of which are first principles (what distinguishes a first principle from a non-first principle will be discussed in Chapter 3).⁴⁹ Further, Copenhaver (2014) maintains that the moral sense is not an external sense faculty, but instead an internal (or inner sense faculty):

Reid is clear that there is a distinction between the outer sense and the inner sense, and that perception of external objects and their properties is via the outer sense. Accordingly, aesthetic and moral experiences come

⁴⁸ This depiction of a moral intuition as being an intellectual seeming state is borrowed from Huemer (2005).

⁴⁹ In order to give the reader a basic idea of what I think a moral first principle is for Reid, I define a Reidian moral first principle as one that is known immediately or non-inferentially; a moral non-first principle is one that is known mediately or inferentially.

by way of the inner senses. Then, if we stipulate that ‘perception’ refers only to the external sense, Reid’s use of that term for aesthetic and moral experience will seem wrong (81-82).

Copenhaver does not specify whether the moral sense is a faculty of intuition or reason, but it is clear from the passage that she does not think the moral sense is an external-sense faculty, and so does not give us knowledge by way of perceptual experience. In which case, it seems the moral sense is described to be more like a faculty by which we intuit (where the definition of ‘intuition’ is broadly understood) some moral facts.

Also, Davis (2006) states that “Reid’s account of the progress of moral judgment is a form of moral intuitionism. Moral beliefs arise immediately and non-inferentially from a consideration of non-moral facts” (69). Moreover, Davis also states that “Reid’s moral epistemology shares key features with the intuitionism defended by Ross (1963) and Huemer (2005)”.

Cuneo (2004), moreover, states that “through an *a priori* act of the moral sense, says Reid, we can “perceive” the necessary first principles of morality” (259). Cuneo (2007) maintains that Reid’s account of moral intuitionism can explain the intimate link between moral judgments and moral motivation. (However, I should note that Cuneo also provides an account of Reidian moral perception (2003), one that strongly suggests Reid thinks the moral sense is a form of external sense perception. I will discuss his view in the next section.)

Finally, Van Cleve (2015) appears to understand Reid as a moral intuitionist as well. As Van Cleve writes,

Objective non-naturalism is typically accompanied by a moral epistemology in which ethical concepts are a priori concepts and ethical principles are synthetic necessary truths known by intuition; hence it is also known as intuitionism.(442)

Van Cleve maintains that Reid is an objective non-naturalist, and so I understand Van Cleve as maintaining that Reid thinks some moral knowledge is obtained by intuition—at least, I take this interpretation as following from his understanding of what it means to be an objective non-naturalist.

A number of passages support their interpretations. Consider the following:

- (1) [*conscience*] is evidently intended by nature to be the immediate guide and director of our [behavior]...

Conscience prescribes measures to every appetite, affection, and passion, and says to every other principle of action, so far thou mayest go but no further. (*EAP* 3.3.8, p. 190-192)

- (2) I call these [moral] first principles, because they appear to me to have in themselves an *intuitive* evidence I cannot resist. I find I can express them in words. I can illustrate them with words. I can illustrate them by examples and authorities, and perhaps can deduce one of them from another; but I am not able to deduce them from principles that are more evident...

In like manner, our moral judgment, or conscience, grows to maturity from an imperceptible seed planted by our Creator. When we are capable of contemplating the actions of other men, or of reflecting upon our own calmly and dispassionately, we begin to perceive in them the qualities of honest and dishonest, honourable and base, of right and wrong, and to feel the sentiments of moral approbation and disapprobation. (*EAP* 5.1, p. 276-277)

- (3) As we rely upon the clear and distinct testimony of our eyes, concerning the colours and figures of the bodies about us, we have the same reason to rely with security upon the clear and unbiased testimony of our *conscience*, with regard to what we ought, and ought not to do. In many cases, moral worth and demerit are discerned no less clearly by the last of those natural faculties, than figure and color by the first. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p. 179)

- (4) The faculties which nature has given us, are the only engines we can use to find out the truth. We cannot indeed prove that those faculties are not fallacious, unless God should give us new faculties to sit in judgment upon the old. But we are born under a necessity of trusting them.

Every man in his senses believes his eyes, his ears, and his other senses, he believes his consciousness, with respect to his own thoughts and purposes, his memory, with regard to what is past, his understanding, with regard to abstract relations of things ... And he has the same reason, and, indeed, is under the same necessity of believing the clear and

unbiased dictates of his *conscience*, with regard to what is honorable and what is base. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.179-180).

- (5) by an original power of the mind, which we call *conscience*, or the moral faculty, we have the conceptions of right and wrong in human conduct, of merit and demerit, of duty and moral obligation, and our other moral conceptions (*EAP* 3.3.6, p. 180).
- (6) Conscience commands and forbids with more authority, and in the most common and most important points of conduct, without the labour of reasoning. Its voice is heard by every man, and cannot be disregarded without impunity.

...he who pays a sacred regard to the dictates of his conscience, cannot fail of a present reward, and a reward proportioned to the exertion required in doing his duty.

...The consciousness of inward worth gives strength to his heart, and makes his countenance shine. Tempests may beat and floods roar, but he stands firm as a rock in the joy of a good conscience...

...what every man's conscience dictates, that he who does his duty, from the conviction that it is right and honourable, and what he ought to do, acts from a nobler principle... (*EAP* 3.3.7, p.186)

- (7) There are truths, both speculative and moral, which a man left to himself would never discover; yet, when they are fairly laid before him, he owns and adopts them, not barely upon the authority of his teacher, but on their own intrinsic evidentness, and perhaps wonders that he could be so blind as not to see them before (*EAP* 3.3.8, p. 188-189)

Furthermore, in (*EAP* 3.3.8), Reid frequently equates the moral sense as being one and the same thing as one's conscience—for instance, he states that “the moral faculty [i.e., moral sense] or conscience is an active power of the mind” and “conscience, i.e. the moral faculty, is an intellectual power”. Accordingly, the important lesson from analyzing these passages is that Reid identifies the moral sense as the same thing as one's conscience.

In each of these passages, Reid claims that one's conscience provides us with moral conceptions⁵⁰ and moral judgments/beliefs. Accordingly, if we were to decide

⁵⁰ I understand conception as a non-propositional mental notion of some object or quality. For example, to

whether one's conscience was more like a faculty of intuition or more like an external sense faculty, my hunch is that we would say it is a faculty of intuition—a faculty by which we some moral knowledge is obtained by way of intuition. One's conscience does not seem to be a faculty by which we literally see right and wrong (e.g., literal cases of seeing include seeing that grass is green or seeing that it is cloudy outside). Instead, one's conscience seems to be more like a non-perceptual psychological faculty or process that suggests to an individual that a certain action is, for instance, morally wrong, morally right, obligatory, or what duty prescribes. At least, I think the way we standardly use 'conscience' is to think of it as a faculty that presents or shows to the intellect that certain actions are right or wrong.⁵¹ Reid may have a different notion of 'conscience' in mind, but nothing he says suggests that his notion of the term differs from the standard notion mentioned here.

Furthermore, it is not too far a stretch to say that the role of one's conscience is to provide intuitions about right and wrong.⁵² For to say that my conscience presents or

have a conception of red, does not mean that one holds any beliefs about the color (e.g., when it can be attributed to some object) but just that one has some mental notion or grip of what red is. See Folescu (2015) for a thorough treatment of Reid's account of conception.

⁵¹ Evidence that this is the standard usage of 'conscience' comes from the following sort of statements:

- (1) "I was going to cheat on my taxes but my conscience got the best of me."
- (2) Jones to Smith—"I am going to steal social security checks, simply because I can."
Smith to Jones—"do you not have a conscience?"
- (3) "Anyone with the slightest bit of conscience would know that torturing people for fun is morally wrong".

⁵² Consider how Thagard and Finn (2009) describe what a conscience is:

"Conscience is the internal sense of moral goodness or badness of one's own actual or imagined conduct. The products of conscience are moral intuitions, which are the feelings that some acts are right and others are wrong (150)".

I find this passage to be a convincing representation of what a conscience is, and so I believe I have no good reason to think this faculty should be described differently.

shows that some action is right or wrong does not seem different from saying that I have an intuition that this same action is right or wrong. For example, one might say that his conscience indicates that torturing people for fun is wrong; or similarly, one might have an intuition that torturing people for fun is wrong. Here, what one's conscience suggests is wrong does not seem different than having an intuition that some action is wrong.

Reid, moreover, does not say that all of our moral beliefs are deduced or inferred; instead, as the above passages suggest, one's conscience prescribes right and wrong independent of any inference or deduction— consider (1), (3), (4), and especially (7). At least at first pass, it seems appropriate to say that Reid is a moral intuitionist: by one's conscience (i.e., the moral sense), one is immediately presented with notions about moral rightness, wrongness, duty, obligation, etc. This claim fits well with the intuitionist view (broadly construed) that some foundational or basic moral knowledge is obtained non-inferentially or immediately by way of intuition

So far, I have attempted to motivate the interpretation that Reid is a moral intuitionist. Another interesting question concerns what kind of moral intuitionist is Reid. There are multiple accounts of moral intuitionism, and it may not be clear which account Reid's view falls under. However, given the scope of this chapter, I will not answer this question now. This questions will be answered Chapter 4, where I discuss how the moral sense gives us knowledge of moral reality. This question is best answered there because I believe understanding what kind of moral intuitionist is Reid will help answer the question concerning how the moral sense gives us moral knowledge. That aside, I now proceed to explain why some philosophers believe Reid thinks the moral sense is an

external sense faculty—or at least a faculty that provides us with moral knowledge in the same way that our external faculties provide us with knowledge of mind-external facts about the world.

3. Reid and Moral Perception

3.1 Evidence for Reidian moral perception

In this section, I provide evidence for the view that Reid thinks moral perception sometimes occurs. If Reid thinks there are moral perceptions, then Reid may not think the moral sense is a faculty by which we exclusively intuit moral reality; instead, Reid may also mean that the moral sense is a faculty by which we obtain moral knowledge by way of perceptual experience. While I will ultimately argue that it is possible that Reid thinks we can obtain moral knowledge through both intuition and external-sense perception, I first present textual evidence supporting the view that the moral faculty could also be plausibly interpreted as being an external sense faculty. But before doing this, let me provide examples of philosophers who understand Reid's moral sense as being a faculty by which we perceive moral reality.

There are at least three philosophers who suggest Reidian moral perception is a form of external sense perception. While Cuneo (2006, 2007) says Reid's moral epistemology is a form of moral intuitionism, Cuneo (2003) presents a thorough account of Reid's account of moral perception, and he demonstrates how Reid's account of moral perception is similar to his account of non-moral perception:

I shall [(regarding his interpretation of Reid)] be concerned with the manner in which a person perceives moral properties of other persons and their intentions, beliefs, desires, etc...

I call the present manner of acquiring moral beliefs a mode of perception because it qualifies as such (at least in the extended sense) according to Reid's view (237).⁵³

Moreover, Kroeker (2010) appears to interpret Reid as committing to a moral perception as being a genuine form of external sense perception; she writes that:

Whatever the source of our moral beliefs, in order to perceive the moral quality of actions, one must first perceive the action itself; one must perceive it in its circumstances and context and its relation to the agent. In order to perceive these things, all the external senses come into play (63).

And in (Kroeker, 2013), she states that

Reid's general understanding of perception thus applies to moral perception, since the behavior of the agent functions as a natural sign that suggests contingently and immediately the (non-propositional) conception of and belief about the agent's moral worth. My view, therefore, is that Reid understands moral perception as a case of perception in general (136).

From these passages, it appears Kroeker thinks Reid is committed to moral perception as at least being a type of external sense perception.

Furthermore, although Davis (2006) thinks Reid's view is a form of moral intuitionism, he describes moral perception as functioning much like external sense perception. Davis maintains that our perception of certain moral qualities is similar to various aspects of Reidian non-moral perception. For instance, Reid thinks that through experience and training, we can non-inferentially perceive a bird as being a Golden Finch

⁵³ I should point out that Cuneo mentions the possibility that Reid's notion of moral perception may not be a form of external sense perception. Instead, Reid might be using 'perception' in one of its non-standard forms (later in this chapter, I will discuss whether Reid might have multiple senses of 'perceive', one that is literal, another that is metaphorical. Cuneo, moreover, proceeds to argue as if Reid thinks we sometimes perceive moral reality. I, accordingly, take Cuneo as being neutral about whether moral perception is a genuine form of external sense perception (i.e., we literally see rightness, wrongness, etc.) or whether it is merely analogical to sense perception. Later, I argue for the stronger claim that Reid is committed to moral perception as being a genuine form of external sense perception.

and not just as an ordinary bird—in other words, upon perceiving the bird, we immediately judge it to be (or see it as) a Golden Finch.⁵⁴ Similarly, Davis maintains that, according to Reid, we are constituted such that when we see certain actions or events, we immediately and non-inferentially make a moral judgment about the action or event. For example, Reid might maintain that upon seeing a group of hoodlums lighting a cat on fire, one immediately (or non-inferentially) judges that their actions are morally wrong. The upshot is that, as Davis understands Reid, we know moral facts in the same way we know non-moral facts; if we know such non-moral facts through perceptual experience, then it may be that we know moral facts by way of moral perception.

Accordingly, some philosophers interpret (or at least appear to interpret) Reid as endorsing moral perception as being a form of external-sense perception; the following passages support such an interpretation:

- (1) [the moral sense has] got this name sense, no doubt, from some analogy which it is conceived to bear to the external senses. And if we have just notions of the office of the external senses, the analogous very evident, and I see no reason to take offence, as some have done, at the name of the moral sense. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p. 175)
- (2) ...our moral faculty may, I think, without impropriety, be called the moral sense...

In its dignity it is without doubt, far superior to every other power of the mind; but there is this analogy between it and the external senses, that, as by them we have not only the original conceptions of the various qualities of bodies, but the original judgments that this body has such a

⁵⁴ In Reid's words,

Our perceptions are of two kinds: some are natural and original, others are acquired and the fruit of experience. When I perceive that this is the taste of cider and that of brandy, this is the smell of an apple and that of an orange, this is the noise of thunder and that the ringing of bells, this is the sound of a coach passing and that the voice of a friend, these perceptions and others like them are not original; they are acquired. But the perception that I have by touch of the hardness and softness of bodies, of their extension, shape and motion, isn't acquired; it is original. (*IHM* 6.20, p.171)

quality, that such another; so by our moral faculty, we have both the original conceptions of right and wrong in conduct, of merit and demerit, and the original judgments that this conduct is right, that is wrong; that this character has worth, that, demerit. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p. 176)

In (1), Reid claims the moral sense is analogous to the external sense faculties, and so has no qualms with referring to it as a sense faculty. In (2), Reid maintains that similar to how our basic conceptions and judgments of qualities or objects comes from external sense experience, so do our basic conceptions of morality come from our moral sense. Such comparisons invite an interpretation where we understand the moral sense as an external faculty. However, one might interpret these two passages differently: one might maintain that these passages merely suggest that the moral sense is analogous in some respects to our external sense faculties; accordingly, the moral sense is not to be understood as something like an external sense faculty; instead, at best, it functions in a manner similar to how our external sense faculties function. Yet, if Reid did not think the moral sense was an external faculty, I find it strange that he did not compare it to some other faculty. Why does he invite confusion instead of explicitly saying that the moral sense is not an external faculty? This concern aside, consider the next passages, which I take to be textual evidence supporting the interpretation that Reid thinks we obtain moral knowledge by way of external sense perception:

- (3) whatever is immediately *perceived* to be just, honest, and honorable, in human conduct, carries moral obligation along with it, and the contrary carries demerit and blame; and from those moral obligations that are immediately perceived, all other moral obligations must be deduced by reasoning. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.179)
- (4) by an original power of the mind, which we call conscience, or the moral faculty, we have the conceptions of right and wrong in human conduct, of merit and demerit, of duty and moral obligation, and our other moral conceptions; and that, by the same faculty, we *perceive* some things in human conduct to be right, and others to be wrong; that the first principles of morals are the dictates of this faculty; and that we have the

same reason to rely upon those dictates, as upon the determinations of our senses, or of our other natural faculties. (*EAP*, 3.3.6, p.180)

(3) and (4) further support interpreting the moral sense as being an external sense faculty. In these passages, Reid claims that by the moral sense we perceive moral facts. These passages support the view that the moral sense is an external faculty that perceives moral facts. Further, in (3) Reid maintains that what we immediately (i.e., non-inferentially) perceive to be right or wrong provides the foundation by which other moral beliefs can ultimately be deduced.

Finally, while the first part of the next passage (4) supports the interpretation that Reid is a moral intuitionist, the second part suggests that the moral sense at least closely resembles our external sense faculties:

by the same faculty, we *perceive* some things in human conduct to be right, and others to be wrong; that the first principles of morals are the dictates of this faculty; and that we have the same reason to rely upon those dictates, as upon the determinations of our senses, or of our other natural faculties.

Moreover, in many cases immediate moral perceptions arise when we observe peoples behaviors, facial expressions, and tone of voice:

(5) A man's wisdom is known to us only by the signs of it in his conduct; his eloquence by the signs of it in his speech. In the same manner we judge of his virtue, of his fortitude, and of all his talents and qualities of mind. Yet it is to be observed, that we judge of men's talents with as little doubt or hesitation as we judge of the immediate objects of sense.... We perceive one man to be open, another cunning; one to be ignorant, another very knowing; one to be slow of understanding, another quick...From this it appears, that it is no less part of the human constitution, to judge of men's characters, and of their intellectual powers, from the signs of them in their actions and discourse, than to judge of corporeal objects by our senses. (*EIP* 6.6: 503–4)

Such a passage provides more evidence that the moral sense is an external sense faculty.

Here, Reid says that we can see one's moral character similar to how we see other higher-

order properties—e.g., intelligence and wit. Presuming that we can see that someone is happy or intelligent, so we can also see (or in some sense perceive) someone's goodness or badness.

Other textual evidence comes from Reid's Practical Ethics:

- (6) In treating the principles of morals in general we endeavored to shew that by our moral faculty we have an immediate perception of right and wrong of moral rectitude and depravity in moral agents in like manner as we have a perception of black and white in visible objects by the eyes of harmony and discord by a musical ear and of other qualities in objects by means of the several faculties of our nature which are adapted by our Author for our nature as to give us not only the ideas of such qualities but an immediate perception of their existence in certain subjects. (*PA* 5, p.43)

Here, Reid maintains that in the like manner as we perceive qualities in physical objects, so do we perceive rightness and wrongness as well as rectitude and depravity in moral agents.

Finally, also Reid maintains that:

- (7) It is through the medium of material objects on which their signatures are impressed...that we perceive life, activity, wisdom, and every moral and intellectual quality in other beings. (*EIP* 8.4, p.602-603)

In sum, I think it is safe to say the following: (a) the moral sense may be understood as a faculty by which we perceive moral reality, such as whether one's conduct is right or wrong, virtuous or vicious; (b) in some cases, what we perceive to be morally right or wrong is immediate: The moral perceptual belief is not inferred from other beliefs one knows; and (c) Reid repeatedly compares the moral sense to the external sense faculties. I take (a)-(c) as strong textual evidence supporting the interpretation that Reid thinks we perceive moral facts by way of external sense perception. More precisely, I think the textual evidence suggests that Reid thinks some moral knowledge is obtained by way of moral perception (where moral perception is understood is a genuine form of

external sense perception, one where we obtain knowledge of moral reality by a process similar to how we obtain knowledge of mind-external, empirical reality).

3.2 Objection: Reid uses two distinct senses of ‘perceive’

I now consider an objection one might raise to the interpretation that Reid thinks we externally perceive moral reality: Consider again the passages where Reid says we perceive moral reality. One might maintain that by ‘perception’, Reid does not mean the sort of perception that occurs when our external senses perceive mind-external qualities or objects, such as colors, smells, rocks, or people. Reid instead uses ‘perception’ in some metaphorical sense: accordingly, Reid thinks we perceive moral facts similar to how one might “see” that the Yankees are not in first place, “see” that Trump is ahead in the polls, or how a mathematician “sees” or “perceives” that a certain axiom is true⁵⁵ On this view, moral perception should be understood as a state where some moral proposition seems true to one’s intellect; when one says he sees or perceives that an action is morally wrong or right, he is using “sees” or “perceives” in a sense that a mathematician uses it when he or she claim to see or perceive that an axiom is true. th. Accordingly, when Reid claims that we perceive moral facts, he does not mean that we externally perceive some moral quality (e.g., an action’s wrongness); instead, by “perceive”, he might mean that when we intuit or rationally grasp some moral proposition, we simply “see” it as true—the way one sees that Trump is ahead in the polls, or how a blind person sees that the Yankees are in first place, or how a mathematician sees that a certain axiom is true

⁵⁵ I got this type of example from McBrayer (2010).

The objection, then, is that Reid may have at least two senses in which he uses the term ‘perceive’: (1) when it comes to external sense perception, ‘perceive’ refers to the act where our external sense faculties perceive some mind-external object or quality; whereas (2), when it comes to moral perception, ‘perceive’ refers to the act where we intuit or grasp some moral fact. However, I think that interpreting Reid as committing to two distinct notions of ‘perceive’ is problematic in at least two ways.

First, Reid explicitly claims that the term ‘perception’ is an act performed by our external sense faculties:

‘perception’ is most properly applied to the evidence that our senses give us concerning external objects. But as this is a very clear and compelling kind of evidence, the word ‘perception’ is often applied by analogy to the evidence of reason, or of testimony when it is clear and compelling. But this way of talking is analogical and loose. The perception of external objects through our senses is a very special and individual operation of the mind, and ought to have a name to itself. And in all languages it has. I don’t know of any English word more suitable for expressing this act of the mind than ‘perception’. ‘Seeing’, ‘hearing’, ‘smelling’, ‘tasting’ and ‘touching’ or ‘feeling’ are words that express the operations associated with each sense; ‘perceiving’ expresses what they all have in common. (*EIP* 1.1, p.17)

This passage from *IPM* expresses Reid’s intent to avoid using terms ambiguously. Accordingly, Reid states that he uses ‘perception’ to refer to “the evidence that our senses give us concerning external objects”. Reid does not want to say we perceive mathematical axioms or other propositions one typically knows by way of *a priori* reasoning or intuition. Accordingly, as the above passage suggests, Reid’s notion of perception is strictly confined to external sense perception. That Reid intends to be careful in how he uses terms is further supported by his claim that “there is no greater impediment to the advancement of knowledge than the ambiguity of words” (*EIP* 1.1, p.17).

However, one might maintain that Reid's notion of 'perception', as stated in *EIP*, is distinct from how he uses it in *EAP*. Accordingly, while in *EIP*, Reid thinks 'perception' is an act performed by our external sense faculties, in *EAP*, Reid uses he 'perception' in a different sense: in *EAP*, Reid thinks moral perception is a kind of mind's eye perception (e.g., what happens when we see that, say, the Yankees are in first place); accordingly, when Reid says that we 'perceive' moral facts, he really means that we intuit or grasp such facts. The upshot is that, in *EAP*, Reid may be using two notions of how we might perceive some facts: (1) Regarding our external sense faculties, we perceive various colors, smells, or mind-external material objects; (2) on the other hand, regarding our non-external sense faculties (such as reason or intuition), we perceive various mathematical, logical, and even moral facts—in this second sense, 'perceive' is used only metaphorically or figuratively.

However, I have my doubts that, when it comes to moral perception, he does not think we externally perceive moral facts. First, as mentioned above, there are several passages where Reid thinks the moral sense is at least analogous to our external sense faculties. For example, he claims that in so far as we are justified in believing the immediate testimony of our external sense faculties, so we are justified in believing the immediate testimony of our moral sense faculty. So Reid maintains that moral perception functions like external sense perception. Second, if Reid thought our moral sense was strictly a faculty of intuition (or at least some non-external sense faculty), why did he not say so? If the moral sense was strictly a faculty that gave us knowledge by way of intuition or reason, then why did Reid not simply say moral perception was analogous to external sense perception? As such, the fact that he claims the moral sense is analogous to

our external faculties is reason to doubt that the moral sense is strictly a faculty of reason or intuition.

I grant that this response does not completely demonstrate that Reid's moral sense is an external-sense faculty. Nonetheless, I believe these responses are strong enough to motivate the doubt that Reid thinks the moral sense is strictly a faculty of intuition. However, for now, I will assume that one can plausibly maintain that Reid thinks the moral sense may be interpreted as being an external-sense faculty. In chapter 4, where I discuss objections to my interpretation at length, I consider and respond to a stronger version of this objection. According to the stronger objection, given Reid's own account of external sense perception, moral perception could not be a genuine instance of external sense perception. While I think this stronger objection fails, I will not discuss it now.

Thus far, I have presented textual evidence supporting two different readings of Reid's moral epistemology. On the one hand, there is textual evidence suggesting that Reid is a moral intuitionist; on this view, at least some of the basic, foundational moral knowledge is obtained by intuition. On the other, there is textual evidence that Reid is a moral perceptionist (where moral 'perceptionist' is a truncated form of the claim that 'some moral knowledge is obtained via external sense perception'). At this point, I think we are in a position to evaluate what kind of moral epistemology Reid endorses. I think there are four positions one can take on this matter. I will ultimately argue for the view that Reid may think we obtain basic, foundational moral knowledge in two ways: (1) through moral intuition and (2) through moral perception. I call this interpretation the Multiple-Process View, but before getting to this interpretation, I consider and reject three other possible interpretations. It is to these interpretations this chapter now turns.

4. Which Moral Epistemology Does Reid Endorse?

4.1 Reid as strictly being a moral intuitionist

I now consider the interpretation that Reid's moral epistemology is strictly a form of moral intuitionism. Again, in this chapter I will not attempt to classify what kind of moral intuitionism Reid may accept. This issue will be discussed in Chapter 4. Nonetheless, I understand moral intuitionism as (at least broadly speaking) the view that some moral beliefs are intuited, and some of these beliefs provide the set of basic, foundational moral knowledge from which all other moral knowledge is ultimately inferred or derived. Moreover, such intuited beliefs are known immediately in so far as they are not inferred from other beliefs one knows. I now consider the view that Reid thinks all foundational moral knowledge is obtained by way of moral intuitionism.

According to (what I call) the Strict Intuitionist View, some basic, foundational moral knowledge is obtained through moral intuition, and all other moral knowledge is derived from this set of basic moral knowledge. As previously mentioned, there is substantial textual evidence supporting this view. To quickly recap such evidence, Reid frequently identifies the moral sense (the faculty by which we obtain moral knowledge) as being the same thing as one's conscience. A conscience, as I understand it, is simply a faculty that suggests (or shows) to the individual moral rightness, moral wrongness, and other aspects of morality (e.g., duty, obligation, virtue, etc.). If a faculty of intuition is simply a faculty that suggests what is right or wrong, then it is not much of a stretch to claim Reid think one's conscience at least functions the same way as one's intuitions. For one's conscience to suggest that X is wrong seems to be the same as saying one has an intuition that X is wrong.

However, I maintain that the Strict Intuitionist View is implausible. My primary concern with this view is that it must ignore passages where the moral sense is described as being similar to the external senses. As already stated, there are several passages where Reid claims the moral sense is analogous to an external sense faculty; moreover, he frequently mentions that we perceive moral facts. My claim is that it would be strange for Reid to make such claims if he had no intention of treating the moral sense as being something like an external-sense faculty. Accordingly, we can either (a) take Reid at his word or (b) come up with some plausible reason why Reid does not think the moral sense is an external sense faculty. (b) Has already been discussed in the previous section, but I will now quickly summarize it.

Recall, one could maintain that Reid uses two distinct senses of 'perception'. One such sense refers to instances where one 'perceives' some mind-external object or quality by way of some external sense faculty, such as vision or hearing. For instance, by our faculty of sight, we perceive that grass is green or by our auditory faculty we perceive the sound of a horse-drawn carriage. However, Reid may also use a second sense of 'perception'. According to this other notion, 'perception' is used in a metaphorical sense. One perceives moral reality in a manner similar to how a blind person "sees" that Trump is ahead in the polls or a mathematician "perceives" an axiom's truth

In which case, when Reid says we perceive moral facts, he uses the metaphorical sense of 'perception'. On such an interpretation, Reid may think there is an analogy between external sense perception and moral intuition: and the analogy is just that both involve seeming states (a state where some proposition seems to be true). Accordingly, in external sense perception, it may perceptually seem to the perceiver that grass is green;

while in moral intuition, it might intellectually seem to the individual that some action is right, wrong etc. Nonetheless, the only similarity is that both types of belief-forming processes involve seeming states.

I already argued that I think Reid does not have two different senses of 'perception'. But to recap my position, first recall the following passage from *EIP1.1*, p.17):

'perception' is most properly applied to the evidence that our senses give us concerning external objects. But as this is a very clear and compelling kind of evidence, the word 'perception' is often applied by analogy to the evidence of reason, or of testimony when it is clear and compelling. But this way of talking is analogical and loose. The perception of external objects through our senses is a very special and individual operation of the mind, and ought to have a name to itself. And in all languages it has. I don't know of any English word more suitable for expressing this act of the mind than 'perception'. 'Seeing', 'hearing', 'smelling', 'tasting' and 'touching' or 'feeling' are words that express the operations associated with each sense; 'perceiving' expresses what they all have in common.

In this passage, Reid stresses that 'perception' strictly applies to perception of objects or qualities by one's external sense faculties. So while some philosophers might use 'perception' metaphorically, Reid does not use 'perception' in this sense. To avoid ambiguity, he stresses that he uses only one sense of 'perception'. The upshot is that the Strict Intuitionist View is problematic since it relies on Reid having two distinct notions of 'perception'.

Now an advocate of the Strict Intuitionist View could maintain that while Reid uses a single notion of 'perception' in *IPM*, he uses two notions of 'perception' in *EAP*. Accordingly, in *EAP*, when Reid claims we perceive moral facts, he does not think such perception is analogous or similar to external sense perception. Instead, Reid uses the 'metaphorical' sense of perception. Again, I grant that Reid possibly uses two distinct notions of 'perception' in *EAP*. However, I think this move by the advocate of the Strict

Intuitionist View is problematic.

To see the problem, first consider passages where Reid claims the moral sense is the same thing as one's conscience; as previously stated, such passages support the Strict Intuitionist View. Furthermore, for the Strict Intuitionist View to be plausible, it must interpret any passage where Reid says we perceive moral facts as instances where Reid uses 'perception' in its metaphorical sense.

Now the problem is that if the proponent of the Strict Intuitionist View thinks Reid uses 'perception' in the metaphorical sense, it becomes vulnerable to the following worry: similar to how one thinks Reid sometimes uses 'perception' metaphorically, 'one can also maintain that Reid is being ambiguous or vague when he says the moral sense is the same thing as one's conscience. Accordingly, one could maintain that in *EAP*, Reid uses two different senses of 'conscience', or at least he does not always use 'conscience' to refer to the state where one intuits moral reality.⁵⁶ The worry, then, is that on the same grounds that the Strict Intuitionist View says Reid uses two distinct senses of 'perception', we can claim that Reid uses two distinct senses of 'conscience'. One could press that in any passage where Reid thinks we obtain moral knowledge by our conscience, Reid uses 'conscience' in a metaphorical sense; he does not literally mean that by our conscience we come to know right and wrong (or intuit right and wrong). Perhaps the following passage is evidence in support of such a view:

by an original power of the mind, which we call conscience, or the moral faculty, we have the conceptions of right and wrong in human conduct, of merit and demerit, of duty and moral obligation, and our other moral conceptions; and that, by the same faculty, we *perceive* some things in human conduct to be right, and others to be wrong; that the first principles of morals are the dictates of this faculty; and that we have the same reason to rely upon those dictates, as upon the determinations of

⁵⁶ I owe Peter Markie for bringing this point to my attention.

our senses, or of our other natural faculties. (*EAP*, 3.3.6, p. 180)

Here, Reid starts by saying that we gain moral knowledge by our conscience; so far, it sounds like Reid thinks we intuit moral reality. However, further in the passage Reid maintains that we perceive moral knowledge, and so it seems Reid thinks we perceive moral reality. The worry is that Reid is at best ambiguous about how we obtain moral knowledge.⁵⁷

As such, the worry is that, for all we know, when Reid says the moral sense is just one's conscience, Reid could mean something like the following: 'conscience' is just a term used to explain what happens in moral perception (where moral perception is a type of external-sense perception): in moral perception, we see that some action is morally wrong or right; 'conscience' just refers to the state of seeing that some action is right or wrong, good or bad, etc. Reid, then, may have two notions of 'conscience'; or at least one could maintain that when he uses the term 'conscience' he is not referring to some state where we intuit some moral truth.

So while an advocate of the Strict Intuitionist View would maintain that Reid uses two senses of 'perception', an opponent could argue that Reid has two uses of 'conscience'—or at least when Reid uses 'conscience', he does not mean we intuit moral reality. In sum, given the passages that strongly suggest Reid thinks we obtain moral knowledge by perceptual experience and given passages where the moral sense is depicted as being analogous to an external sense faculty, the proponent of the Strict Intuitionist View owes us a story about why Reid has two distinct notions of 'perception'

⁵⁷ Note, one could possibly use this passage to support the view that Reid uses two different senses of 'perceive'. On the one hand, we perceive things by our external sense faculties. On the other, 'perceive' is used metaphorically in instances where Reid says we perceive moral reality.

but only one notion of 'conscience'. Without such a story, it seems the Strict Intuitionist View is implausible (or at least it is being arbitrary). Having discussed reasons for and against the Strict Intuitionist View, I now proceed to discuss reasons for and against what I call the Strict Perceptionist View.⁵⁸

4.2 Reid as strictly being a moral perceptionist

Having shown that the Strict Intuitionist View is false, I now proceed to explain what I call the Strict Perceptionist View. According to this interpretation, Reid is not a moral intuitionist; instead, he commits to the view that the moral sense is an external-sense faculty; or at least this interpretation maintains that strictly by external sense perception, we obtain various moral beliefs. Some of these beliefs are basic and foundational, and we ultimately infer or derive other moral beliefs from these basic, foundational beliefs. As mentioned above, motivation for this interpretation come

whatever is immediately *perceived* to be just, honest, and honorable, in human conduct, carries moral obligation along with it, and the contrary carries demerit and blame; and from those moral obligations that are immediately perceived, all other moral obligations must be deduced by reason. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p. 179)

and

by the same faculty, we *perceive* some things in human conduct to be right, and others to be wrong; that the first principles of morals are the dictates of this faculty; and that we have the same reason to rely upon those dictates, as upon the determinations of our senses, or of our other natural faculties. (*EAP*, 3.3.6, p. 180)

These passages suggest that we perceive moral truths immediately (or non-inferentially); moreover, the second passage claims that the first principles are known by way of this faculty. Such passages point in favor of understanding Reid as (what I call) a moral

⁵⁸ In Chapter 5, I grant for sake of argument that the textual evidence best supports interpreting Reid as a moral intuitionist. Here, I respond to this argument by saying that Reid has the resources at his disposal, so to speak, to present an account of moral perception.

perceptionist. As far as I am aware, no philosopher interprets Reid as strictly being a moral perceptionist, with Kroeker (2010) and Thorpe (2015) being possible exceptions. To be fair, it is not clear whether Kroeker or Thorpe think Reid is strictly a moral perceptionist. However, since the strict perceptionist interpretation is an option, I discuss it and try to motivate why one might accept it. Accordingly, Kroeker at times writes as if knowledge of general moral axioms (including moral first principles) and particular moral propositions is obtained by way of moral perception. I take her interpretation to be supported by the many passages where Reid says we perceive aspects of moral reality and describes moral perception as functioning similarly to ordinary external sense perception. Accordingly, Kroeker writes that,

certain moral axioms are first principles of action that are not deduced from abstract truths. They are neither the fruit of sensation nor of reflection but of common sense. However, he [(Reid)] points out that in order to perceive the truth of these axioms, one's moral faculty must first grow to maturity....

[Moreover, it] is...therefore possible to perceive right and wrong before perceiving the truth of self-evident axioms. (62-63)

Here, it seems Kroeker is maintaining that, according to Reid, we not only perceive the wrongness or rightness of a particular action (e.g. the wrongness of the hoodlums action of lighting a cat on fire) but we also perceive the truth of first principles, which I take to be general moral axioms (why I think such principles are general moral axioms will be explained in chapter 3). Here, Kroeker could plausibly be read as maintaining two distinct claims. First, she could be maintaining that we perceive the truth of first principle (which, as I show in chapter 3, constitute the set of basic, foundational moral principles) and other particular moral truths; on such a reading, she does not think Reid claims that we obtain moral knowledge by way of intuition. Or, second, she could leave it open

whether such basic or foundational moral first principles can be known by either intuition or perception. This second reading is supported by the following passage:

a [mature] person...has moral knowledge by reflecting on moral axioms, but this person also knows or believes that certain persons or actions are virtuous or vicious by perceiving such qualities. As adults, however, our moral knowledge is received from perception and from the knowledge of general axioms...and also from other sources like testimony, all working together. (63)

In this passage, it seems Kroeker is open to the possibility that some moral knowledge (even knowledge of general axioms) can be obtained by processes other than perception. Ultimately, I leave it open whether Kroeker thinks all Reidian moral knowledge is obtained by perception or from deductions or inferences made from beliefs formed by way of perception. Nonetheless, I discuss her view in order to show how one might argue for the interpretation that Reid is strictly a moral perceptionist.

Kroeker's interpretation aside, Thorpe is also ambiguous about whether he thinks all Reidian moral knowledge is obtained by perception (and from inferences from beliefs obtained by perception). He writes that:

Reid often talks of "perceiving" duties...it seems clear to be that when Reid talks of "perceiving" an obligation or duty, Reid is using his words carefully and means what he says. (101)

While Thorpe thinks that, according to Reid, one literally perceives rightness, wrongness, duty, or obligation, it is not clear whether he thinks we perceive the truth of various general axioms such as moral first principles. Accordingly, I do not want to put words in Thorpe's mouth, and so will leave it open whether he thinks moral knowledge might also be obtained by other processes like intuition.

However, regardless of whether any philosopher thinks Reid is strictly a moral perceptionist, I think there are two problems with the Strict Perceptionist account. The first problem is the same that faced the Strict Intuitionist View. Consider the frequent

passages where Reid says one's conscience is the same thing as one's moral sense. I claimed that a conscience is typically understood to be a faculty by which one intuits moral reality; for I claimed that to say one's conscience suggests (or shows or presents) that some action X is right or wrong is no different than to say that one has an intuition that X is right or wrong. The problem is that, for the Strict Perceptionist View to be plausible, it must explain why such passages do not support the view that Reid is a moral intuitionist. Accordingly, the Strict Perceptionist View must maintain that, every time Reid mentions that the moral sense is the same thing as one's conscience, he does not think 'conscience' refers to a faculty that intuits moral reality. As I will now show, I think such an interpretative strategy is implausible.

Such an interpretative strategy must maintain that Reid uses multiple meanings of conscience. 'Conscience' is standardly used as a faculty by which we intuit moral reality; however, to make the Strict Perceptionist View work, one must maintain that 'conscience' refers to some external sense faculty; accordingly, one must maintain that 'conscience' refers to the state where (or what happens when) someone judges that some action is right or wrong (etc.) during a perceptual experience. However, I think it is implausible that Reid has any such usage of 'conscience' in mind; at least, the onus is on the advocate of the Strict Perceptionist View to show the reader that Reid thinks one's conscience is an external belief-forming faculty. The worry is that maintaining that Reid uses multiple senses of 'conscience' only courts confusion: at any time, how do we know which sense of 'conscience' (or any technical term, for that matter) Reid has in mind?

Furthermore, leaving aside difficulties with interpreting 'conscience' as an external-sense faculty, a philosophical worry arises for the Strict Perceptionist View. I

assume Reid thinks there are particular moral propositions (e.g., Jones should not steal from Smith) and general moral propositions (e.g., stealing is wrong), and that we believe some of these propositions inferentially (or immediately) and others non-inferentially. The true propositions we believe immediately (in so far as they are self-evident) constitute the set of basic, foundational moral principles (I will explain Reid's account of such principles and what he means by 'self-evident' in chapter 3). Here, my concern is about the content of one's moral perceptions. Now I think the representational content (how something appears, feels, smells, tastes, or sounds to the individual) of a moral perception can either be a general moral proposition or a particular moral proposition. A general moral proposition might look like the following: we should not steal.⁵⁹ The content of this proposition is general. In contrast, a particular moral proposition might be something like the following: Smith should not steal from Jones. The importance of this distinction will appear shortly.

Now suppose Reid is a moral perceptionist, which is the view that we sometimes obtain moral knowledge directly by way of external sense experience. It seems plausible that the content of one's moral perception could be a moral proposition that is particular in structure. For instance, consider Harman's (1977) case where someone approaches a group of hoodlums pouring gasoline on a cat, and that individual perceives (instead of inferring) the wrongness of their action. This would seem to be a moral perception. Moreover, the content of this moral perception might be 'the hoodlum's action is morally

⁵⁹ Maybe it is better to describe such contents as containing general moral principles rather than general moral propositions. However, for the purposes of this section, I see nothing problematic in describing the contents of perceptions or intuitions as containing general moral propositions, and so I will use such terminology. But maybe a better way to put the idea is to say that general moral propositions express general moral principles, and particular moral propositions express particular moral claims.

wrong', which is a particular moral proposition.

However, I think it is implausible that a general moral proposition could be the content of one's moral perception. To see why, consider again Harman's case where some hoodlums are attempting to set a cat on fire. If there are moral perceptions, it seems plausible that the content of the moral perception would be a particular moral proposition. What seems implausible is that the content of this perception is a general moral principle like 'it is wrong to torture sentient creatures for fun'. One might infer this general moral principle after doing some reflection. But it seems strange to say that the content of a particular perception could be a general proposition.

The problem, then, is as follows: suppose we take Reid as thinking that we immediately know some general moral propositions, and that some such propositions constitute basic or foundational first principles (what makes a first principle a first principle will be discussed in Chapter 3). Now also suppose that Reid is strictly a moral perceptionist. If so, his view faces the counterintuitive consequence that we can immediately perceive general moral principles. Such an interpretation has this consequence because, according to the Strict Perceptionist View, moral perception is the only source of basic, foundational moral knowledge, and so it can be the only source of general moral first principles. Reid might accept this implication, but I think the view is counterintuitive, and if there is an interpretation under which Reid's moral epistemology is more plausible, then we should interpret Reid as such (so long, of course, such an interpretation accurately reflects what Reid says).

Before considering the third interpretive strategy let me point out that it does not seem strange (at least to me) that we might intuit some general moral propositions like 'it

is wrong to torture animals for fun' or that 'we should perform acts that bring about the most happiness in the world'. It seems plausible that such propositions could be intuited. The upshot is that Reid's view is more plausible if we interpret him as claiming we intuit, rather than perceive, general moral propositions.

In this section, I have considered the Strict Perceptionist View and provided two reasons to reject it. The first reason was that this interpretation must either ignore or explain away passages where Reid says the moral sense is the same thing as one's conscience. I was skeptical that such a project could either succeed or be plausible. The second reason is that the Strict Perceptionist View has the implication that we immediately perceive general moral propositions. I claimed that such a view is counterintuitive, and that we should hold out for a more philosophically plausible interpretation of Reid.

4.3 Reid as being neither a moral intuitionist nor a moral perceptionist

So far, I have provided reasons for not interpreting Reid as either being strictly a moral intuitionist or being strictly a moral perceptionist. I now consider the interpretation that Reid is neither an intuitionist nor a moral perceptionist. To me, it is not clear how such an interpretation would go, nor is it clear any philosopher accepts this interpretation of Reid. However, perhaps Copenhaver (2014) has such a view in mind when she says that:

Is Reid's moral faculty a faculty of sense? Is moral experience perceptual? The best answer to these questions is that the moral faculty is a basic representational faculty, independent of—but on par with—such other basic representational faculties as the external sense and the internal sense of taste. (98)

Here, Copenhaver seems to be saying that the moral sense is similar to the external sense faculties as well as the internal faculties (a faculty that enables us to arrive at knowledge

independently from external-sense perception). Yet she is hesitant to say that it falls under either of these faculties. She seems to be taking the modest interpretation that the moral sense is only similar or analogous to these types of faculties (or, at least that the processes through which we obtain moral knowledge is analogous to how we obtain knowledge of other non-moral facts). But in what respects is the moral sense analogous to the external senses? I speculate that there are at least three such similarities. (1) both are what Copenhaver (2014) calls representational; (2) both are reliable or trustworthy; and (3) both function the same way.

Regarding (1), both the external faculties and moral faculty represent the world as being a certain way; for instance, our visual faculty represents various mind-independent qualities and objects; similarly, our moral faculty represents aspects of moral reality (e.g., right and wrong, virtue and vice etc.) (98). Also (2), both are reliable belief-forming faculties whose representations we can trust as accurate: just as we are justified in trusting the testimony (or how the faculty represents the mind-external world) of our external faculties, so we are justified in trusting the testimony of our moral sense. Reid says as much when he says that we are equally justified in believing the testimony of either faculty.⁶⁰

Finally (3), both types of faculties function the same way: during one's perceptual experience, one becomes aware of various signs (or indicators of some quality or object), and such signs cause or evoke immediate conceptions of qualities or objects and an

⁶⁰ As Reid states,

we *perceive* some things in human conduct to be right, and others to be wrong; that the first principles of morals are the dictates of this faculty; and that we have the same reason to rely upon those dictates, as upon the determinations of our senses, or of our other natural faculties. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p. 180)

immediate belief/judgment that such qualities or objects exist in one's environment.⁶¹ For example, in color perception, the signs are red sensations. Upon experiencing these red sensations, one then has a conception of red and believes/judges that this red quality exists. Similarly, for Reid, someone's behavior, facial expression, or tone of voice are signs or indicators of moral reality.⁶² Upon becoming aware of such signs, one then has an immediate conception of rightness or wrongness (virtue or vice etc.) and forms an immediate judgment/belief that, say, some individual is virtuous or that some action is morally wrong. In sum, both external perception and moral perception follow the same format: we first become aware of a sign, which causes or evokes both an immediate conception and belief/judgment (Cuneo, 2003).

Why, if we grant that the moral sense shares important similarities to the external sense faculties, should we not go farther and say that the moral sense is an external sense faculty? I think the strongest motivation for accepting the weaker claim is that Reid is writing in the 18th century, and the terms he uses and the views he holds may be vastly different than the terms we use and the views we hold nowadays. Accordingly, we cannot with any confidence be certain that when Reid talks about moral perception, he is using 'perceive' in a sense used by modern-day philosophers. So at best, we can say that there may be strong analogies between Reidian moral perception and external sense perception,

⁶¹ For a brief description of Reid's account of perception, I direct the reader to the introductory chapter. For a more thorough description of Reid's account of perception, I direct the reader to chapter 4.

⁶² According to Reid,

A man's wisdom is known to us only by the signs of it in his conduct; his eloquence by the signs of it in his speech. In the same manner we judge of his virtue, of his fortitude, and of all his talents and qualities of mind. Yet it is to be observed, that we judge of men's talents with as little doubt or hesitation as we judge of the immediate objects of sense....(*EIP* 6.6, p.503-504)

but we cannot make the stronger claim that moral perception is external sense perception for Reid.

So, as the concern goes, the important point is that even though the moral sense shares these similarities with the external senses, it does not imply that the moral sense is an external sense faculty. The moral sense is merely analogous or similar to the external sense faculties. Similarly, one might maintain that the moral sense is also analogous or similar to non-external sense faculties. I am admittedly not sure how the moral sense is analogous to such faculties, so again I can only speculate as to how they might be similar: One similarity might simply be that both are not external sense faculties. Moreover, one might interpret Reid as saying that one's conscience plays a role similar to that of moral intuitions (e.g., both seem to suggest that certain moral propositions are true), but still hesitate to say that Reid is a moral intuitionist.

To recap, the third interpretation rejects the view that Reid is either a moral perceptionist or moral intuitionist; in interpreting Reid's moral epistemology, it takes a modest approach: the moral sense is only analogous or similar to the external sense faculties and internal sense faculties (e.g., a faculty by which we intuit various truths). However, as I will now show, I think such an interpretation is problematic in at least two ways.

First, it seems to imply that Reid's moral epistemology is mysterious: for if the moral faculty is not an external-sense faculty and if it is not a faculty by which we intuit moral truths, then what is it? On the one hand, it is not a faculty that gives us knowledge by perceptual experience; on the other, it is not a faculty that gives us knowledge by way of rational intuition or physical intuition. Thus far, I have left it open which moral

epistemology Reid accepts; this has particularly been the case for my treatment of intuition, where I have broadly construed an intuition as simply being a seeming state that expresses a moral or evaluative proposition. In which case, the worry is that if we cannot classify Reid's moral epistemology under any category, how do we go about evaluating it? How can we assess whether his moral epistemology is plausible or sound if we cannot say what moral epistemology Reid endorses? While we do not want to wrongly classify Reid's views, I think it is much worse to commit to an interpretation where Reid's views are mysterious.

Second, I am not sure Reid would be unfamiliar with a moral intuitionist epistemology, and so it may be too quick to assume Reid would not recognize or accept such a view. For instance, Reid's contemporary, Richard Price (1758), seems to endorse a form of moral intuitionism very similar to some contemporary accounts, particularly Huemer's (2005). Price thinks that there are some self-evident moral propositions; these are known by what he calls immediate apprehension of the intellect. Such apprehension occurs when, as worded by Stratton-Lake (2009), "we apprehend self-evident truths, general and abstract ideas, 'and anything else we may discover, without making any use of any process of reasoning'". The notion that we immediately (or non-inferentially) apprehend some self-evident moral propositions sounds similar to the moral intuitionist's claim that we immediately know some basic, foundational moral principles by way of intuition. I do not claim that Price's and Reid's moral intuitionism are the same. I merely bring the matter up to illustrate the notion that moral intuitionism was not a position alien to Reid's time. The upshot is that Reid may have been in a position to either understand or endorse some version of moral intuitionism.

Ultimately, I think we have good reason to reject the view that Reid is neither a moral intuitionist nor a moral perceptionist. For such an interpretation makes Reid's moral epistemology mysterious, and I do not think moral intuitionism would be unfamiliar to Reid (he and his contemporaries may not have called it moral intuitionism, but the view seems to be on the table, so to speak). In the next section, I proceed to explain why I think the fourth interpretation is the most plausible.

4.4 Reid as being both a moral intuitionist and a moral perceptionist

Having explained why I think the first three interpretations are false, I now argue for why I think my interpretation is the most plausible. According to this interpretation (what I call the Multiple-Process View), we can understand Reid's as possibly committing to two distinct ways of obtaining basic, foundational moral knowledge. First, we can understand the moral sense as being the same thing as one's conscience; in the above-mentioned passages, Reid says as much. I have argued that a conscience is something that suggests (or shows or presents) to an individual that some action is right, wrong, one's duty, virtuous etc. Moreover, to say one's conscience suggests (or shows or presents) some action as being, say, morally right is not much different than saying that one has an intuition that some action is morally right. In sum, we can understand the moral faculty as that which gives us moral knowledge by way of intuition.

Second, we can also interpret Reid as claiming that we acquire basic, foundational moral knowledge through external sense experience. Again, as mentioned above, Reid says that the moral sense functions similarly to our external sense faculties. Moreover, as already stated, there are passages where Reid says we perceive moral facts, and that perception of such facts is similar to one's perception of various higher-order properties

(e.g., one's intelligence or wit). In sum, it is possible that Reid also thinks we obtain moral knowledge by way of external sense perception.

Before explaining why I think this interpretation is the most plausible, let me pause to better clarify how I understand the moral sense. I do not want to characterize the moral sense (or moral faculty) as a hybrid faculty, one that provides us with knowledge either by intuition or external-sense perception. Such a characterization makes this faculty seem strange: It is hard to imagine one single faculty that helps us obtain moral knowledge in two very distinct ways. Instead, I understand the moral sense as a term that Reid uses broadly to refer to different ways one might obtain moral knowledge. On the one hand, the moral sense is a faculty by which we intuit moral reality; on the other, the moral sense could be a faculty by which we perceive moral reality. To put the idea more generally, I think Reid may think we obtain basic, foundational moral knowledge by two distinct ways or processes (or at least, there is a plausible interpretation that he thinks we obtain such knowledge through two distinct processes). I think this account makes the moral sense seem less strange. However, for purposes of flow, I refer to this interpretation as the Multiple-Process View, as it is less wordy than saying "the view where we can obtain moral knowledge in either of two ways or processes".

Now the main advantage of the Multiple-Process View is that it avoids the problems faced by the other three interpretations. Consider the Strict Intuitionist View: The primary problem with this interpretation is it must ignore or explain away passages where either Reid says we perceive moral reality or that suggest moral perception is similar to external sense perception. Accordingly, this interpretation must claim that Reid uses 'perception' in two different senses: there is external sense perception, and then

there is moral perception, which is a type of mind's-eye perception. This move is problematic because (a) Reid stipulates that he uses only one sense of perception; (b) if we claim that Reid uses two senses of 'perception', then how do we know Reid does not have multiple senses of other technical terms, such as 'conscience'?

The advantage of the Multiple-Process View is that such problems are avoided: the Multiple-Process View proponent neither has to ignore various passages nor face the difficult task of explaining away various passages. On this interpretation, we can take Reid at his word when he says we perceive moral reality, and that such perception functions the same way as external sense perception.

Furthermore, the Multiple-Process View avoids the pitfalls of the Strict Perceptionist View. The Strict Perceptionist View faced two problems: First, it has to ignore or explain away passages where Reid says the moral faculty is the same thing as one's conscience. I am skeptical such a project could succeed, largely because such an interpretation must treat Reid's notion of 'conscience' as being much different than the standard notion of 'conscience'. According to the standard notion, one's conscience seems to play the same role as intuitions: they both suggest (or present or show) to the individual that certain actions are morally right, wrong, virtuous, etc. The Strict Perceptionist View must claim that Reid's notion of 'conscience' is altogether different than this standard notion; or this interpretation must claim that Reid uses multiple senses of 'conscience'. As I argued earlier, I find either of these claims implausible.

The second problem is that it provides an implausible account concerning the representational contents of our moral propositions. I assume Reid thinks there are both true general and particular moral propositions, and that we know some of these

propositions immediately (non-inferentially). Now suppose Reid is strictly a moral perceptionist. If we have moral perceptions, then the content of such perceptions would have to be a general moral proposition. Now as I argued, it seems plausible that the content of a perceptual experience is a particular moral proposition; for instance, if I approach some hoodlums setting a cat on fire, I might see that their particular action is wrong. However, it seems odd and implausible that I immediately see general propositions like 'it is wrong to torture animals for fun'.

The Multiple-Process View avoids both of these problems. Regarding the first, we can take Reid at his word when he says the moral sense is the same thing as one's conscience; we are not burdened with having to either ignore or explain away such passages. The Multiple-Process View, moreover, avoids the second problem: it can maintain that we perceive particular moral propositions but intuit either particular or general moral propositions. Accordingly, although it is counterintuitive that we perceive general moral propositions, I think it is plausible that we intuit general moral propositions. For instance, I think we can know the Golden Rule or that 'torturing animals for fun is morally wrong' by way of intuition. In Chapter 4, I discuss at length how, according to the Multiple-Process View, we obtain knowledge of moral principles by intuition and perception. In which case, for now, I merely sketch out how the Multiple-Process View avoids this problem faced by the Strict Perceptionist View.

Finally, the Multiple-Process View avoids the problem faced by the interpretation that Reid is neither a moral intuitionist nor a moral perceptionist. Such a view maintains that Reid's moral epistemology does not clearly fit into any category, and it would be somehow inappropriate (or misguided) to place his view under any such category.

Earlier, I stated that if we claim that Reid is neither an intuitionist nor moral perceptionist, then his view seems mysterious: If we obtain moral knowledge neither by intuition nor external perception, then how does Reid think we obtain moral knowledge? The Multiple-Process View, however, has merit at least in virtue of attempting to make Reid's moral theory sound less mysterious.

Before proceeding, let me add that my interpretation can in principle take two forms. On the one hand, I am making the stronger claim that Reid can be interpreted as being both a moral intuitionist and moral perceptionist. On the other, I could weaken my interpretation and maintain that Reid's moral epistemology is unclear; yet despite such lack of clarity, there are elements in his philosophy that support reading him as being both a moral intuitionist and moral perceptionist. In which case, given Reid's various philosophical commitments and given with what he says about morality in general, the elements of an intuitionist or perceptionist moral epistemology are present. As such, even if I weaken my interpretation, I still think there is a plausible way to interpret Reid as being both a moral intuitionist and moral perceptionist.

There may be multiple objections one can raise against the Multiple-Process View. But I will not address them now; for it was merely my goal in this chapter to show why I thought the Multiple-Process View was more plausible than the other three interpretations. As I argued, I think the Multiple-Process View avoids each of the problems facing these interpretations; in virtue of avoiding such problems, I think it is the most plausible interpretation. In the next two chapters, I hope to elaborate on my interpretation of Reid's moral epistemology, and in doing so intend to both anticipate and

address some of these objections. I now proceed to delve deeper into Reid's moral epistemology by investigating his account of moral facts and moral first principles.

Chapter 3: Reidian Moral Facts and Reidian Moral First Principles

So far, I have argued that Reid's account of the moral sense is ambiguous: on the one hand, it could be a faculty that enables us to obtain moral knowledge by way of moral intuition; on the other, it could be a faculty that enables us to obtain moral knowledge through external sense perception. The upshot, I believe, is that we can plausibly interpret Reid as thinking we obtain moral knowledge in either of two ways: through moral intuition and through moral perception (I call this interpretation the Multiple-Process View). I now think it is important to discuss what kinds of facts by which the moral sense (in either way it is understood) gives us epistemic access; for one might press the following concern: Even if we understand what kind of faculty is the moral sense, it is still unclear how such a faculty is supposed to work: presumably, the moral sense is supposed to help us obtain knowledge of moral reality, yet the worry concerns how such a faculty does so. In which case, I think this mystery will be partly unraveled if we have in hand Reid's account of the nature of moral reality.

In this chapter, I explain what I think constitutes a true moral judgment for Reid as well as what constitutes a moral first principle. In the first section, I show that for Reid moral judgments are objectively true and non-natural. I also maintain that a feature of a Reidian moral first principle is that in addition to being objectively true and non-natural, they are also in some sense nomologically necessary. I claim that how we understand Reid's account of moral judgments (whether they are first principles or non-first principles) has important implications for how we understand Reid's moral epistemology as a whole. In section two, I argue for what I think constitutes a moral first principle for Reid. While I think moral first principles are necessarily true in something like a

nomological sense, I also argue that such first principles are in some sense self-evident. In what sense they are self-evident will be explained as well. In the third section, I provide Reid's list of moral first principles and note that Reid's list of moral first principles is problematic since it fails to provide any plausible standard for deciding what is morally right, wrong, etc. I suggest a solution to this problem. Finally, I close this chapter by discussing a way in which one might add to Reid's list of moral first principles.

1. The Nature of Moral Facts for Reid

First, I take Reid to be a moral realist and moral objectivist, where moral realism is defined as the view that there are true moral judgments⁶³ and moral objectivism as the view that moral judgments are true independently of one's beliefs, desires, or emotional responses; moral judgments, accordingly, are not true in virtue of being based on (or the product of) one's beliefs, desires, or emotional responses. I take Reid's motivation for adopting moral objectivism to be that he is trying to distance himself from Hume's moral sentimentalism,⁶⁴ which, broadly speaking, is the view that moral judgments are in some

⁶³ I take moral principles (e.g., that it is morally wrong for agents of type X to perform actions of type Y in circumstance C), if true, to be a type of moral fact. Moral principles are distinct from particular moral judgments (e.g., Smith should not have lied to Jones), albeit both if true are types of moral facts. I understand Reid as claiming that there are objectively true moral principles and objectively true particular or general moral judgments, and so I understand Reid as committing to the view that there are objective moral facts.

⁶⁴In the above passage, Reid is considering Hume's account of moral sentimentalism. There are many different versions of moral sentimentalism, and to my understanding, there is widespread debate concerning how to interpret Hume's account. Nonetheless, here is my attempt to provide the basic idea behind moral sentimentalism: Broadly construed, moral sentimentalists commits to the view that either moral judgments or moral facts (or perhaps both) are in some sense the product of or based on an individual's emotional responses to various situations. For instance, suppose Smith judges that X is wrong. According to moral sentimentalism (broadly construed), Smith makes this judgment because he felt some negative emotion or attitude towards X (e.g., perhaps disgust, disdain, or anger); or Smith might judge that X is wrong in virtue of the fact that he has a negative emotion or attitude towards X. As I understand Reid, he rejects moral

sense the product of or determined by one's sentiments or emotions. Reid's concern about the implications of moral sentimentalism is evident in the following passage, where, after presenting what he takes to be Hume's view,

If what we call moral judgment be no real judgment, but merely a feelings, it follows, that the principles of moral which we have been taught to consider as an immutable law to all intelligent beings, have no other foundation but an arbitrary structure and fabric in the constitution of the human mind: So that, by a change in our structure, what is immoral might become moral, virtue might be turned into vice, and vice into virtue. And beings of a different structure, according to the variety of their feelings, may have different, nay opposite, measure of moral good and evil. (*EAP* 5.5, p.361-362)

he stresses his commitment to moral objectivism:

...if moral judgment be a true and real judgment, the principles of morals stand on the immutable foundation of truth, and can undergo no change by any difference of fabric, or structure of those who judge of them. There may be, and there are, beings, who have not the faculty of conceiving moral truths, or perceiving the excellence of moral worth, as there are beings incapable of perceiving mathematical truths; but no defect, no error of understanding, can make what is true to be false. (*EAP* 5.7, p.362)

Here, Reid says moral judgments are "immutable" and neither determined nor based on the arbitrary structure and fabric in the constitution of the human mind; moral judgments are not made true or fashioned by what people believe or feel is right, wrong, etc.

sentimentalism largely because he is worried that it is not consistent with moral objectivism. For we can imagine someone else, call him Jones, who may feel a positive emotion or attitude towards X and then judge that X is morally right. The worry, then, is that if our moral judgments or if moral facts are in some sense the product of our emotions, and different people experience or have different emotional responses to the same actions or events, then it seems that moral facts and moral judgments would not be objective.

However, I should point out that Reid also indicates that emotions play a significant role in moral judgment. For as stated in the previous chapter, Reid maintains that we do not only make moral judgments but that we also experience certain emotions when we make such judgments. For instance, in the event we judge that someone has acted wrongly, we also experience a feeling of disapprobation towards that individual as well as a negative feeling (e.g., disgust) within ourselves. As indicated by Roeser (2001, 2009) and in discussions with Folescu, Reidian moral judgment is incomplete if the individual does not experience such feelings. Cuneo (2006) moreover points out that it is this emotional component of Reidian moral judgment that helps explain, at least for Reid, the link between moral judgments and the concomitant motivation to act in accordance with such judgments.

Moreover, like with mathematical truths ($2+2=4$) or scientific truths (e.g., water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit) moral judgments are true independently of whether people believe them. Given this textual evidence, it is difficult to say Reid is not a moral objectivist.⁶⁵

However, in addition to stating that moral first principles are objectively true and non-natural, Reid thinks moral first principles (the set of self-evident, foundational moral principles)⁶⁶ are necessarily true: In his discussion of first principles in general, Reid places moral first principles under the category of necessary truths.⁶⁷ Principle 5 of the first principles of necessary truths lists what Reid thinks are moral first principles; here the principles Reid lists include (1) an unjust action as more demerit than a just one; (2) a generous action has more merit than a merely just one; (3) that no man ought to be blamed for what it was not in his power to hinder; (4) that we ought not to do to others

⁶⁵ As indicated by Cuneo (2015) and Cohon (2008), it is likely that Reid has misinterpreted Hume. Reid seems to think Hume commits to a form of moral non-cognitivism, where moral judgments lack propositional content. As such, Reid appears to understand Hume as maintaining that moral judgments are not only based on one's moral sentiments, but that Hume also is a moral anti-realist. However, as pointed out by Cohon, there is strong textual support that Hume was neither a non-cognitivist nor anti-realist, but instead was a moral subjectivist (where moral subjectivism is the view that there are not objective but only subjective moral facts).

⁶⁶ Reid's notion of a moral first principle was briefly discussed in chapter 1, section 4. But to recap, the basic idea of a Reidian moral first principle is that it is (a) immediately or non-inferentially known and (b) in some sense self-evident. Which sense of self-evident Reid uses to characterize moral first principles will be discussed at length in the second section of this chapter.

⁶⁷ Reid divides first principles into first principles of contingent truths and first principles of necessary truths. I take the crucial difference between these types of principles to be the modal nature of the content of such principles. The first principles of contingent truths have contingent propositions as their contents, while the content of the first principles of necessary truths are necessary propositions. For instance, principle 7 of the first principles of contingent truths maintains that our belief-forming faculties are reliable and should be trusted. However, as indicated by Van Cleve (2001), there is a reading on which the dictates of our faculties (so to speak) are themselves first principles. For instance, some of our perceptual beliefs—although they have contingent propositions as their contents—count as first principles. As I understand Van Cleve, if, for instance, one believes certain perceptual beliefs immediately or non-inferentially, such beliefs or judgments count as first principles.

what we would think unjust or unfair to be done to us in like circumstances.⁶⁸ Moreover, as Reid states:

Some perhaps think that our determinations, either in matters of taste or in morals, ought not to be counted necessary truths: That they are grounded upon that faculty which we call taste, and of that which we call the moral sense or conscience; which faculties might have been constituted as to have given determinations different, or even contrary to those they now give.....

This indeed is a system, with regards to morals and taste, which hath been supported in modern times by great authorities. And if this system be true, the consequences must be, that there can be no principles, either of taste or morals, that are necessary truths....

What is true or false in morals, or in matters of taste, is necessarily so. For this reason, I have ranked the first principles of morals and of taste under the class of necessary truths. (*EIP* 6.6, p.495)

In these first two paragraphs, Reid explains his concern that if the moral sentimentalists (which, at least for Reid, consists of those who endorse the view that our moral judgments and beliefs are in some sense shaped or determined by our emotions, beliefs, and values) are right, then moral facts would not be necessarily true. Furthermore, in the last paragraph, Reid states that all moral principles are necessarily true. However, Reid does not specify whether such principles are necessarily true in either a strong sense (e.g., logical or metaphysical necessity) or in some weaker sense (e.g., nomological or physical necessity).⁶⁹

Yet if Reid's claim is that moral first principles are metaphysically necessary (and so necessary in all possible worlds), then Reid risks committing to some version of moral

⁶⁸ I do not take this list of moral first principles to be complete; for Reid in *EAP* provides at least 10 moral first principles and hints that the list may be even larger.

⁶⁹ By the strong sense of necessity, I mean that a proposition is necessarily true just in case it is true in all possible worlds. Candidates for such necessary truths include mathematical and logical propositions. By the weaker sense of necessity, I mean that a proposition is necessarily true relative to a particular set of conditions. Accordingly, whenever these conditions obtain, this proposition will be true. In worlds where these conditions do not obtain, this proposition may not be true.

absolutism, which is the view that certain moral propositions are true in all possible circumstances, and so one is morally obligated to act in accordance with them regardless of the circumstances. For example, suppose ‘you should never lie’ is a moral first principle (Reid never explicitly says it that it is, but as I will later show, we may have strong textual grounds for thinking he might include such a principle in his list of moral first principles). Now if this principle holds or applies absolutely, then it seems like it would be wrong to lie regardless of the circumstances. Yet this seems counterintuitive: for it seems permissible if not obligatory to lie if, for instance, doing so saves an innocent person’s life or brings about some other significant good.

However, in the next passage, Reid appears to reject the claim that all moral principles are necessarily true in a logical or metaphysical sense,

The propositions which I think are properly called moral, are those that affirm some moral obligation to be, or not to be incumbent on one or more individual persons. To such propositions, Mr. Locke’s reasoning does not apply, because the subjects of the propositions are not things whose real essence can be perfectly known. They are the creatures of God; their obligation results from the constitution which God has given them, and the circumstances in which he has placed them. That an individual has such a constitution and is placed in such circumstances, is not an abstract and necessary truth, but a contingent truth. It is a matter of fact, and therefore not capable of demonstrative evidence, which belongs only to necessary truths. (*EIP* 7.2, p.550-551)

In this passage, certain moral obligations obtain because of the type of constitution God has given humans and the circumstances in which he has placed them. This passage, however, leads to another worry: If Reid is not using the logical or metaphysical account of necessity when he describes moral principles or moral falsehoods as being necessarily so, then what account of necessity is he using? There may be multiple solutions to this worry, but I will focus on one proposed by Cuneo (2014). Cuneo’s suggestion is to draw a distinction between two kinds of necessity: absolute and relativized necessity, and he

claims only moral first principles are necessarily true in this relativized sense. According to Cuneo,

The key is to understand Reid as operating with two different notions of necessity that he does not explicitly distinguish. The first is that of absolute necessity, which includes all and only those propositions that are true 'no matter what'. Candidates for the absolutely necessary would be propositions such as 'all unmarried men are bachelors' and 'that nothing is red or green all over at once', since they are true but not relativized to any set of conditions. Relativized necessities, in contrast, are necessarily true but only relatively to a set of specified conditions. Candidates for the relatively necessary would be propositions such as 'water freezes at 0 degrees Celsius' and (more controversially) that 'Obama=Obama', since both are relatively true only relativized to certain conditions. (104)

Cuneo's move is to place moral first principles under the category of relativized necessities. Such principles are necessarily true, but only when a certain set of conditions obtain. Cuneo admits that Reid does not explicitly make such a distinction, but he nonetheless maintains that such a move shows how we might think of moral principles as being necessarily true, albeit in a weaker, non-metaphysical sense: moral principles apply or obtain only when certain conditions obtain.⁷⁰ Such conditions might include the existence of agents with a certain constitution (e.g., those that have rationality and free will) being placed in circumstances of a certain type (e.g., morally relevant situations).

However, the problem with Cuneo's solution is that his notion of relativized necessity seems too vague. For as he specifies relativized necessity, any metaphysically contingent fact could be relatively necessary. For instance, consider the metaphysically contingent proposition that Albany is the capital of New York. It seems we can give an account under which this proposition is relatively necessary. Accordingly, we can

⁷⁰ Accordingly, moral first principles are contingently true, since they are not true in all possible worlds—they are true in and only in worlds where certain conditions obtain. However, as I understand Cuneo, even though they are contingent, there is a sense in which such principles are necessary. While both moral first principles and other truths are contingent, there are still some contingent truths that are not necessary in the relative sense.

stipulate that, necessarily, if Albany is the capital of New York, then Albany is the capital of New York. Trivially, it seems, relative to any world where Albany is the capital of New York, Albany is the capital of New York. Or to use another example, the coffee mug being on my desk is a metaphysically contingent. However, the coffee mug on my desk being identical to the coffee mug on my desk (i.e., Phil's mug on desk=Phil's mug on desk) seems to be a necessary fact (though not metaphysically necessary since this mug does not exist in all possible worlds), albeit a trivial fact at that. And we can tell the same story for any metaphysically contingent proposition.

That said, Cuneo may be right to think that Reid thinks moral facts are necessary in a much weaker sense than metaphysical necessity. However, in what sense Reidian moral facts are necessary in this weaker sense just needs further elaboration. There may be multiple ways to expand on Cuneo's interpretation; I will suggest one and hope that it explains how moral facts might be necessary but in a distinctive, non-trivial way. The solution is that, possibly, some moral facts—particularly moral first principles—are nomologically necessary similar to how some philosophers think certain laws of nature (e.g., the fundamental physical laws of the universe) are nomologically necessary (e.g., Armstrong 1997).⁷¹

Here, I understand a nomologically necessary proposition to be one that must be true given the various physical nature of the universe. The idea is that certain laws of

⁷¹ I admit that referring to moral principles as being nomologically necessary may be a mistake, especially if we think that things like physical laws could only be nomologically necessary. Nonetheless, I refer to moral principles as being something like nomologically necessary propositions since I think it helps illustrate how they might be necessary in (1) a non-metaphysical sense and (2) distinctive, non-trivial way. Perhaps there is a better term than 'nomological' to account for how such principles might be necessary. In which case, I will gladly substitute 'nomological' for a term that more accurately or aptly captures the notion of necessity I am attempting to explain.

nature are necessarily true in this world, though they are not metaphysically necessary; for there are possible worlds where the physical nature of the universe is different such that the physical laws of this world would not obtain in these other worlds. Yet, in this world, such physical laws are nomologically necessary since, given the physical nature of the universe, it must be the case that certain physical facts obtain.

For example, that water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit and boils at 212 degrees might be examples of such laws; or perhaps laws about gravity, thermodynamics, and other physical facts like $E=MC^2$ constitute nomologically necessary propositions. In short, given the physical nature of the universe, it must be the case that these various laws obtain (though, in some circumstances, there might be conditions under which, say, water does not freeze at 32 degrees Fahrenheit). Furthermore, while these laws or forces might be nomologically necessary given the physical nature of the universe, other metaphysically contingent propositions would not be nomologically necessary. For it is hard to see how it must be the case that the mug being on my desk or that Albany is the capital of New York must obtain due to the physical nature of the universe. Such facts would at most be nomologically contingent.

Of course, I do not think moral principles are nomologically necessary in the same sense as physical laws or forces are nomologically necessary; nor am I confident that Reid has this notion of necessity in mind when he describes moral first principles as being necessary. However, maybe Reid could say that given facts about human nature (e.g., that humans are free, autonomous creatures capable of experiencing happiness and suffering), it must be the case that certain moral principles obtain. For instance, Reid might think that since humans are free autonomous creatures, then it is necessarily the

case (in a nomological sense since humans do not exist in all possible worlds) that it is wrong to lie to, steal from, or harm other autonomous free creatures. Furthermore, while facts about human nature make it the case that certain moral principles must obtain, such facts would not make it the case that other metaphysically contingent truths would obtain as well. Such contingent truths might be necessary in a trivially sense; yet such truths would not be nomologically necessary given facts about human nature. This has been an admittedly brief account of how moral first principles might be necessary in a sense weaker than metaphysically necessary, but it hopefully illustrates how such principles might be necessary in some distinctive or interesting sense.

Thinking of moral first principles as being something like nomologically necessary propositions has the advantage that such principles are not moral absolutes. Recall, the worry of thinking about moral principles as being metaphysically necessary is that such principles would have to hold or apply absolutely. For instance, if 'it is wrong to lie' is a moral first principle that is absolute, then it seems it would never be permissible or obligatory to lie. But this implication seems counterintuitive that it is never wrong to lie. However, if moral first principles are necessary in a weaker sense, then this counterintuitive result is avoided. For it at least leaves it open whether Reid thinks there are circumstances where it is morally permissible if not obligatory to lie. Accordingly, there may be circumstances or conditions that make it the case that lying is permissible or obligatory (similar to how, even in this world, there are circumstances where water neither freezes at 32 degrees nor boils at 212 degrees).⁷²

⁷² I thank Marina Folescu for providing helpful feedback concerning how to present this weaker notion of necessity in a clearer, more precise way.

Furthermore, understanding moral first principles as being necessarily true in a nomological sense fits well with Reid's criticism of Locke mentioned above (*EIP* 7.2). In this passage, Reid criticizes Locke's claim that moral facts are necessarily true in a stronger (e.g., metaphysical or logical) sense of necessity. For, again, according to the interpretation presented in this section, Reid is only committed to the view that moral first principles are, at most, nomologically necessary. Moreover, this understanding of moral first principles also preserves Reid's claim (also mentioned above, *EIP* 6.6) that moral first principles are necessarily true. For although they are only necessarily true in a weaker, nomological sense, they are nonetheless still necessarily true.

Leaving this issue about the modal status of moral first principles aside, I understand Reid as thinking of moral facts as being non-natural. According to moral non-naturalism, moral facts are non-natural if they are neither identical with nor reducible to various natural facts or properties in the world. Roughly put, I understand natural facts as those that are the proper domain of the natural sciences; they are facts we observe by our external senses (and instruments used to enhance our senses) and are what we investigate through disciplines like chemistry, psychology, biology, physics, etc.⁷³ As Ridge (2014) describes the view,

Most often, 'non-naturalism' denotes the metaphysical thesis that moral properties exist and are not identical with or reducible to any natural property or properties in some interesting sense of 'natural'.

Furthermore, the following passage suggests that Reid endorses some version of moral non-naturalism:

⁷³I grant that this definition of non-naturalism is quite vague. However, the debate over the difference between naturalism and non-naturalism is quite extensive, and I lack the time and space to provide a complete overview of the literature. Accordingly, I simply provide a quick definition in order to provide the reader with a rough and ready idea of what it means for a moral fact to be non-natural. Further, I do not think any of my arguments rest on having a crisp or precise account of moral non-naturalism, and so I will not investigate the issue much further.

There are many important branches of human knowledge, to which Sir Isaac Newton's rules of Philosophizing have no relation, and to which they can with no propriety be applied. Such are Morals, Jurisprudence, Natural Theology, and the abstract Sciences of Mathematics and Metaphysics; because in none of those Sciences do we investigate the physical laws of Nature. There is therefore no reason to regret that these branches of knowledge have been pursued without regard to them. (*AC*, p. 186)

Here, I understand Reid as claiming that moral facts (in addition to other kinds of facts—e.g., facts about math, theology, and metaphysics) are not the type of facts we can discover in the empirically observable world. Moreover, Reid claims that Newton's laws and theories strictly apply to the physical or empirical observable world, and so do not apply to moral facts. As such, we have good reason to think Reid is a moral non-naturalist.

I raise this issue of moral principles being non-natural moral facts for two reasons. First, it further distances Reid's view from Hume's moral sentimentalism: if moral facts are non-natural, then it is hard to see how they could be determined by, shaped by, or the product of one's (or a group's) beliefs, desires, or values. For if moral facts are non-natural, then it seems like they are neither in time nor space—at least, this is how mathematical or logical facts (which are perhaps arguable non-natural facts) are sometimes understood (e.g., Huemer 2005). If something exists outside of time and space, then it is difficult to see how it could be in any sense determined or shaped by one's beliefs, desires or values. At least, it seems like one has to bare some kind of causal relation between the object or quality one has shaped or created. However, it is not clear how such a causal relation could hold between something that exists in either time or space and something that neither exists in time nor space. I admit that such a relation is

possible, but I am nonetheless skeptical. The bottom-line is that if moral facts are non-natural—and so outside of space and time), then it is hard to see how they could be shaped or determined by someone's (or group's) beliefs, desires and values.⁷⁴

Second, I think Reid's moral non-naturalism has important implications for whether Reid thinks we perceive moral reality. Recall, I claimed that the moral sense may refer to a process by which we obtain moral knowledge through external sense perception (The Multiple-Process View). However, if moral principles are non-natural (they are not like scientific facts that are knowable through external sense experience), then it is not clear how we can know them directly through perceptual experience; for how can you perceive something that is not the sort of thing you can perceive through one's external sense faculties? This is a problem for my Multiple-Process View; nonetheless, I think we can understand Reid as having a plausible response to it (if of course, we can plausibly interpret Reid as claiming that we obtain moral knowledge in either of two ways). I address this issue in Chapter 4, where I respond to the objection that it is implausible that we externally perceive non-natural moral principles.

Before proceeding to the next section, let me recap the points covered in this section. So far, I have shown that Reid is a moral realist and moral objectivist. Moral principles and moral judgments, accordingly, are neither determined by, shaped by, nor the product of one's (or a group's) beliefs, desires, or values. Reid's moral objectivism is further supported by the fact that he thinks moral facts are non-natural; for in virtue of being non-natural, it is hard to see how moral principles can be determined by or the result of one's beliefs, desires, etc. Furthermore, moral first principles are necessarily

⁷⁴ I thank Marina Folescu for encouraging me to expand on this point in greater detail and precision.

true, albeit in a weaker, nomological sense. Accordingly, thinking of moral first principles as being nomologically necessary helps Reid avoid the counterintuitive implication that there are never instances where, for instance, it is either permissible or obligatory to lie, such as when lying would save an innocent person's life. With Reid's views about the nature of moral principles in hand, I now turn to the question of how to best interpret what makes a moral principle a first principle for Reid.

2. Moral First Principles

2.1 Moral first principles as being self-evident in the narrow sense

I understand Reid as claiming that moral facts can be divided into moral first principles and moral non-first principles, some of which include particular moral judgments. For Reid, the primary characteristic of a moral first principle is that it is self-evident and in some sense epistemically foundational or basic:⁷⁵

[it] was long ago demonstrated by Aristotle, that every proposition to which we give a rational assent, must either have its evidence in itself, or derive it from some antecedent proposition. And the same thing may be said of the antecedent proposition. As, therefore, we cannot go back to antecedent propositions without

⁷⁵ Now one might question why Reid thinks our belief in such principles are not only true but justified as well. I take Reid as being an epistemic foundationalist. Broadly construed, foundationalism is the view that some beliefs are self-justified, or at least not justified in virtue of being deduced or inferred from other justified beliefs. As Fumerton (2010) succinctly puts it, "the foundationalist's thesis in short is that all knowledge and justified belief rest ultimately on a foundation of noninferential knowledge or justified belief." Self-justified beliefs ultimately provide the foundation through which other non-self-justified beliefs are justified. In which case, for Reid, since moral first principles are those we believe immediately or non-inferentially, they would be self-justified propositions. The following passage is evidence that such principles are foundational for Reid:

In every branch of knowledge where disputes have been raised, it is useful to distinguish the first principles from the superstructure. They are the foundation on which the whole fabric of the science leans; and whatever is not supported by this foundation can have no stability. (*EAP* 5.1, p.369)

Moral first principles, accordingly, "are the foundation on which the whole structure of the [moral] science rests".

end, the evidence must at last rest upon propositions, one or more, which have their evidence in themselves, that is upon first principles. (*EIP* 6.7, p. 685)

There are other propositions which are no sooner understood than they are believed. The judgment follows the apprehension of them necessarily.... There is no searching for evidence; no weighing arguments; the proposition is not deduced or inferred from another; it has the light of truth in itself, and has no occasion to borrow it from another. Propositions of the last kind, when they are used in matters of science, has commonly been called axioms; and on whatever occasion they are used, are called first principles, principles of common sense, common notions, self-evident truths. (*EIP* 6.4, p. 593)

And specifically concerning moral first principles,

Morals, like all other sciences, must have first principles, on which all moral reasoning is grounded. In every branch of knowledge where disputes have been raised, it is useful to distinguish the first principles from the superstructure. They are the foundation which the whole fabric of the science leans; and whatever is not supported by this foundation can have no stability. In all rational belief, the thing believed is either itself a first principle, or it is by just reasoning deduced from first principles. (*EAP* 5.1, p. 369)

So Reid thinks moral first principles are self-evident and foundational. However, as pointed out by Van Cleve (1999, 2015), there are two ways we might understand Reid's account of self-evident: in a narrow sense and in a broad sense. According to the narrow sense of 'self-evident', a proposition *P* is self-evident just in case *P* is immediately known and *P* seems evident to someone in virtue of that someone understanding or grasping *P*. Accordingly, (1) *P* being immediately known and (2) *P* being believed in virtue of being understood or grasped are individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for *P* being a first principle. For example 'all married men are bachelors' or '2+2=4' might be self-evident in this narrow sense: one immediately believes such propositions upon understanding or grasping their content.

On the other hand, under the broad sense of self-evident, a proposition *P* is self-evident just in case *P* seems evident "not on the basis of support from other propositions

believed or known” (Van Cleve, 4). Here, P being immediately known is both necessary and sufficient for P being a first principle. Both perceptual and non-perceptual beliefs might be self-evident in this sense: For example, in perceptual experience, one might immediately believe that grass is green or that something smells foul. However, as I now show, we have good reason to think (at least for Reid) that moral first principles are self-evident in the narrow sense.

In the previously mentioned passages, Reid claims that first principles are self-evident since they have “their evidence in themselves” and have “the light of truth in [them]”. Moreover, Reid states that as soon as we understand or grasp such propositions, we believe them. Such propositions are neither inferred nor deduced from other propositions one knows or believes, and so such propositions are epistemically immediate (or non-inferential). Since such first principles are immediately believed in virtue of the individual understanding or grasping them, it seems that such principles are self-evident in the narrow sense.

The next passage adds further support to the interpretation that first principles are self-evident in the narrow sense:

I call these first principles, because they appear to me to have in themselves an intuitive evidence which I cannot resist. I find I can express them in other words. I can illustrate them by examples and authorities, and perhaps can deduce one of them from another; but I am not able to deduce them from other principles that are more evident. And I find the best moral reasonings of authors I am acquainted with, ancient and modern, heathen and Christian, to be grounded upon one or more of them. (*EAP* 5.1, p. 276)

According to this passage, a self-evident belief is one that has “an intuitive evidence which [one] cannot resist”. I take this statement as meaning that when the individual understands or grasps a proposition’s meaning, he or she will have an irresistible urge or

compulsion to believe it.⁷⁶ If Reid accepts this account of a self-evident belief, then it seems first principles (moral or otherwise) are those that are not only immediately believed or known, but believed or known upon being grasped or understood.⁷⁷

Thinking of first principles as being self-evident in the narrow sense has implications for how we understand Reid's moral epistemology. Recall in chapter 2, I argued that we can interpret Reid as claiming that we obtain moral knowledge in either of two ways: by way of either moral intuition or moral perception. However, if moral first principles are believed in virtue of being understood or grasped, then it seems we do not obtain knowledge of such principles by way of perceptual experience. For while some perceptual beliefs might be formed immediately (e.g., 'grass is green', or 'something smells awful'), presumably one does not believe such propositions in virtue of merely understanding or grasping them. I might see that grass is green or see that my dog is sleeping, but I do not believe such propositions the same way I believe 'all unmarried men are bachelors' or ' $2+2=4$ '.

⁷⁶ Cuneo (2013), for instance, interprets this as being Reid's view concerning moral first principles.

⁷⁷ While Reid claims that moral first principles are self-evident, he also maintains that not every individual will believe them:

I am far from thinking instruction in morals unnecessary. Many may, to the end of life, be ignorant of self-evident truths. They may, to the end of life, entertain gross absurdities. Experience shows that this happens often in matters that are indifferent. Much more may it happen in matters where interest, passion, prejudice and fashion, as so apt to pervert the judgment. (*EAP* 5.2, p. 278)

Reid claims that factors like poor education, emotional impulses, and lack of rational maturity may lead someone to either reject moral first principles or fail to understand such first principles. Further, Reid thinks that one's fails to accept or recognize moral first principles is not merely confined to issues of morality; such failures also arise in other areas of rational inquiry, such as in mathematics or the sciences: for example, through poor education, bias, or lack of rational maturity, one may simply fail to understand, grasp, or believe certain mathematical axioms, axioms that are self-evidently true to most rational people.

Instead, it seems only propositions known through intuition would be candidates for truths that are self-evident in the narrow sense; for it is through intuition (or just reasoning in general) that we grasp the meaning of a proposition; for example, the statement ‘all unmarried men are bachelors’ would be self-evident in so far as one believes it in virtue of understanding or grasping the structure of the sentence and the meaning of the terms ‘all’, ‘unmarried man’ and ‘bachelor’. The upshot is that if moral first principles fall under the narrow sense of ‘self-evident’, perceptual beliefs (those formed in external sense perception) could not be moral first principles. Accordingly, such candidates for moral first principles could only be moral beliefs formed by way of intuition.

Before proceeding, let me point out that Reid does not think all first principles are known by way of intuition. For instance, in agreement with Van Cleve (1999 and 2015), I think Reid thinks many of the first principles of contingent truths are obtained by way of external sense perception. However, since moral first principles have contents that are general and necessary (albeit in a weaker, non-metaphysical sense), I find it doubtful that they could be known by way of perception. Instead, I think they could only be known in virtue of being first understood or sufficiently grasped, and I take it that such understanding or grasping occurs by a process of intuition. In which case, I claim that the first principles of morals (understood as being first principles of necessary truths) are most likely known by way of intuition.⁷⁸

Furthermore, thinking of moral first principles as falling under the narrow sense of self-evident (and so known by way of intuition) fits well with how Reid presents his

⁷⁸ I owe Marina Folescu for bringing this important point to my attention.

own list of moral first principles. In the final section of this chapter, I will discuss at length Reid's own list of moral first principles. For now, I merely mention that each of these principles are general in nature, as they apply to a broad range of cases or circumstances. For instance, Reid's inclusion of the Golden Rule among his list of moral first principles is evidence that he thinks at least some moral first principles are general:

In every case, we ought to act towards another, which we would judge to be right in him to act towards us, if we were in his circumstances and he in ours; or, more generally, what we approve in others, that we ought to practice in like circumstances, and what we condemn in others we ought not to do. (*EAP* 5.1, p. 274)

And,

The equity and obligation of this rule of conduct is self-evident to every man who hath a conscience; so it is, of all the rules of morality, the most comprehensive, and truly deserves the encomium given it by the highest authority, that it is the law of the profits. (*EAP* 5.1, p.275)

As described by Reid, the Golden Rule is a general moral principle: For In the above passage, Reid says that in every case, we ought to treat people as we would like to be treated if we were in their circumstances.

Moreover, that Reid thinks moral-first principles are not only self-evident in the narrow sense but also general in nature fits with the interpretation that moral first principles are nomologically necessary. For I think if moral first principles are nomologically necessary, such principles are likely to be general rather than particular in structure. At least, I find it hard to believe that a particular moral fact—e.g., that Smith should not lie to Jones about losing his car) could in any sense be necessary (whether it is metaphysical or nomological) Accordingly, I do not think it is odd that we intuit general moral principles, and so I think it is possible that we intuit nomologically necessary moral first principles. Moreover, I do not think it is odd that we might perceive particular

moral truths; for instance, I might immediately perceive the wrongness of a particular agent's actions (what it means to immediately perceive an action's wrongness will be discussed in Chapter 4). For instance, one might approach a group of hoodlums about to set a cat on fire and perceive their action as being morally wrong. However, it seems odd that we might have perceptions whose contents are general moral principles, as it does not seem like the content of a particular perception could be a general principle. While the content of a perception could be a particular judgment (e.g., 'Smith's action was morally wrong'), I doubt we perceive general principles (e.g., that it is morally wrong to maim and torture innocent creatures). Yet it seems plausible that we might intuit such general principles. Accordingly, if moral first principles are necessary in the nomological sense, then it seems likely that we intuit rather than perceive them.⁷⁹

So far, I have shown why Reid's moral first principles might fall under the narrow sense of self-evident, and I have explained how this account of moral first principles fits well with Reid's claim that such principles are necessarily true in a nomological sense. I now proceed to discuss textual evidence supporting the interpretation that moral first principles fall under the broad sense of self-evident.

⁷⁹ Now suppose Reid thinks the following: 'we should not lie' is a moral first principle and that it is necessary in the relativized sense. Accordingly, whenever a set of conditions obtained, this moral fact obtains. Such conditions might include facts about human nature (e.g., humans being rational, autonomous agents). The question now is what must one know in order to intuit this moral principle? One answer is that I need to know the conditions that must obtain in order for the relatively necessary moral principle to obtain. Admittedly, I am not sure which answer is right and I am not sure what must one know before he or she can intuit moral first principles. I will not pursue the issue thoroughly, but will merely briefly suggest one possible answer: My hunch is that one must understand various facts about human nature—e.g., that humans are autonomous, rational, or sentient—and the environment in which they are placed before he or she can intuit such principles. I leave it as a future exercise exactly which facts one must know before he or she is in a position to intuit or grasp moral first principles.

2.2 Moral first principles as being self-evident in the broad sense

In the following passages, Reid describes a moral first principle as something much different than a proposition that is believed (or known) simply in virtue of understanding the meaning of its grammatical structure and terms:

It is no less natural to a man trained in society, and accustomed to judge of his own actions and those of other men, to perceive a right and a wrong, an honorable and a base, in human conduct; and to such a man, I think, the principles of morals I have above mentioned will appear self-evident. (*EAP* 5.1, p.277)

The truths immediately testified by the external senses are the first principles from which we reason, with regard to the material world, and from which all our knowledge of it is deduced. The truths immediately testified by our moral faculty, are the first principles of all moral reasoning, from which all our knowledge of our duty must be deduced. (*EAP* 5.1, p.276-277)

whatever is immediately *perceived* to be just, honest, and honorable, in human conduct, carries moral obligation along with it, and the contrary carries demerit and blame; and from those moral obligations that are immediately perceived, all other moral obligations must be deduced by reason. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.179)

These passages do not say anything implying that a proposition is self-evident if one believes it in virtue of understanding or grasping its content. The claims each makes about first principles is much weaker. In the first passage, Reid says that we just see certain moral propositions as self-evident, particularly when we observe the conduct of others. On this reading, a self-evident proposition need not be grasped or understood. Accordingly, Reid seems to be using 'self-evident' in its broader sense.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Let me point out that even if Reid claims that one cannot help but believe first principles, such a claim does not imply that we know such propositions simply in virtue of understanding their contents; for example, I might feel an urge or compulsion to believe all kinds of perceptual propositions, such as grass is green or that it is cold outside, and I might believe such propositions independently of other propositions I already believe or know. Further, it seems likely that I simply cannot help but believe that grass is green or that it is cold outside. The important upshot is that 'self-evident' would not exclusively apply to principles believed through intuition, but can also apply to principles known by way of perceptual experience. Now if

In the second and third passages, Reid states that truths immediately perceived are moral first principles. As stated in these passages, Reid seems to claim that a proposition being immediately or non-inferentially believed or known is sufficient for that proposition being a first principle. Such an account describes first principles as falling under the broad sense of self-evident. If this is how Reid thinks of first principles, then it seems first principles can be known through either intuition or perception. For it seems like one can immediately believe some proposition by way of intuition, and it also seems possible that a perceptual belief can be known immediately as well; for instance, one might encounter some object and have an immediate perceptual belief that that object is, say, green or a bird. The upshot is if Reid thinks moral first principles fall under the broad sense of self-evident, then some immediate perceptual beliefs could count as moral first principles. Moreover, this upshot fits well with the above passages where Reid says that we perceive the first principles of morals.

Now the problem is that Reid seems to be making two distinct, incompatible claims: On the one hand, Reid describes moral first principles as being necessarily true (but in a nomological sense) and also falling under the narrow sense of self-evident. On the other, Reid describes the same principles as falling under the broad sense of self-evident; if moral first principles are self-evident in the broader sense, then perceptual moral beliefs could be first principles. Yet as already argued, such a view is incompatible with moral first-principles being necessarily true in a nomological sense. The question now is whether we should reject one account and accept the other, or

Reid has this notion of 'self-evidence' in mind', then moral first principles can be known through both perceptual experience and intuition (both rational and physical).

whether there is a way these two conflicting interpretations might be reconciled. I think the latter option is not only plausible but does not require that we ignore or dismiss certain passages. As such, I will attempt to reconcile this apparent contradiction in Reid's account of moral first principles.

Now if we accept that first principles fall under the narrow sense of self-evident, then we do not perceive first principles. The worry then concerns how we make sense of Reid's claim that we sometimes perceive moral reality. Consider the following:

whatever is immediately *perceived* to be just, honest, and honorable, in human conduct, carries moral obligation along with it, and the contrary carries demerit and blame; and from those moral obligations that are immediately perceived, all other moral obligations must be deduced by reason. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.179)

Here, Reid explicitly states that principles immediately perceived constitute the foundations by which we might derive other moral knowledge.⁸¹ From this passage, it might be tempting to think some moral first principles are known immediately from perceptual experience; for it seems like one characteristic of a first principle is that it is epistemically foundational or basic: first principles are immediately known, and all other beliefs are inferred or deduced from these basic principles. If we immediately perceive some principles, then it seems we could know some first principles by way of perceptual experience. However, such an interpretation is incompatible with what I have already

⁸¹ As I understand Reid, he thinks we can also obtain knowledge of non-moral first principles through perceptual experience. As the passage below indicates, Reid also thinks that through perceptual experience we can obtain knowledge of first principles about the mind-external material world:

The truths immediately testified by the external senses are the first principles from which we reason, with regard to the material world, and from which all our knowledge of it is deduced. The truths immediately testified by our moral faculty, are the first principles of all moral reasoning, from which all our knowledge of our duty must be deduced. (*EAP* 5.1, p.276-277)

argued —that moral first principles are necessarily true in a relativized sense, and so can only be known by intuition (or perhaps some other non-perceptual belief-forming process, like deductive or inductive reasoning).

My solution is to claim that we can think of some particular moral judgments, including those made in perceptual experience, as being basic or foundational, and we can do so without maintaining that they are also nomologically necessary first principles. The move is to first consider Reid's account of the first principles of contingent truths. Accordingly, (at least according to Van Cleve's 1999 and 2015 interpretation) Reid maintains that particular propositions expressed by some of our ordinary perceptual beliefs may be first principles (*EIP* 6.5).⁸²

Moreover, Reid states that,

The truths immediately testified by the external senses are the first principles from which we reason regarding the material world, and from which all our knowledge of it is deduced. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p. 176)

Thus, together I take these two passages as maintaining that some immediate perceptual beliefs could be first principles, albeit their contents are particular propositions.

Moreover, I take such beliefs to be basic or foundational, since they are neither inferred

⁸² Here, I go with Van Cleve's interpretation of Reid. Van Cleve thinks that in some cases even if a proposition is particular in nature, it can still qualify as a first principle:

First principles are supposed to be self-evident. They are supposed to be things we can't help believing. And they are supposed to be ultimate premises, lying behind all other beliefs. The general principles about truth that are first principles...do not have a strong claim to possess any of these features. The particular propositions about the contents of consciousness, memory, and perception that are first principles...have a much better claim. These are excellent reasons for adopting the particularist construal. (Van Cleve, p.9)

Van Cleve, accordingly, thinks that a perceptual proposition being believed immediately is sufficient for it being a first principle. Moreover, since such propositions are categorized under Reid's list of first principles of contingent truths, it seems some particular perceptual propositions would be first principles.

nor deduced from other beliefs one holds; I also maintain that thinking of these particular principles as foundational means that other knowledge of the external world is deduced or inferred from them. I take this as textual evidence that a particular belief can also sometimes be formed immediately and be foundational.

Now consider moral perceptual beliefs, and suppose that, as I argued in Chapter 2, Reid might think we have moral perceptions and that some of our moral perceptual beliefs are epistemically foundational. Accordingly, while I do not think moral perceptual beliefs are necessarily true (in a nomological sense) first principles, I think the text is open about whether Reid thinks such beliefs are sometimes formed immediately and are epistemically foundational—similar to how some non-moral perceptual beliefs may be epistemically foundational. As such it is at least possible that, according to Reid, particular perceptual judgments like ‘Smith was wrong to set the cat on fire’ or ‘Smith should not have lied to Jones’ (if these are in fact moral perceptual judgments) may be immediate and foundational for Reid.⁸³

Such an interpretation might seem counterintuitive, especially to someone who thinks there are some basic general moral principles from which all of our duties, obligations, etc., are ultimately derived. Nonetheless, such an interpretation fits well with what Reid says:

A system of morals is not like a system of geometry, where the subsequent parts derive their evidence from the preceding, and one chain of reasoning is carried on from the beginning; so that, if the arrangement is changed, the chain is broken, and the evidence is lost. It resembles more a system of botany, or mineralogy,

⁸³ I can only suggest an example of a case where a particular perceptual belief might be a first principle. Suppose ‘there is water’, ‘it is below 32 degrees Fahrenheit’, and ‘there is ice where there was once liquid water’ are all immediate perceptual beliefs and also have contents that are particular. Now from these basic, perceptual beliefs, one might draw the inference that water freezes into ice when the temperature gets below 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Here, we have derived a general scientific principle or law from a set of basic, particular perceptual beliefs.

where the subsequent parts depend not for their evidence upon the preceding, and the arrangement is made to facilitate apprehension and memory, and not to give evidence. (*EAP* 5.2, p.281)

One might think a moral system functions like the following: take a general moral axiom (such as Kant's Categorical Imperative or Mill's Greatest Happiness Principle) and then derive every particular moral duty, obligation, etc. from this principle; for what makes these particular duties or obligations the right ones is that they are deduced from the general moral principles. For example, upon deciding that we ought to perform the act that maximizes the amount of happiness in the world, we can then decide how we ought to act in any particular situation (just apply the Greatest Happiness Principle to the particular case). Such a system would resemble how we reason in math: we first discover a fundamental axiom and then use this axiom to solve particular problems.

However, in the previous passage, Reid rejects such a comparison between a system of morals and a system of mathematics. In doing so, I take him as claiming that we need not know the general moral principle before we can know our particular moral duties, obligations, etc.. As Reid puts it, the "evidentness" of one's particular judgements does not depend on one already having evidence supporting the general moral principles; for example, one need not infer that 'Smith should not set cats on fire' from the general principle that 'it is wrong to maim or torture sentient creatures for no reason'. I take this as Reid maintaining that some particular judgments can be immediately known (and perhaps also be foundational in the way that some perceptual beliefs might be foundational to the natural sciences).

The upshot is that even if only intuited moral beliefs are candidates to be moral first principles, it does not follow that Reid does not think we have moral perceptions,

and it could be the case that some of our moral perceptual beliefs are immediate and foundational. Since such perceptual beliefs are immediate, we can obtain some foundational moral knowledge by way of moral perception. For such knowledge would not be inferred from moral propositions already known.

Before advancing to the next section, let me recap the points already covered in this chapter. I have attempted to show that Reid is a moral objectivist who thinks moral truths are non-natural; moreover, I have maintained that moral first principles are both necessary in a nomological sense and self-evident. They are self-evident in the sense that one immediately believes such principles upon grasping or understanding their content. Furthermore, I have also maintained that we can also obtain moral knowledge by way of moral perception, and we can do so even though the immediate perceptual judgments are not nomologically necessary. I now proceed to talk about Reid's list of moral first principles and to show how his list might be amended.

3. The Set of Moral First Principles

3.1 A problem with Reid's list of moral first principles

Having explained what Reid thinks is a moral fact and having described two possible ways one might understand a Reidian moral first principle, I now discuss a problem concerning Reid's list of moral first principles. Although Reid maintains that his list of moral first principles is incomplete,

I propose, therefore, to point out some of the first principles of morals, without pretending to a complete enumeration. (*EAP* 5.1, p.270)

the problem is that none of the first principles he lists provides a standard by which one can determine what is morally right, wrong, obligatory, etc. The worry this problem

raises is that it is not clear why anyone should accept a moral theory that fails to provide one with any plausible standard about how to determine moral rightness, wrongness, obligation, and so on. I admit that I do not know which moral principles should be added to his list of moral first principles, but I will later explain two possible ways Reid might respond to the charge that his list of moral principles needs amending. However, before addressing how Reid might amend his list of first principles, let me first provide Reid's actual list of such principles.

In *EAP*, Reid identifies a number of moral first principles, most of which are general. The first set concern what Reid calls 'virtue in general' (*EAP* 5.1, p.271):

1. There are some things in human conduct, that merit approbation and praise, others that merit blame and punishment; and different degrees either of approbation or of blame, are due to different actions.
2. What is in no degree voluntary can neither deserve moral approbation nor blame.
3. What is done from unavoidable necessity may be agreeable or disagreeable, useful or hurtful, but cannot be the object either of blame or moral approbation.
4. We may be highly culpable in omitting what they ought to have done, as well as in doing what they ought not.
5. We ought to use the best means we can to be well informed of our duty, by serious attention to moral instruction; by observing what we approve, and what we disapprove, in others and ourselves; by reflecting often on our own past conduct; and by deliberating coolly and impartially upon our future conduct.
6. It ought to be our most serious concern to do our duty as far as we know it, and to fortify our minds against every temptation to deviate from it; by maintaining a lively sense of the beauty of right conduct, and of its present and future reward, of the turpitude of vice, and of its bad consequences here and hereafter.

An initial worry is that none of these principles give us an account of what makes an action morally right, wrong, etc. Moreover, none of these principles prescribe what one

should do in any particular situation. For instance, principle 2 states that one is only morally responsible for an action if he or she has the power to freely bring about that action; yet it says nothing about what we ought or ought not to do. Further, principle 5 states that we ought to do our best to find out what our moral duty amounts to; while it is probably true that we should do our best to discover what our duty amounts to, the principle itself provides no guidance as to how to discover our duty. However, in the next set of principles, we get something closer to a principle that informs us about what we ought to do (*EAP* 5.1, p.272-276):

7. We ought to prefer a greater good, though more distant, to a less; and a less to a greater.
8. As far as the intention of nature appears in the constitution of man, we ought to comply with that intention, and to act agreeable to it.
9. No man is born for himself only. Every man, therefore, ought to consider himself as a member of the common society of mankind, and of these subordinate societies to which he belongs, such as family, friends, neighborhood, country, and to do as much good as he can, and as little hurt to the societies of which he is a part.
10. In every case, we ought to act that part towards another, which we would judge to be right in him to act toward us, if we were in his circumstances and he in ours.
11. To every man who believes, the existence, the perfections, and the providence of God, the veneration and submission we owe him is self-evident.⁸⁴

Now regarding this last set of principles, we get two principles that are action guiding.

Principle 7 says that we ought to prefer a greater good that occurs over the long-run to a lesser good that occurs in the short-run. Principle 10 says that we ought to treat others as we would like to be treated if we were in their circumstances. However, even these two

⁸⁴ Note, Reid does not order the principles 1-11. However, for sake of clarity, I decided to organize these principles as such.

action-guiding principles are problematic. Regarding 7, while it may be true that we should prefer greater future goods to lesser short-term goods, we need a standard about how to determine whether one state of affairs is better than another. For instance, maybe what is good is simply happiness; accordingly, what makes one state of affairs better than another is that it brings about more happiness. Yet, we do not get any such standard from Reid. In which case, principle 7 helps us decide what we should do only if we have an account of what makes a state of affairs good or better than another.

Principle 10, Reid's notion of the Golden Rule,⁸⁵ is problematic as well. One problem is that we can imagine scenarios where the agent has really bad desires or beliefs: For instance, someone might be a masochist or feel a high degree of self-loathing/self-mortification (as in the case of people who are depressed or who have suffered from severe instances of abuse). In such cases, the agent may want to be treated in ways that seem morally problematic.⁸⁶ For instance, someone might think they deserve to be abused or disliked, and they may even want to be abused or disliked. However, despite what such people want or desire, it seems morally problematic for them to treat other people in such ways. Thus, we need a principle explaining how people should want to be treated—such a principle might just be that we should treat people as we would like to be treated if we were fully rational (and so not motivated by problematic desires).

⁸⁵ Reid refers to the Golden Rule as the Law of the Profits. However, I will refer to the Law of the Prophets as the Golden Rule, for I find that the wording flows better this way and I think that the Golden Rule is the more recognizable label for the moral principle that we ought to treat others as we would like to be treated if we were in their circumstances.

⁸⁶ While this concern does not prove the Golden Rule is false, it suggests a need to amend the principle. Absent such an amendment, the Golden Rule seems to be an implausible action-guiding principle. Such an amendment would seem to require that we explain how someone *should* want to be treated instead of merely stating how someone would like to be treated. Doing so, you avoid the implication that we should treat people according to what they want, where what they want might be morally problematic.

Without such a principle, the Golden Rule (at least as characterized by Reid) is problematic.

So to restate the problem, while Reid lists some moral first principles, such principles are either non-action guiding or need to be amended such that they can plausibly prescribe what someone ought to do in particular cases. The ultimate concern is that if Reid's moral theory fails to provide a plausible account prescribing what we ought or ought not to do, then there seems to be no reason to accept it; for it is hard to see why we should accept a moral theory that fails to give us plausible ethical guidance. There are at least two ways Reid might respond to this concern. In turn, I consider each and argue that the second way is the most promising.

3.2 Amending Reid's list of moral first principles and the Golden Rule

I can only speculate how Reid might amend his list of moral first principles such that his list would include principles that provide a standard to determine what is morally right, wrong, etc. One strategy is for Reid to provide a more plausible account of the Golden Rule. So while Reid's account of the Golden Rule is problematic, perhaps he is on the right track: the idea is that the Golden Rule has a kernel of truth to it: after all, when deciding what to do (e.g., when deciding whether to murder X, steal from X, or in any sense harm X), it seems we should sometimes put ourselves in another person's shoes and see how we would like to be treated if we were in that person's circumstances. Accordingly, we would not want to be murdered, stolen from, or harmed, and so we should consider such factors when deciding how to treat others. Moreover, while there are problems with the Golden Rule, there are also problems with any moral principle

(e.g., the Greatest Happiness Principle or the Categorical Imperative).⁸⁷ At least in principle, we can amend the Golden Rule to make it more plausible and then maintain that Reid would endorse this amended version.

Admittedly, I am not sure how to amend the Golden Rule such that it no longer faces this objection. One option is that if the individual is fully rational and functioning the way he or she ought, then he or she should treat others as he or she would like to be treated; since masochists and depressed people are presumably not functioning the way they ought to, then they are not in the right sort of psychological or physical state required to appropriately use the Golden Rule as a guide to their actions. Admittedly, there are likely problems with this amendment, and admittedly I am not sure how to respond to these problems.

However, instead of coming up with a more plausible account of the Golden Rule, I merely suppose for sake of argument that there is such a plausible amendment. In which case, supposing there is a more plausible version of the Golden Rule, Reid could maintain that his list of moral first principles provides a sufficient standard by which we could determine moral rightness, wrongness, duty, obligation, etc. For successfully amending the Golden Rule would show that Reid commits to at least one plausible action-prescribing moral principle. Accordingly, Reid could maintain that when deciding how to

⁸⁷ The problem with these two theories is well-known, but I nonetheless quickly flag some of them in order to motivate the idea that any moral theory has serious flaws (and not just the Golden Rule): regarding utilitarianism, it seems problematic to always perform acts that bring about the most happiness; for we can imagine scenarios where violating an innocent person's life is necessary to bring about some greater good—e.g., pushing the fat man onto the bridge in order to save five others. And the Categorical Imperative, where (at least according to the Principle of Humanity account) we should respect others as rational autonomous agents, is flawed too. First, it is vague when we are or not treating someone as a rational, autonomous agent; second, animals and babies are not rational, autonomous agents, and yet it still seems they are deserving of respect; it is not clear the Principle of Humanity can adequately account for the intuition that such sentient creatures also appear to have interests and rights.

act, we merely apply the amended Golden Rule and perform the action prescribed by this principle.

Furthermore that Reid thinks the Golden Rule by itself provides the standard that determines moral rightness and wrongness has textual support. The following passage is perhaps evidence that Reid thinks the Golden Rule is the only necessary action-prescribing moral first principle (similar to how a utilitarian might think the Greatest Happiness Principle is ultimately the only action-prescribing principle):

The equity and obligation of this rule of conduct is self-evident to every man who hath a conscience; so it is, of all the rules of morality, the most comprehensive, and truly deserves the encomium given it by the highest authority, that it is the law of the profits.

It comprehends every rule of justice without exception. It comprehends all the relative duties, arising either from the more permanent relations of parent and child, of master and servant, of magistrate and subject, of husband and wife, or from the more transient relations of rich and poor, of buyer and seller, of debtor and creditor, of benefactor and beneficiary, of friend and enemy. It comprehends every duty of charity and humanity, and even of courtesy and good manners.

Nay, I think, that without any force or straining, it extends even to the duties of self-government. For, as every man approves in others the virtues of prudence, temperance, self-command and fortitude, he must perceive, that what is right in others must be right in himself in like circumstances.

To sum up all, he who acts invariably from this rule will never deviate from the path of his duty, but from an error of judgment. (*EAP* 5.1, p.275)

Accordingly, Reid says that the Golden Rule comprehends all other moral principles, where ‘comprehends’ is understood to mean that all other moral principles are in some sense derived from or applications of the Golden Rule. For example, it suggests that we should treat our creditors in certain ways (e.g., paying loans on time, honoring interest rates, etc.) because that is how we would like to be treated if we were creditors. In short, pick any moral principle (either particular or at least something less general than the Golden Rule); what that principle prescribes is ultimately determined by or derived from

the Golden Rule. If Reid thinks this is the most comprehensive moral principle, then we neither need to intuit nor perceive any other action-guiding moral first principle. The Golden Rule can, at least in principle, prescribe what we ought to do in any morally relevant situation.

The worry with thinking that the Golden Rule comprehends all other moral principles is that Reid maintains that there are additional moral first principles that could be added to his list of first principles:

I propose, therefore, to point out some of the first principles of morals, without pretending to a complete enumeration. (*EAP* 5.1, p.270)

If the Golden Rule is all-comprehensive, then why does Reid need to add additional moral first principles? Any additional moral first principle would be redundant if the Golden Rule is the most comprehensive first principle. As will now be shown, the resolution to this concern depends on the scope of moral principles comprehended by the Golden Rule.

One possible interpretation is that, by ‘comprehends’, Reid means that the Golden Rule comprehends only principles concerning right and wrong, duty, or obligation. However, moral principles about, say, duty and obligation do not exhaust every possible moral principle; for principles concerning moral responsibility, virtue, or intrinsic goodness (to name some) are moral principles even though they are not strictly about what makes an act right or wrong; nor are such principles strictly about what is one’s moral duty or obligation. For instance, Reid might think there are additional principles specifying when an agent is morally responsible for an action or what exactly is intrinsically good (e.g., is it pleasure, doing one’s duty, following God’s dictates etc.?).

Such principles would be moral principles (and perhaps moral first principles) even if they are neither applications of nor derived from the Golden Rule.

This interpretation is supported by the previously-mentioned passage, where Reid says the Golden Rule comprehends principles like the principles of justice (which I take as principles concerning moral rightness, duty, or obligation), but says nothing about whether the Golden Rule also comprehends principles about moral responsibility, virtue, intrinsic goodness, etc. The upshot is that, according to this reading of ‘comprehends’, the Golden Rule comprehends other principles concerning moral rightness or wrongness; yet this view is compatible with there being additional principles about moral responsibility and goodness that are not comprehended by the Golden Rule.

There are, however, at least two problems with this interpretation. The first is that it conflicts with Reid’s claim that a system of morals is not like a system of geometry, where upon first knowing a few basic mathematical axioms or principles, we can then apply such axioms or principles to particular cases (*EAP* 5.2). Accordingly, the first interpretation makes it sound as if Reid thinks that upon knowing the Golden Rule, we can apply the Golden Rule when deducing more particular principles or making particular moral judgments. Moreover, according to this interpretation, we need not intuit any other action-guiding moral principles, as we merely need to apply the Golden Rule to particular cases. Yet at *EAP* 5.2, Reid states that we need not always apply the Golden Rule (or some other general principle) in every case in order to know what we ought to do. The problem, then, is this reading of ‘comprehends’ conflicts with Reid’s claim that we need not deduce or infer what our duty or obligation amounts to from a single moral principle or axiom.

Before proceeding to the second problem with the first interpretation of ‘comprehends’, let me note that I think Reid could maintain that the following two claims are compatible: (1) The Golden Rule comprehends all other moral principles and (2) there may be other moral first principles—even principles that prescribe a standard by which one can determine right from wrong—in addition to the Golden Rule. How these two claims could be compatible will be explained at the end of this section. The important point is that, by showing how these two claims are compatible, Reid can provide a possible solution to the first problem.

That issue aside, the second problem with this interpretation is that it conflicts with claims Reid makes elsewhere. In the following passage, Reid maintains that, like the Golden Rule, the principles of justice, and the principles of benevolence are believed by any rational or competent moral agent:

It is a first principle of morals that we ought not to do to another, what we should think wrong to be done to us in like circumstances. If a man is not capable of perceiving this in his cool moments, when he reflects seriously, he is not a moral agent, nor is he capable of being convinced of it by reasoning.

From what topic can you reason with such a man? You may possibly convince him by reasoning, that it is his interest to observe this rule; but this is not to convince him that it is his duty. To reason about justice with a man who sees nothing to be just or unjust; or about benevolence with a man who sees nothing in benevolence preferable to malice, is like reasoning with a blind man about colour, or with a deaf man about sound (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.177-178).

The concern is that the principles of justice and benevolence seem to be treated as moral first principles; for in this passage, I understand Reid as claiming that a rational or competent moral agent will believe such principles in virtue of grasping or understanding them. As stated earlier, one feature of a moral first principle is that one feels some urge or compulsion to believe such principles in virtue of grasping or understanding them. However, if the Golden Rule comprehends all principles concerning rightness, obligation, or duty,

then it should also comprehend the principle of justice and benevolence, which are principles of rightness, obligation, etc. This passage, accordingly, suggests that Reid thinks there are other moral first principles concerning moral rightness or wrongness besides the Golden Rule.

Accordingly, I think it is too quick to assume that the Golden Rule comprehends all other principles concerning rightness or obligation such that such principles are ultimately derived from or applications of the Golden Rule. Further, regarding the first problem, it seems Reid is committed to the view that some moral beliefs (including perhaps beliefs in other moral first principles) are known without having been inferred from some more basic or fundamental moral principle, such as the Golden Rule. The issue now concerns how to reconcile Reid's claim that the Golden Rule is the most comprehensive despite there being additional moral principles, especially principles concerning rightness, wrongness, duty, and obligation, some of which might be known independently from being deduced from the Golden Rule. As I will now show, I think there is a way to consistently maintain that (1) the Golden Rule comprehends all other principles of rightness, wrongness, etc. (2) that the principles of justice and benevolence could also be moral first principles.

The solution, then, is that even if the Golden Rule is the most comprehensive moral principle concerning moral rightness, wrongness, etc., it does not mean that other moral principles cannot qualify as being first principles; nor does it imply that all other moral principles or judgments must be deduced from the Golden Rule. A concern arises: how can the Golden Rule be the most comprehensive when other action-guiding principles or judgments need not be derived from it?

The answer to this concern is that the Golden Rule is simply a metaphysical principle about how the world ought to be. It is solely a theory about why some moral propositions are true; yet the issue concerning which moral judgments are true is a different project, one that is primarily epistemological.⁸⁸ As such, the Golden Rule is not the most comprehensive in an epistemological sense, and so it is not a principle from which we derive all other moral principles. But how do we understand the Golden Rule as merely being a metaphysical principle and not one that is an epistemological principle as well?

The answer is as follows: admittedly, as it stands, the Golden Rule is either problematic or vague, and it is not clear how or when we should apply it to particular situations; nor is it clear how we might derive other moral principles from the Golden Rule. The plausibility of the Golden Rule aside, maybe Reid could say the following: through intuition, we grasp some moral propositions immediately; if such principles are necessarily true in a relativized sense, then they count as moral first principles. Yet what makes these principles true is that they are applications of the Golden Rule. For instance, one might immediately intuit that he or she should not steal. What makes this judgment true is that it is ultimately an application of the rule that we should treat others as we would like to be treated if we are in their circumstances. Such principles, moreover, is neither inferred nor deduced from the Golden Rule.⁸⁹ Furthermore, this account is

⁸⁸ I interpret Lehrer (2010) as maintaining that, for Reid, when moral judgments are self-evident, that is sufficient for that judgment counting as a first principle. Moreover, such judgments need not be justified in virtue of being derived or deduced from the Golden Rule; their justification comes from the fact that they were formed by a reliable faculty. However, Lehrer does not clarify what sense of self-evident he uses nor does he describe when a moral judgment would not count as a first principle. I have attempted to answer each of these questions in this chapter.

⁸⁹ I am indebted to Peter Markie for bringing this point to my attention.

consistent with some moral non-first principles (e.g., some general principles and particular moral judgments) being known independently from the Golden Rule. Some such principles might include those believed immediately or non-inferentially in perceptual experience.

Furthermore, concerns about when or how to apply the Golden Rule is not unique to Reid's moral theory; for one could raise a similar concern with other moral theories, especially to act-consequentialism, which maintains that one ought to perform the action that brings about the best overall consequences (call this the act-consequentialist thesis). As it stands, it is controversial what standard to apply when deciding what makes an action's consequences better than another's; for instance, are actions that have the best consequences those that bring about more happiness or pleasure? Or are actions with the best consequences those that maximize virtue, rights, autonomy, or something else entirely? At least by itself, the act-consequentialist thesis does not provide such a standard, and so like the Golden Rule, it is vague and difficult to apply to particular cases. Furthermore, act-consequentialism is difficult to apply because it is often unclear which actions will bring about the best consequences (this problem of course remains even if we come up with some standard for measuring which actions have better consequences than others); for in many cases, we can only guess as to which actions bring about the best consequences; and in many cases, it is a matter of luck whether the action we perform brings about better consequences than some alternative action.

However, I think an act-consequentialist could address this concern by saying that act-consequentialism is simply a metaphysical explanation about what makes an action morally right. How we know which actions are morally right is an entirely different

project. Accordingly, a consequentialist might maintain that experience plays a crucial role in helping us decide which actions bring about the best consequences. By learning from past events and experiences, one can develop the ability to notice which actions will bring about the best consequences. For example, one could observe the institution of slavery in America and note that it had worse consequences than the state of America after slavery was abolished. Here, even if many of our moral judgments are not based on applying the act-consequentialist thesis to particular cases, it does not mean such judgments are wrong or ill-formed. For the important point is that what ultimately makes various moral principles the right ones is that they are actions prescribed by the act-consequentialist thesis. As such, one might know many moral principles even if he or she is not sure the best way to apply the act-consequentialist thesis to various particular cases.

Accordingly, Reid could maintain that his moral epistemology involves two separate projects. The first project is to come up with a general moral principle about how we ought to act in most, if not all, morally relevant situations. For Reid, I think this general moral principle is the Golden Rule. The second project is to come up with less general action-prescribing principles. The principles learned or derived in this second project are ultimately true in virtue of being applications of the more general moral principle. Yet some of these principles are known by being non-inferentially intuited; some such principles will be necessarily true in a nomological sense. When they are, they count as moral first principles.

This strategy has multiple advantages. First, it shows how the Golden Rule can be the most comprehensive moral principle; for ultimately, what makes any other moral proposition true is that it is an application of the Golden Rule. Second, it shows how Reid

could maintain that there are additional action-prescribing moral first principles even though the Golden Rule is the most comprehensive. For it seems possible that even if the Golden Rule is the most comprehensive moral principle, we still need guidance from other moral principles since the Golden Rule, by itself, sometimes does not provide sufficient ethical guidance. In which case, there may be other moral principles that are immediately intuited and also nomologically necessary; in this sense, they are epistemologically foundational even if they are not metaphysically foundational.

Accordingly, even though we do not derive such first principles from the Golden Rule, they are nonetheless true in virtue of ultimately being applications of this rule. Third, it is consistent with Reid's claim that not all moral knowledge is obtained by either knowing a single general principle or applying that principle to particular cases (*EAP* 5.2, p. 281). Accordingly, Reid thinks some moral knowledge can be obtained by way of intuition (and perhaps perception); one can form a true and justified moral belief without having to infer it from some all-encompassing general moral principle.

Finally, I think this interpretation has the advantage of helping Reid avoid the objections often targeted at the Golden Rule. Recall, a problem with the Golden Rule is that we can imagine cases where treating one as he or she would like to be treated seems problematic. For example, we can imagine people with low self-worth or evil beliefs and desires, and we think it is wrong when such people should treat others the way they would like to be treated. Maybe the Golden Rule can be amended, and some philosophers have presented ways of revising this principle against such objections.⁹⁰ Yet it is not my

⁹⁰ In response to the above concern with the Golden Rule, some philosophers have tried to amend it (Gewirth 1978, Wattles 1997, Gensler 2013). I am not convinced that any of these attempts have succeeded in defending the Golden Rule from such concerns.

current project to see whether there is a plausible account of the Golden Rule. That said, there is an advantage to understanding Reid as maintaining that the Golden Rule is merely a metaphysical principle about what makes an action morally right or wrong: for one need not apply the Golden Rule when deciding what he or she ought to do; instead, through intuition and moral perception, one can obtain sufficient moral knowledge. Accordingly, moral knowledge and moral guidance need not require applying the Golden Rule to various cases.

3.3 Adding to Reid's list of moral first principles

I close this chapter by discussing two other issues with Reid's moral theory. The first concerns Reid's admittance that his list of moral first principles is incomplete. The second concerns which principles we might add to Reid's list. Regarding the first issue, the worry is that Reid's moral theory leaves us in the dark about which principles should be added to his list of moral first principles. Having done so, Reid may have an unappealing moral theory; for one might think any plausible moral theory (especially an intuitionist moral theory) should have a robust list of foundational or basic action-guiding moral principles. However, I think that Reid's failure to provide such a list may not be problematic, as he might maintain that it is not his project to discover each first principle; instead, his project is much more modest: to merely explain how we know moral first principles. In which case, his project is to provide an account about how we obtain moral knowledge; discovering which principles complete the set of moral first principles is another project altogether.⁹¹

⁹¹ I should point out that I think for any moral intuitionist, discovering each first or basic foundational

I think such a move is common in other areas of philosophy, particularly non-moral epistemology. For instance consider an epistemological foundationalist. For an epistemological foundationalist, one project is to defend the claim that there is a set of propositions that are in some sense self-evident or self-justified; such propositions are known, but not in virtue of being inferred from or based on other propositions one believes or knows. Now there are at least two questions such a project might try to answer: (1) how do we know (or come to know) such foundational propositions? and (2) what exactly are these foundational propositions? However, answering the first question does not answer the second: for one might successfully answer (1) without answering (2).

Yet, even if one does not provide a complete list of the foundational propositions, it does not necessarily mean the foundationalist's position is less plausible; for we might still have good reasons for being a foundationalist even if we do not know every foundational principle. Similarly, even if we do not know every moral first principle, it does not mean we lack justification for thinking there are foundational or basic moral first principles.

Furthermore, Reid could also maintain that it is an empirical issue whether a judgment has a moral first principle as its content. How do we go about discovering whether something is a moral first principle? Admittedly, I am not sure, but I can think of one general strategy. The strategy is to carefully reflect upon which moral principles you believe and then decide whether you inferred these principles from others. If you can

principle is itself a daunting task, and to my knowledge there is not much agreement about which moral principles complete the set of such basic foundational principles. For instance, Audi thinks there are 10 such principles, while Ross goes back and forth between there being 5 or 7 such principles. So while it is certainly a worthwhile project to uncover each foundational moral principle, it should not be surprising that intuitionists either fail to do so or disagree with one another about moral principles are foundational.

confidently say that you non-inferentially believed such propositions and did so in virtue of understanding or grasping such propositions, then you have reason to think they are moral first principles. You can then compare these principles with those believed by others. Eventually, one might arrive at some consensus about which principles are the most likely candidates for being moral first principles.

I close this chapter by considering whether Reid has given us any clues about which principles might be added to his list of moral first principles. I do not have anything new to add to this issue, but I find Cuneo (2014) has something substantive to say on the matter, and so I will discuss his view at length, clarifying or elaborating on his view where necessary. Cuneo, accordingly, indicates that Reid's list of moral first principles is incomplete, but thinks we have good reason to treat Reid's principles of justice as being moral first principles. That Reid might think the principles of justice are first principles is evident in the following paragraph:

We may observe, that as justice is directly opposed to injury, and as there are various ways in which a man may be injured, so there must be various branches of justice opposed to the different kinds of injury.

A man may be injured, first, in his person, by wounding, maiming, or killing him; secondly in his family, by robbing him of his children, or any way injuring those he is bound to protect; thirdly, in his liberty, by confinement; fourthly, in his reputation; fifthly, in his goods or property; and lastly, in the violation of contracts or engagements made with him. (*EAP* 5.5, p. 312-313)

As indicated by Cuneo, there are at least six duties of justice that are implicitly stated in this passage:

- (1) We have a duty not to wound, maim, or kill others.
- (2) We have a duty not to harm those an individual is bound to protect, and we have a duty not to do harm those we are bound to protect.
- (3) We have a duty not to infringe on someone's liberty by restraining or confining that individual.

- (4) We have a duty not to damage another's reputation.
- (5) We have a duty not to steal or damage one's goods or property.
- (6) We have a duty not to violate the contracts we make with others.

I understand these principles as being defeasible: we should follow them unless we have good reasons not to do so (e.g., we should always refrain from wounding, maiming, or killing someone unless that person deserves to be wounded, maimed, or killed). When we should or should not act on such principles is a good question, one that warrants a thorough answer; I briefly answer this question (or at least how I think Reid might answer it) in chapter 5, where I discuss how Reid might respond to the concern about which principle we should follow when multiple principles prescribe conflicting moral actions (what I call the problem of moral conflicts).⁹² That issue aside, Cuneo thinks we have good reason to believe the principles of justice should be included among Reid's list of moral first principles. According to Cuneo, why such principles should be added is evident in passages where Reid says that a rational, morally competent individual will assent to a set of propositions (what Cuneo calls the moral fixed points). Such propositions include the first principles of morals, the principles of justice, and the principles of benevolence. As Reid states,

It is a first principle of morals, that we ought not to do to another, what we should think wrong to be done to us in like circumstances. If a man is not capable of perceiving this in his cool moments, when he reflects seriously, he is not a moral agent, nor is he capable of being convinced of it by reasoning.

⁹² My reason for not addressing the problem of moral conflicts in chapter 4 (where I discuss objections to my interpretation at length) is that I think it is a general philosophical problem for any moral theory containing multiple foundational or fundamental moral principles. As such, it is not a problem strictly for Reid. Nonetheless, I think Reid may have a plausible response to this problem, and so I consider what he might say in the closing chapter, where I discuss a few areas in moral philosophy where a Reidian approach may be helpful.

From what topic can you reason with such a man? You may possibly convince him by reasoning, that it is his interest to observe this rule; but this is not to convince him that it is his duty. To reason about justice with a man who sees nothing to be just or unjust; or about benevolence with a man who sees nothing in benevolence preferable to malice, is like reasoning with a blind man about colour, or with a deaf man about sound (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.177-178).

If any man could say with sincerity, that he is conscious of no obligation to consult his own present and future happiness; to be faithful to his engagements, to obey his Maker, to injure no man; I know not what reasoning, either probable or demonstrative, I could use to convince him of any moral duty. As you cannot reason in mathematics with a man who denies the axioms, as little can you reason with a man in morals who denies the first principles of morals? The man who does not, by the light of his own mind, perceive some things in conduct to be right, and others to be wrong, is as incapable of reasoning about morals, as a blind man is about colours. Such a man, if any such man ever was, would be no agent. (*EIP* 7.2, p.551-552).

In these passages, Reid says that if one does not assent to moral first principles, the principles of justice, or the principles of benevolence, he or she is not a moral agent. Such an individual is in some sense morally defective—the same way someone who fails to grasp mathematical axioms is in some sense intellectually defective. Psychopaths (or rational amoralists), egoists, and perhaps young children or intellectually immature adults are possible candidates for those who lack moral agency.⁹³ As Cuneo states,

...Reid holds that assenting to a range of substantive moral propositions is constitutive of competent moral thinking; failure to do so is not to make a moral mistake in which one accepts false substantive moral view but marks a failure to be a moral agent. (110)

And also,

⁹³ Of course, I think Reid would admit that even if one does not always act in accordance with such principles, that person could still be a moral agent. One can be a moral agent and yet sometimes fail to always act justly or benevolently; for instance, due to weakness of will, one may not be as charitable or fair as he ought to be. It seems that if moral agency requires that we always act in accordance with such principles, then there would be very few moral agents. But I think it is counterintuitive that there are so few moral agents. Accordingly, I think Reid's point is that a moral agent, upon grasping such propositions, will believe such principles and experience some concomitant motivation or desire to act in accordance with such principles. However, someone who fails to grasp such principles, believe them, or feel some concomitant motivation to act in accordance with them would likely not be moral agents.

Moral principles are...constitutive of moral thinking inasmuch as one could not competently engage in such thinking without affirming these principles. (111-112)

As I understand Cuneo, any proposition one cannot help but believe upon sufficiently grasping it is a first principle. Such principles are what Cuneo calls the moral fixed points, and they include Reid's list of moral first principles; moreover, given what Reid says in the previous passages, the principle of justice and benevolence would be first principles as well; for one's failure to grasp or assent to them is evidence that he or she is not a moral agent. I admit I am not sure what other principles should be included in the set of moral first principles. I put aside this project for another time. However, we at least have some way to identify a moral first principle: if a competent moral agent assents to a proposition upon sufficiently grasping it, that proposition should be considered a first principle.

At this point, we are in a position to better understand how Reid's views about moral reality fit together. As shown, Reid is a moral realist and moral objectivist and thinks that moral facts are non-natural; some of these moral principles are nomologically necessary: given facts about human nature, it must be the case that certain moral principles obtain (similar to how the nature of the physical world leads to the instantiation of various physical laws). Moreover, only moral first principles are necessary in this nomological sense. Furthermore, moral first principles are known by way of intuition: such principles are not inferred, but upon grasping the content of such principles, one cannot help but believe them. Also, while Reid's list of moral principles is incomplete, Reid provides us with a clue as to which principles should be added; for as Reid states, there are some principles (what Cuneo calls the moral fixed points) that all morally

competent agents will assent to; such principles include his list of moral first principles, the principles of justice, and the principles of benevolence.

So far, in Chapter 2, I argued that we can interpret Reid as committing to two distinct ways of obtaining moral knowledge: moral perception and moral intuition. In this chapter, I discussed the nature of moral principles as well as the difference between moral first principles and non-first principles (including particular moral judgments). I argued that moral first principles are necessarily true, but in a nomological sense. Such principles are also first principles for Reid in so far as they are immediately believed or known in virtue of being understood or grasped. I argued that such an interpretation is compatible with the claim that some moral perceptual judgments are foundational, albeit they are not necessarily true in any nomological sense. Further, I explained how Reid's list of moral first principles, as presented by him, are problematic; I suggested a way Reid might respond to this concern, and I closed this chapter by suggesting ways in which one might add to Reid's list of moral first principle. I proceed in Chapter 4 to discuss how moral intuition and moral perception are supposed to work for Reid.

Chapter 4: Reidian Moral Perception and Reidian Moral Intuition

Thus far, in Chapter 2, I argued for what I call the Multiple Process View. According to the Multiple Process View, Reid might mean two different things when he says the moral sense provides us with knowledge of moral reality: First, Reid might mean that the moral sense is a faculty by which we intuit moral reality; or second, Reid might mean that the moral sense is an external sense faculty, and so we obtain knowledge by way of moral perception. I argued that we could plausibly interpret Reid as claiming we obtain moral knowledge through either intuition or perception.

In Chapter 3, I focused on three specific questions. The first concerned the nature of moral facts for Reid; I demonstrated that, for Reid, moral facts are non-natural and that moral first principles are necessarily true in a nomological sense. Second, I showed that in addition to being nomologically necessary, moral first principles are known immediately (or non-inferentially)—one believes such principles upon understanding or grasping their content; I added that we can still interpret Reid as maintaining we sometimes perceive moral reality, albeit what we perceive are not moral first principles; nonetheless, some of these perceptual moral judgments may be epistemically foundational. Third, I provided Reid's list of moral first principles and indicated that it is problematic since it lacks any principles that provide a plausible standard by which we can determine whatever is morally right, wrong, obligatory, etc. I proposed a solution available to Reid. Finally, drawing from Cuneo (2014), I investigated how one might add to Reid's list of moral first principles; I concluded that discovering which principles are first principles may be an empirical issue; however, given what Reid says, we have good

reason to think the principles of justice and the principles of benevolence could be added to the list of moral first principles.

Now in Chapter 4, I explain how the Multiple Process View—the interpretation where Reid might endorse that we obtain moral knowledge in either of two ways: by moral intuition and moral perception—is supposed to work. In section 1, I start by discussing Reid’s account of ordinary sense perception, for it bears close similarities to his account of moral perception, or so I claim. In the second section, I describe how I believe Reid’s account of moral perception is supposed to work. In section three, I raise and respond to three objections to the interpretation that Reid is at least partly a moral perceptionist. Lastly, in section 4, having discussed at length how moral perception might work for Reid, by considering how Reid’s moral intuitionism might be best understood. I close by considering objections one might raise against Reidian intuitionism and an objection one might raise against the Multiple Process View in general.

1. Reidian External Sense Perception

1.1 The three ingredients of Reidian external sense perception

One such way Reid thinks we obtain moral knowledge is by way of moral perception, where moral perception is understood as a type of external sense perception. According to such a view, one literally sees or perceives an action’s moral features or individual’s moral qualities. Now perhaps a good way to understand how Reidian moral perception functions is to first see how Reidian ordinary sense perception functions; for as will be shown, both moral perception and ordinary sense perception function similarly for Reid. In which case, my discussion starts with Reid’s account of ordinary sense perception.

For Reid, perception in general involves three ingredients, so to speak. The ingredients are (1) sign, (2) conception, and (3) judgment/belief. Regarding (1), signs are indicators of some quality or object in the external world:

I have called our sensations signs of external objects, finding no terms that express better the function that nature has assigned to sensations in perception and the relation they have to their corresponding objects. (*IHM* 6.21, p. 108)

For Reid, signs are often (but as I will later show, not always) sensations, and I understand a sensation as the way some quality or object looks, smells, tastes, sounds, or feels. For instance, a red sensation is simply the visual appearance of red, while a sensation of a rose's smell might be a certain pleasant odor. For Reid, in external sense experience, one's sense faculties are affected in certain ways by external objects and qualities, which in turn leads to that individual experiencing certain sensations. For example, in one's visual experience of a red rose, one's vision modality is affected in certain ways, which leads to the individual having red sensations. Or to use another example, in one's olfactory experience of a rose's smell, one's smell modality is affected in certain ways, which causes the individual to experience certain smell sensations.

Concerning (2), sensations in turn evoke or cause a conception of some quality or object. Reid describes a conception⁹⁴ in the following passages:

In bare conception there can't be either truth or falsehood, because conception neither affirms nor denies. Every judgment, and every proposition by which judgment is expressed, must be true or false; and truth and falsehood—using those terms in their proper sense—can belong to nothing but judgments or propositions that express judgments. . . . (*IHM* 6.1, p.161)

⁹⁴ Reid draws a distinction between the types of conceptions we form when we perceive either primary or secondary qualities. Regarding our conception of primary qualities (hardness, figure, extension), Reid says that we have a direct conception of the quality. We understand what the quality is like in itself (or its intrinsic nature). However, our conception of secondary qualities (smell, taste, color, hear) is relative, meaning that we only have a conception of the quality as something that produces certain sensations in us. The distinction does not bare much weight on the topic of this chapter, but I nonetheless bring it to the reader's attention.

It is impossible to perceive an object without having some notion or conception of the thing we perceive. We can indeed conceive an object that we don't perceive; but when through our external senses we perceive the object we must have some conception of it at the same time....(*EIP* 2.5, p.50-51)

Here, in the first passage, Reid describes a conception as a state where someone neither affirms nor denies a proposition. Moreover, in the second passage, Reid describes a conception as not only being an essential component of perceptual experience but also as a state where one has a mental notion (or simple apprehension)⁹⁵ of some quality or object. For instance, when experiencing a red sensation, one will have a conception of the quality of red, which is to say that he has a mental notion of or that he apprehends the color red.

Upon having a conception of some quality or object, he or she will also have an irresistible and immediate judgment/belief that the color red exists. That Reid thinks such a judgment is irresistible is suggested by the following passage:

In perception we have not only a more or less clear notion of the perceived object but also an irresistible belief that it exists. (*EIP* 2.5, p.51)

That Reid thinks such belief or judgments are immediate (or non-inferential) is evident when he says that:

This conviction is not only irresistible but is immediate. It is not by reasoning and argumentation that we come to be convinced of the existence of what we perceive; the only argument we want for the object's existence is that we perceive it. Perception commands our belief on its own authority, and doesn't condescend to base its authority on any reasoning whatsoever. (*EIP* 2.5, p.51)

⁹⁵ The notion of simple apprehension comes from Russell. As I understand Russell's use of the term, one simply apprehends some object or quality X if he or she has some intellectual understanding or grasp of X but does not affirm or deny X's existence. For example, one has a simple apprehension of a unicorn if he or she in some sense grasps or understands the concept of a unicorn; however, one might apprehend a unicorn without affirming or denying that a unicorn exists.

However, I should make three points before proceeding. First, as I understand Reid, there is no necessary or noticeable time lapse between one having a sensation, conception, and judgment; even though they each happen simultaneously, they each are necessary ingredients of perception. Reid compares our perceptual experience as being similar to what happens when we read. Accordingly, we can think of individual letters and their ordering as the signs of actual words. Yet we often do not think about the individual letters and their ordering when we read; we recognize words and their meanings immediately without paying much attention to the individual letters. So while the individual letters are necessary ingredients in our reading experiences, there need not be any time lapse between our recognition of the letters and our grasp of a word's meaning.

Second, in agreement with Copenhaver (2014)⁹⁶ and Folescu (2015), Reidian judgment is not to be understood as a state where one either affirms or denies whether a

⁹⁶ As Copenhaver interprets Reid,

The belief or judgment – Reid uses the terms interchangeably—by which we attribute properties in perception is not a propositional attitude. Rather, belief or judgment represents the object apprehended by conception as being thus-and-such. In other words, the belief or judgment that partially composes perceptual experience is not independent of conception and is formed on the basis of it. Conception and belief together are the representational aspects of perceptual experiences....What Reid calls 'belief' or 'judgment' is what we might now call representational content of experience—the part of experience that presents the world as represented to the subject of experience. (82-83)

I admit that I am not sure this view is textually supported, as Copenhaver does not provide any passages suggesting that Reid held such a view. Maybe Copenhaver has the following type of passage in Reid:

By my ears I don't just have the idea of sounds that are loud or soft, sharp or mellow, but I immediately perceive and this sound is loud and that soft, that this is sharp and that mellow, and two or more sounds at the same time I perceive to be concordant or discordant. These are judgments of the senses. That's what they have always been called, and how they have always been classified, by people whose minds are not tainted by philosophical theories. They are nature's immediate testimony through our senses; and we are so constituted by nature that we must accept their testimony simply because it is given to us by our senses. Sceptics try in vain to overturn this evidence by metaphysical reasoning. Even if we can't answer their arguments we still believe our senses and base our most important concerns on their testimony. (*EAP* 3.3.6)

proposition is true. Instead, it is more like a state where some proposition seems to be true.⁹⁷ The idea is that a Reidian judgment is one where the senses are affected in certain ways by external stimuli. Upon being affected, the senses then represent the world as being a certain way—e.g., as containing the color red. This representation—that the world is a certain way—is the judgment of the senses. It is up to the individual to either affirm or reject whether this judgment is accurate, though I understand Reid as maintaining that the individual has strong, if not compelling, grounds for affirming what the senses present to him.

One might press that even if Reid does not think judgment is a state where one affirms or denies a proposition, Reid clearly says we form an immediate belief in perceptual experience (*EIP* 2.5, p. 51). One might take such claims as evidence that Reid

Here, Reid talks about the judgment of the senses, and he refers to such judgments as nature's immediate testimony. Maybe the idea is that 'judgment' refers to a state where our perceptual faculties represent the world as being a certain way. Accordingly, when Reid says that in perception we form a judgment, by 'judgment', maybe he means that our sensory faculties represent the world as being a certain way. For example, to judge that something is red means the same thing that our perceptual faculties represent something in the world as being red.

However, one problem with this interpretation is that Reid often uses 'judgment' and 'belief' interchangeably. The common usage of 'belief' is that it is a state where an individual either affirms or denies a proposition. Now there may be three different ways one might understand Reid's usage of 'belief' and 'judgment', particularly in contexts where he describes the nature of perception: (1) Reid uses 'belief' in a non-standard sense—it means the same thing as the meaning of 'judgment' as described in the previous paragraph; or (2) both 'belief' and 'judgment' describe states where one affirms or denies a proposition; or (3) 'belief' refers to the state where one affirms or denies that a proposition, whereas 'judgment' refers to a state where one's perceptual faculties represents the world as being a certain way. One might accept (3) and maintain that even if judgment always occurs in perceptual experience, it is not always accompanied by belief. Admittedly, I am not sure which interpretation most accurately reflects Reid's view. To me, it seems that (3) is the most philosophically and empirically plausible.

⁹⁷ Van Cleve (2015) points out that to assume that a judgment, understood as an act where one affirms or denies some proposition's truth, is an ingredient in perception is counterintuitive. For it seems like there are multiple examples where someone has a perceptual experience of some object or quality but does not believe that the object or quality exists. For example, consider someone who is familiar with the Muller-Lyer illusion. In this illusion, one straight line appears to be longer than another parallel line; however, the lines are actually the same length. Someone familiar with this illusion might see these lines as being different lengths and yet not believe they are different lengths. Or to use another example, one might take a hallucinogenic drug and perceive all sorts of bizarre things. We can imagine that this person knows he is on drugs and so does not believe that these bizarre things are present.

thinks we actually affirm whatever we perceive. Accordingly, if it perceptually seems to me that it is raining, I will believe that it is raining. Or if it perceptually seems to me that there is a pink elephant in the room, I will believe such a creature is in the room. Given how the world is presented to me in perceptual experience, I have compelling grounds for my perceptual belief, and I have such grounds even if my perceptual belief is false (e.g., there is no pink elephant in the room). For Reid, then, it is the nature of perceptual experience that we believe what our sense faculties present to us as seeming to be true.⁹⁸

I grant that in many circumstances we have compelling or irresistible grounds for believing what we perceive, and that in many—if not most cases—we believe what our perceptual faculties present as being the case. However, it seems counterintuitive that we always believe what we perceive; for example, one might know that he is hallucinating, and so not believe that there is a pink elephant in the room despite the fact that it perceptually seems to him that there is such a thing in the room. Or to use Van Cleve's (2015) example, one might be subjected to the Muller-Lyer illusion where two lines of different lengths appear to be the same length. He or she might know that the two lines are different lengths even though it perceptually seems to him or her that they are the same length; accordingly, this person might not believe what perceptually seems to be the case. Ultimately, I am not sure what Reid would say in response to such cases; I leave it open whether his account of perception can accommodate these types of perceptual experiences.

Nonetheless, maybe it is possible that when it comes to perceptual experience, Reid is using a non-standard sense of 'belief', where 'belief' does not refer to the state

⁹⁸ I am indebted to Marina Folescu for bringing this point to my attention.

where one affirms or denies some proposition. For now, I leave aside whether Reid uses ‘belief’ in a non-standard sense when it comes to perception. The bottom line is that if Reid writes that belief is a state where one affirms a proposition’s truth, then it is a case where his pen slipped or he had an off-day. Moreover, regarding my goal in this dissertation, I do not think anything crucial hinges on having a clear stance on Reid’s various notions of ‘belief’, and so I leave this issue aside for another time and place.

Moreover, even if Reid thinks we always immediately believe our perceptions, I have no idea why Reid would have to make such a claim; for nothing crucial about his account of perception seems to hinge on it. Hereafter, I will work under the assumption that Reid does not think perceptual judgment or belief (when understood as ingredients of perception) are necessarily states where one affirms or denies some proposition.⁹⁹

Third, what Reid means by ‘immediate’ in regards to an immediate belief/judgment warrants some discussion. As pointed out by Buras (2009), Reid means that perceptual belief is immediate in three senses. In the first sense, in perceptual experience, the belief or judgment is *epistemologically immediate*: one’s judgment or belief that it is raining is not based on any inference. In the second sense, ‘immediacy’ means that no object mediates between the perceiver and object of perception; there is no idea or object that acts as a mediary between the perceiver and the object one perceives. For instance, there is no idea or mental representation of, say, rain that acts as a mediary between the

⁹⁹ Van Cleve (2015) has a similar worry and so decides to take Reid as using ‘belief’ in its non-standard sense when he talks about perceptual experience. Van Cleve understands Reidian perception as follows:

perception is belief-like in having propositional contents just as beliefs do, but it need not involve the subject’s endorsing the contents or taking them to be true. It is as though something in your perception tells you that there is a window in the wall, even if you know better than to believe what you are told. (21)

perceiver and the actual rain. In this sense, the perceptual belief is *referentially immediate*. Third, one's perceptual belief that, for example, it is raining is immediate if your perceptual belief does not present or describe the rain only in terms of the rain's relation to something else (e.g., the sensations the rain causes in you). Such a belief would be *descriptively immediate*. I discuss what Reid means by 'immediate' in large part because one might press that Reidian moral perception is not immediate and so does not count as a genuine form of external sense perception. I will discuss this issue at length in section 3 where I discuss objections to my interpretation at length.¹⁰⁰

Having explained the three ingredients of Reidian perception, I now proceed to talk about the difference between what Reid calls original and acquired perceptions.

1.2 Original and acquired Perception

Our perceptions can be either, what Reid calls, original or acquired. Original perceptions are those we have that do not require any requisite experience or training:

Some of our perceptions by the senses could be called 'original' or 'basic', because they don't require any previous experience or learning; but ever so many more of our perceptions are acquired or learned, and are the fruit of experience. (*IHM* 2.21, p. 125)

Our perception of many primary qualities (e.g., motion and hardness) and some secondary qualities (e.g., colors) are in many cases original.¹⁰¹ For Reid, humans are

¹⁰⁰ I should not that Van Cleve (2004 and 2015) seems to understand Reid as committed to a fourth account of immediacy: psychological immediacy. The idea is that one might believe that he sees an oriole, and this perceptual belief might be psychological immediate since the individual is not aware of any state in which he infers that he sees an oriole. Nonetheless, the perceptual belief is not epistemically immediate since its justification is based on other beliefs he hold—e.g., that he has correctly inferred that when he sees a bird of a certain shape and coloration that such a bird is an oriole.

¹⁰¹ Concerning our perception of primary qualities, Reid states that:

the perception that I have by touch of the hardness and softness of bodies, of their extension, shape and motion, isn't acquired; it is original.

constituted such that when they have sensations of, say, certain colors or of something being hard, they will form a conception of and an immediate belief/judgment that such qualities exist in their environment.

Yet, as indicated by the previous passage, many of our perceptions are acquired, meaning that in order to have such perceptions we must have some requisite experience or training:

Our perceptions are of two kinds: some are natural and original, others are acquired and the result of experience. When I perceive that this is the taste of cider and that of brandy, this is the smell of an apple and that of an orange, this is the noise of thunder and that the ringing of bells, this is the sound of a coach passing and that the voice of a friend, these perceptions and others like them are not original; they are acquired. (*EIP* 6.20, p.104-105)

For Reid, one example of an acquired perception is our auditory perception of a horse-drawn coach. Without proper experience, when we hear the clappity-clap sound of a horse-drawn coach, we will not recognize that sound as being that of a horse-drawn coach. However, through experience, one's auditory faculty matures. Eventually, when one hears the clappity-clap, he or she will form a conception of the sound of a horse-drawn coach and have an immediate judgment that the clappity-clap sound is that of a horse-drawn coach. Or to use a modern-day example, a novice birder may look into a tree and see something as being a bird. Noticing its shape and orange and black feathers, he consults his bird manual and infers that he sees an oriole. However, through experience, his bird-identification skills improve, and he eventually becomes an expert birder. As such, he develops the capacity to visually and non-inferentially perceive certain birds as being orioles (or robins, or warblers, or finches, etc.). Moreover, such a perception is immediate in that the birder need not make any inference when judging that he sees an oriole. He simply sees the bird as being an oriole.

Moreover, for Reid, even one's visual perception of an object's three-dimensionality is an example of an acquired perception:

Thus, when I look at a globe that stands before me, all I perceive by the original powers of sight is something that is circular and variously coloured. The visible figure has no distance from the eye, isn't convex, and has only two dimensions; even its size is incapable of being measured in inches, feet, or other linear measures. But when I have learned to perceive the distance from the eye of each part of this object, this perception gives it convexity and a spherical shape, adding a third dimension to the two that it had before. (*EIP* 6.23, p. 116)

Reid thinks that we originally perceive an object's two dimensionality or what he calls its "apparent figure". Take for example one's perception of a spherical ball. For Reid, we are constituted such that we only originally see it as round; while through our sense of touch we perceive it as being three-dimensional, visually seeing it as being a three-dimensional sphere takes experience. Accordingly, through our sense of touch, we originally perceive its three dimensionality.¹⁰² However, through experience, we learn to associate the spherical object we perceive by touch as being the same as the two-dimensional circle we perceive by sight. Eventually, we acquire the perceptual ability to immediately visually perceive it as being a three-dimensional spherical object.

Additionally, Reid even thinks that people can acquire sophisticated perceptual abilities:

The shepherd knows every sheep in his flock the way we know our acquaintances, and can pick them out of another flock one by one. The butcher knows by sight the weight and quality of his cattle and sheep before they are killed. The farmer perceives by his eye roughly how much hay there is in a haystack, or how much corn in a heap. The sailor sees from a great distance what a ship's build and carrying capacity are, and how far away it is. Every man accustomed to writing tells his acquaintances apart by their hand-writing, as he does by their faces. And the painter distinguishes in paintings the styles of all the

¹⁰²Reid claims that we can perceive an object's three-dimensionality, or real figure, by our faculties of touch or feeling. Through experience, we learn that, say, the object we perceive as being spherical by touch is the same object we visually perceive as being round. Eventually, we develop the capacity to visually perceive the object as being a three-dimensional spherical object.

great masters. In short, acquired perception varies greatly from person to person, because of the variety in the objects to which the perceptions are directed and the different ways people go about perceiving them. (*EIP* 6.20, p.104-105)

Sea captains can see types of ships; farmers can see the weight of their livestock; artists can determine whether a painting is a Rembrandt or a Van Gogh. As Reid puts it, “acquired perception varies greatly from person to person”. Acquired perceptions, accordingly, extend from to seeing an object as being three-dimension to hearing a musical composition as being a work of Mozart as supposed to being a work of Beethoven or Bach.

1.3 Signs as appearances and qualities

So far, I have described Reid’s account of signs as being strictly sensations. Such sensations function as signs that various secondary and primary qualities exist in one’s environment. However, in agreement with Cuneo (2003) and Copenhaver (2014), signs, specifically in acquired perception, are not always sensations. They maintain that primary (e.g., hardness, extension, motion) and secondary qualities themselves (e.g., colors, smells, sounds, shapes) and appearances—broadly understood—can be signs in acquired perception. Like in original perception, such signs suggest or evoke a conception and an immediate judgment or belief that the object or quality exists. For instance, the appearance of a circle might suggest (or evoke) a conception of a sphere and also suggest (or evoke) an immediate judgment or belief that something spherical exists in one’s perceptual environment. Or an object’s shape and colorization might suggest a conception of an oriole or a warbler, as well as an immediate judgment or belief that such a bird exists in one’s environment.

To see how such qualities or appearances can function as signs of things, consider some of the examples discussed in the above passages: Certain sounds qualities suggest that there is a stage-coach passing by; the appearance of a circle suggests that an object is three-dimensional. Similarly, an appearance of a sheep or cow can be signs of their weight. As indicated in the above passages, each of these perceptions are acquired, and the signs in these perceptions seem to be something other than sensations.¹⁰³ I raise this issue in large part because I believe Reidian moral perception will involve signs that are not sensations.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ I think there is strong textual evidence supporting the claim that Reid thinks sensations do not always function as signs in acquired perceptions. Perhaps Reid would not agree with my reading that certain sounds or tastes are signs of stage-coaches and cups of brandy, respectfully. Nonetheless, Reid is clear that sometimes qualities and appearances can be such signs:

In all our senses, the acquired perceptions are many more than the original, especially in sight. By this sense we perceive originally the visible figure and color of bodies only, and their visible place: but we learn to perceive by the eye, almost everything which we can perceive by touch. The original perceptions of this sense, serve only as signs to introduce the acquired. (*IHM* 6.20, p.170)

...from the visible appearance as a sign, I immediately proceed to the belief that the object is half a mile distant. Then this distance, together with the visible magnitude, signify to me the real magnitude...of a man on horseback [in the distance]...(*IHM* 6.22, p.184)

¹⁰⁴ As discussed in the previous chapter, Reid does not think sensations are reliable signs of morally relevant features in the world. His view is based on anti-sentimentalism. Recall in chapter 3, Reid wants to distance his moral theory from that of the moral sentimentalists (e.g., Hutcheson and Hume). Roughly moral sentimentalism endorses the claim that our moral judgments are ultimately based on or determined by our moral sentiments (or moral emotions). According to this view, moral sentiments or emotions are types of sensations for a moral sentimentalist. For example, one's judgment that a certain action is morally right or wrong is ultimately based on or determined by one's emotional responses or sentiments (e.g., approbation, anger, disgust, etc.) to that action. Reid, however, fears that such a position either leads to moral subjectivism or some version of non-cognitivism (the view, at least broadly understood, that moral judgments lack propositional content). Leaving aside whether Reid is right to reject emotions or sentiments as reliable signs of moral reality, the important point is that he rejects this sentimentalist account of moral judgment.

I should point out that multiple philosophers maintain that Reid need not reject emotions or sentiments as being reliable signs of moral reality. Cuneo (2006) and Kroeker (2001, 2009, 2014) understand Reid as being in a strong position to endorse the claim that emotions and sentiments can be reliable signs of moral reality. So while Reid does not explicitly say that such emotions could ever function as reliable signs, he is in nonetheless in a position to claim that they are reliable in this way.

That issue aside, let me recap some of the basic ideas of Reid's account of perception. First, in any perception, there are three ingredients: signs, conception, and immediate belief/judgment. Second, I do not think we should understand Reid as maintaining that we always believe what we perceive; so even though he says that judgment or belief is an ingredient of perception, 'judgment' or 'belief' may not necessarily refer to a state where one either affirms or denies a proposition—at least I think a charitable interpretation should not attribute such an implausible view to Reid. Third, the signs in some acquired perceptions are secondary qualities, primary qualities, and appearances (broadly construed). I now proceed to talk about the nature of such signs in moral perception and Reid's apparent claim that our perception of moral reality is similar to our perception of an individual's various mental properties (e.g., intelligence, anger, sadness, etc.).

2. Reidian Moral Perception

2.1 How Reidian moral perception works

With Reid's general account of perception in hand, we are now in a position to understand how Reidian moral perception works. To understand how it works, it should first be noted that in some passages Reid maintains that our perception of moral reality is similar to our perception of an individual's various mental properties. Consider the following passage:

The signs in natural language are features of the face, gestures of the body, and modulations of the voice; the variety of which is suited to the variety of the things signified by them. Nature hath established a real connection between these signs, and the thoughts and dispositions of the mind which are signified by them; and nature hath taught us the interpretation of these signs; so that, previous to experience, the sign suggests the thing signified, and creates the belief of it. (*IHM* 6.19, p.190)

For Reid, various facial expressions, behaviors, and tones of voice function as signs of an individual's mental features. For instance, one's behavior might function as a sign that an individual is intelligent, sad, or angry. Or one's tone of voice might signify whether that individual is angry or sad. For sake of argument, I am going to assume that some of these perceptions are immediate (broadly construed)¹⁰⁵ and that Reid would agree that they are immediate. My grounds for making this assumption is that if Reid thinks we can immediately identify which sheep is which among a flock, then it is not too far a stretch to say that we can immediately perceive someone as being intelligent, sad, or angry. Other passages support the interpretation that Reid thinks that one's behavior, tone of voice, and facial expressions can function as reliable signs of that individual's mental properties:

A man's wisdom is known to us only by the signs of it in his conduct; his eloquence by the signs of it in his speech. In the same manner we judge of his virtue, of his fortitude, and of all his talents and qualities of mind. Yet it is to be observed, that we judge of men's talents with as little doubt or hesitation as we judge of the immediate objects of sense.... (*EIP* 6.6, p. 508)

In natural language the signs are features of the face, gestures of the body and modulations of the voice; and the variety of these is suited to the variety of the things signified by them. Nature has established a real connection between these signs and the thoughts and mental dispositions that they signify; and nature has taught us how to interpret these signs, so that independently of experience the sign suggests the thing signified and creates the belief in it. A man on a social occasion can, without doing good or evil, behave himself gracefully, civilly, politely, or, on the contrary, meanly, rudely and impertinently, without uttering a word! We see the disposition of his mind by their natural signs in his face and his behavior, in the same way that we perceive the shape and other qualities of bodies by the sensations that nature has connected with them. (*IHM* 6.24, p. 217-218)

¹⁰⁵ For purposes of talking about Reid's account of moral perception, I wish to leave open which senses of immediate Reid has in mind. Though I will not argue for it here, I think we should understand Reid as believing that such moral perceptions are at least epistemically, psychologically, and referentially immediate. I leave a defense of this claim for another time and place.

In both of these passages, it seems Reid begins to state that we can perceive one's moral qualities or character traits, such as whether someone is virtuous, brave, rude, polite, mean, or impertinent. Here the important point is that similar to how by various signs we can perceive someone's mental features, we can also perceive an individual's moral qualities. Moreover, Reid maintains that "we judge of men's talents with as little doubt or hesitation as we judge of the immediate objects of sense". I take this passages as Reid maintaining that there are moral perceptions and that such perceptions function in a manner similar to our perception of an individual's mental qualities or properties (e.g., intelligence, sadness, anger, etc.).

However, an objection quickly surfaces for my interpretation: One might consider other passages from Reid and maintain that Reid does not think we perceive an individual's mental qualities or moral qualities. Instead, such passages suggest that Reid thinks we observe certain behaviors, facial expressions, or tones of voice, and then later infer that the individual possesses a certain mental quality or moral quality. If so, then we do not literally perceive such qualities; we merely infer or deduce that such individual's possess such qualities. To see this concern, consider the following passage:

Intelligence, design, and skill, are not objects of the external senses, nor can we be conscious of them in any person but ourselves....A man's wisdom is known to us only by ¹⁰⁶the signs of it in his conduct; his eloquence by the signs of it in his speech. In the same manner we judge of his virtue, of his fortitude, and of all his talents and qualities of mind. Yet it is to be observed, that we judge of men's talents with as little doubt or hesitation as we judge of the immediate objects of sense.... We perceive one man to be open, another cunning; one to be ignorant, another very knowing; one to be slow of understanding, another quick. Every man forms such judgments of those he converses with; and the common affairs of life depend upon such judgments. We can as little avoid them as we can avoid seeing what is before our eyes. From this it appears, that it is no less part of the human constitution, to judge of men's characters, and of their intellectual powers,

¹⁰⁶ One might wonder whether there is a genuine difference between seeing something as being an oriole and seeing someone as being intelligent. My hunch is that it seems less controversial to claim that we perceive something as being an oriole than to say that we perceive someone to be intelligent, angry, sad, etc. In the first case, it seems we can easily imagine birders who have developed the perceptual ability to see something as an oriole or a warbler. In the second case, one could maintain that the belief that someone is angry or sad is inferential. We see someone's behavior or hear one's tone of voice, and then infer that the individual is angry or sad. Accordingly, leaving Reid's view on the matter aside, I think it is worth investigating whether we immediately perceive individuals as being intelligent or sad.

from the signs of them in their actions and discourse, than to judge of corporeal objects by our senses. (*EIP* 6.6, p.503–4)

In this passage, Reid starts by saying that mental qualities like wisdom, eloquence, and virtue are not the objects of external sense perception. He states that we are aware of the signs (e.g., behavior, speech), which are indicators of these qualities; yet he maintains that such qualities are not perceived by the external senses. Accordingly, we could plausibly read this passage as Reid maintaining that we do not perceive mental qualities like whether one is intelligent or virtuous. Instead, this passage suggests that when one judges that someone is say, intelligent or virtuous, he or she is making an inference based on which facial expressions or behavior he or she perceives.

The next passage more explicitly suggests that Reid does not think we perceive one's mental qualities or character traits:

Now, every judgment of this kind is just one application of the design principle, the general principle that intelligence, wisdom, and other mental qualities in the cause can be inferred from their marks or signs in the effect. The things men say and do are effects, of which the speakers and doers are the causes. We perceive the effects through our senses, but the causes are behind the scene. We simply infer their existence and their degrees from what we observe in the effects. From wise conduct we infer wisdom in the cause, and so on. (*EIP* 6.6, p.503-504)

This passage further suggests that we do not perceive an individual's mental qualities; instead, we perceive some facial expressions, tones of voice, or behaviors, and then infer that the individual is, for instance, virtuous, sad, intelligent etc. For the purposes of this chapter, the upshot is that if moral perception functions the same way as perception of another's mental qualities, then it would seem moral perception is not really a form of external sense perception; instead, moral perception is really just a case of seeing one's behavior or facial features and then inferring that that individual is virtuous, vicious, etc.

However, for two reasons, I think both passages are consistent with the interpretation that Reid thinks perception of another's mental properties is a genuine form of external sense perception (or at least, we could take Reid as maintaining that we perceive certain mental qualities such as intelligence, sadness, or virtuous character). First, Reid could maintain that even if one must initially infer from an individual's behavior that he or she is intelligent or virtuous, one may eventually develop the capacity to immediately perceive that individual as possessing such qualities.¹⁰⁷

Second, Reid could maintain that in order to infer from one's behavior that he or she is intelligent or sad, we must perceive her behavior as being intelligent or virtuous. The idea is that we perceive intelligent or virtuous behavior and then infer that some individual possesses such mental qualities. So while we do not literally perceive someone's intelligence or virtue, we still perceive their behavior as being intelligent or virtuous. For example, I do not see that Smith's is intelligent; instead, I see Smith's behavior as exhibiting intelligent behavior and then infer that he is intelligent.¹⁰⁸

Regarding the first response, the idea is that, initially, we perceive various signs—facial expressions, behaviors, tones of voice, etc.—but fail to recognize that such signs are indicators of various mental qualities. But just as we learn that the clappity-clap

¹⁰⁷ I should point out that Reid thinks that we are naturally disposed to certain features as being signs of one's mental states. For example, children worldwide are, upon seeing a mother's smile, disposed to believe that the mother approves of her child's actions. In which case, it seems like seeing such maternal approval is better classified as being a type of original perception. So maybe there are original higher-order perceptions; I grant Reid maintains such a view, and Copenhaver (2014) seems to interpret Reid as such. Nonetheless, in so far as one must already have conceptions of various qualities and objects (e.g., he or she must understand the concept of one's mother or a smile) before he or she can recognize motherly approval, I consider such perceptions to be in some sense acquired; accordingly, in many cases, order to perceive various higher-order qualities, one must have had a set of prior perceptual experiences.

¹⁰⁸ I am indebted to Peter Markie for bringing this point to my attention.

sound is that of a horse-drawn coach or that a certain black-and-orange-colored bird is an oriole, we eventually learn that such things are signs of another's mental qualities.¹⁰⁹

Accordingly, there may be a time were the novice birder sees some object and then infers that it is an oriole. Ultimately, however, similar to how we develop the ability to immediately hear a certain sound as being that of a horse-drawn coach or immediately perceive some bird as being an oriole, we develop the perceptual ability to immediately see people as being intelligent, sad, angry etc. In doing so, one need no longer infer from certain actions or facial expressions that, say, Smith is sad or that Jones is intelligent. Instead one has developed the perceptual ability to immediately see Smith as sad or Jones as intelligent. Here, one might maintain that there is a relevant difference between one's perception of an oriole and one's perception of an individual's intelligence or anger. I will address this concern below, and so for now merely note that I am aware of it.¹¹⁰

Regarding the second response, recall that one could maintain that even if one must infer that someone is, say, intelligent or virtuous, it must be the case that we perceive an individual's behavior as being intelligent or virtuous. To see whether Reid might commit to such a view, consider the end of (*EIP* 6.6, p.503-504):

...that intelligence, wisdom, and other mental qualities in the cause can be inferred from their marks or signs in the effect....We simply infer their existence

¹⁰⁹ Copenhaver (2010) and (2014), for example, interprets Reid as claiming that we perceive higher-order qualities. She uses the example of a coin collector who eventually develops the ability to see whether a coin is genuine or counterfeit. She thinks that, initially, one might form beliefs on the basis of perception or infer such beliefs based on one's perceptual experiences (e.g., noticing the poorer-quality medal and inferring it is a counterfeit coin). However, one could develop the capacity to perceptually see the coin as being a counterfeit.

¹¹⁰ The objection is that regarding one's perception of an oriole, one's perception of the object that is an oriole is immediate (broadly construed), whereas one's perception of one being intelligent is not immediate; accordingly, the worry is that it is not clear how one's mental qualities could be an immediate object of perception. And if Reid thinks immediacy is a necessary condition for a perception to count as a genuine external sense perception, then one's "perception" of another's mental property would not be immediate.

and their degrees from what we observe in the effects. From wise conduct we infer wisdom in the cause, and so on.

Here, Reid states that upon observing someone's behavior we then infer that he or she possesses certain mental qualities. However, as stated previously, that our beliefs about another's mental qualities is inferential is still compatible with maintaining that we can acquire the ability to immediately perceive someone as exhibiting such qualities—similar to how a novice birder must initially infer that an orange and black bird is an oriole but later acquires the perceptual ability to perceive the bird as being an oriole.

Yet even if one denies that we can acquire the ability to perceive someone as being intelligent or sad, we can still interpret Reid as claiming that we perceive things like intelligent or virtuous behavior. For as Reid states, “[from] wise conduct we infer wisdom in the cause....” In doing so, I understand Reid as maintaining that in order to infer that someone is intelligent or virtuous, one must first perceive his or her behavior as being intelligent or virtuous. As such, Reid maintains that we perceive things like intelligent or virtuous behavior, for such perceptions are needed before one can infer that somebody possesses a certain mental feature.

Let me point out that it is not clear (at least to me) that Reid endorses either of these views. However, I think both responses are consistent with various positions Reid holds about perception. Regarding the first response, the idea that we might acquire the capacity to perceive another's mental qualities or character traits fits with Reid's view that we can acquire the ability to perceive properties such as the weight of a sheep or the type of ship sailing towards the horizon. Regarding the second response, as mentioned in chapter 2, Reid frequently mentions that we perceive moral reality. Accordingly, maybe we perceive certain behaviors or actions as being morally wrong, right, virtuous etc., and

then infer that the individual exhibiting such behaviors or performing such actions possesses a certain virtuous or vicious character trait. The bottom line is that both responses do not seem to depart (at least drastically) from Reid's own positions.

So far, I have described Reidian moral perception as involving signs that are appearances and perhaps certain qualities (e.g., tones of voice); I take such appearances to be facial expressions, behaviors, and actions; I also take certain tones of voice to be signs of various moral features as well—for example, a menacing voice could be a sign of someone's vicious character traits, while a kind-sounding voice could be a sign of one's virtuous character traits (see *EIP* 6.6, p.503–4; *EIP* 6.5, p.485 ; *IHM* 6.24, p. 117-118; and *IHM* 6.19, p.190), as these are passages where Reid characterizes signs in moral perception as such). Furthermore: Like with non-moral perception, such signs evoke a conception and immediate judgment or belief. The conception, I presume, is of a certain action or behavior being morally right, wrong, etc., or that of an individual possessing a certain morally relevant character trait. Additionally, Reidian moral perception is accompanied by an immediate judgment or belief that some action or behavior is morally wrong, right etc., or that some individual possesses a certain character trait. At least, I take it that such conceptions and beliefs or judgments are ingredients in moral perception.

That Reid thinks so is evident in the following passage:

...by an original power of the mind, which we call conscience, or the moral faculty, we have the conceptions of right and wrong in human conduct, or merit and demerit, of duty and moral obligation, and our other moral conceptions; and that, by the same faculty we perceive some things in human conduct to be right and others to be wrong. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.180)

Here, Reid maintains that our moral conceptions are obtained or formed by our moral faculty, and that by this faculty we perceive rightness and wrongness in human conduct.

If I am right that Reid endorses some version of moral perception, then I do not think it is much of a stretch to maintain that such moral conceptions are ingredients in moral perception and that moral perception involves a moral judgment or belief.

2.2 Why Reid's account is a form of moral perception

Having shown that signs, conceptions, and beliefs or judgments are ingredients in Reidian moral perception, I now want to further clarify how exactly Reid's view is a form of moral perception. In doing so, I maintain that, the following three conditions are necessary and jointly sufficient for a perception to count as a form of moral perception (at least moral perception broadly understood).

In showing why these three conditions are necessary, perhaps a good place to start is to first consider Harman's paradigm example of a moral perception (1977):

If you round a corner and see a group of young hoodlums pour gasoline on a cat and ignite it, you do not need to conclude that what they are doing is wrong; you do not need to figure anything out; you can see that it is wrong. (4)

In this example, I understand Harman as stating that in moral perception, you immediately see that someone's actions are morally right, wrong, etc. The content of your perception includes the wrongness of the Hoodlum's action, and seeing that the Hoodlum's action is wrong is not based on any inferences or deductions. Accordingly, a moral perceptual belief is non-inferential; it is not formed on the basis of other beliefs one might hold.

Second, I think the content of the moral perception must be a perceptual seeming state. Accordingly, when you round the corner and see the hoodlums pouring gasoline on the cat, it perceptually seems to you that the action is wrong. This perceptual seeming

state is similar to the seeming state one has when it seems to he or she that grass is green, it is raining outside, or that there is an oriole in the oak tree. The state, then, must not be some kind of intellectual seeming state where, say, it appears to one's intellect or mind's eye that the hoodlums' actions are morally wrong. Accordingly, it must perceptually seem to the individual that the hoodlums' actions are morally wrong.

Furthermore, in moral perception, the wrongness, rightness, etc., of an action must constitute part of the representational content of the perception. One does not simply perceive some hoodlums, gasoline, fire, and cats, but no morally relevant feature. The wrongness of the hoodlums' action makes up the content of one's perceptual experience—similar to how 'that bird is an oriole' constitutes the content of one's perceptual experience of an oriole. To see the wrongness of the hoodlums' actions, then, involves having a perceptual (rather than intellectual) seeming state that their action is morally wrong. Had the hoodlums' performed a morally praiseworthy action (e.g., instead of pouring gasoline on the cat, they pour anti-flea medicine), it may have perceptually seemed to the perceiver that the hoodlum's action was morally praiseworthy.

To be a moral perception, accordingly, the perception itself must have a certain phenomenal character. The idea is that there is a difference between seeing X and seeing something as being X. For example, suppose I have not seen my uncle for some time and so no longer recognize his appearance. But then suppose I see my uncle at a family event, yet fail to recognize him as being my uncle (e.g., I see a man walking by (who happens to be my uncle) but I do not recognize who he is). Here, I have seen my uncle but I have failed to see him as being my uncle. I need further knowledge and experiences before I can make the judgment that this individual is my uncle. Similarly, if one is a moral

perceptionist, I think he or she is committed to this view that we must see the action as being morally wrong, right, virtuous etc. So, regarding Harman's example, while one might witness the Hoodlums' morally wrong action, it may not be the case that they perceive the action as being morally wrong, and in such an instance, one would not have a moral perception. In which case, genuine moral perception requires that we see the Hoodlums' action as being morally wrong (McBrayer 2009).

To recap, to count as a genuine moral perception, at least three conditions must be met: First, the perceptual content must be immediate, and not the result of some inference. Second, the representational content must be a perceptual (as supposed to some intellectual) seeming state. Third, a genuine moral perception is one that involves seeing an action as being morally wrong. This is a broad notion of a moral perception, but I think any account of moral perception must meet these three conditions. In which case, if Reid thinks we have moral perceptions, then his view must at least satisfy these three conditions. With this notion of moral perception in hand, I now proceed to show how Reid's account meets these conditions.

Regarding the condition that the moral perceptual belief must be immediate, Reid maintains that when we perceive rightness wrongness, duty, obligation, etc., we do so immediately:

whatever is immediately perceived to be just, honest, and honorable, in human conduct, carries moral obligation along with it, and the contrary carries demerit and blame; and from those moral obligations that are immediately perceived, all other moral obligations must be deduced by reason. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.179)

Now if Reid thinks we sometimes have moral perceptions, then such a passage suggests that some moral perceptions are immediate. I take this as textual evidence that moral perceptual beliefs are immediate or non-inferential. So the first condition is satisfied.

Regarding the second condition, I appeal to passages where Reid draws strong comparisons between the external sense faculties and the moral faculty. Consider the following two passages:

[the moral sense has] got this name sense, no doubt, from some analogy which it is conceived to bear to the external senses. And if we have just notions of the office of the external senses, the analogous very evident, and I see no reason to take offence, as some have done, at the name of the moral sense. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p. 175)

In treating the principles of morals in general we endeavored to shew that by our moral faculty we have an immediate perception of right and wrong of moral rectitude and depravity in moral agents in like manner as we have a perception of black and white in visible objects by the eyes of harmony and discord by a musical ear and of other qualities in objects by means of the several faculties of our nature which are adapted by our Author for our nature as to give us not only the ideas of such qualities but an immediate perception of their existence in certain subjects. (*PA* 5, p.43)

In the first passage, Reid maintains that the analogy between the external senses and moral sense is very evident; here, it seems that we can infer that moral perceptions for Reid are going to function in a manner similar to external sense perception. In the second, Reid states that in the same way we perceive visible objects, so we perceive right and wrong in moral agents. I take these passages, especially the second as evident that, at minimum, the contents of some moral perceptions are perceptual seeming states; for similar to how a non-moral perception has certain perceptual seeming state as its content (an object looking black or white), so do our moral perceptions have such seeming states as their contents.

Finally, do we have evidence indicating that Reid thinks moral perceptions involve seeing certain actions or behaviors as morally wrong, right, obligatory etc.? I think we do: first in the passage just quoted from *Practical Ethics*, Reid states that “by our moral faculty we have an immediate perception of right and wrong of moral rectitude

and depravity in moral agents". Here, I understand Reid as maintaining that we literally see right and wrong actions as well as certain moral character traits in individuals. Moreover, Reid maintains that "we *perceive* some things in human conduct to be right, and others to be wrong" (*EAP*, 3.3.6, p. 180). Reid does not say we infer that their conduct is right or wrong. In so far as he maintains that our perceptual beliefs are not inferred from other beliefs, I take it that, in some cases, our perceptions that certain conduct is right or wrong is immediate as well. In so far as it is immediate, I think we can safely maintain that such perceptions involve seeing certain content as being morally right, morally wrong, etc.

So it seems the three conditions are met by Reid's account of moral perception, and so I think we have good reason for thinking that Reid commits to some version of moral perception. However, in attributing this view to Reid, I intend my interpretation of Reid's moral perception to be rather modest. It is modest since it first describes the basic features of Reid's account of moral perception: Recall, like with non-moral perception, moral perception has signs, conceptions, and belief or judgments as its ingredients. Second, I placed Reid's account as falling under a very broad category of moral perception: in so far as the moral perceptions are immediate, have perceptual seeming states as their contents, and have contents that represent certain actions or behaviors as being morally wrong, right, virtuous, etc., I think we can safely say that Reid endorses some moral epistemology where some moral knowledge is obtained by way of moral perception. I now consider several objections one might raise against my interpretation of Reid.

3. Three Objections to My Interpretation of Reidian Moral Perception

Before proceeding to discuss how moral intuition might work for Reid, let me address several objections. The first worry is that Reid's view is subject to what is sometimes called the causal objection. The objection maintains that if moral facts are non-natural, and so not the sort of facts we can discover through empirical methods, it is not clear individuals and moral properties can have the right sort of causal connection required for perception to occur. The second worry is that, by Reid's own account, moral perception is not a genuine form of external sense perception. The final worry is that Reid's account of moral perception seems quite limited. For it only seems to provide us with epistemic access to an individual's moral properties, and it is not clear whether Reid thinks it provides us with epistemic access to an action's wrongness, rightness, etc. I consider each of these concerns in turn.

3.1 Objection one: The causal objection

Regarding the first concern, one might be concerned that if Reid says moral facts are non-natural (as I argued in Chapter 3), then how do we immediately perceive such facts by way of our external sense faculties? Natural objects and properties have a look or feel to them; rocks, people, plants look a certain way, as do properties like colors and shapes. However, it is not clear what something non-natural looks like, if it looks like anything at all.

Furthermore, even if something need not have a certain look in order to be perceived (one might maintain that the quality of being intelligent does not have a look, but we nonetheless perceive it), it is not clear how a non-natural property could be causally related to the agent in such a way that the agent could perceive it. After all, it

seems likely that in order for a subject S to perceive a property X, S must be in appropriate causal contact with X; we can call this the causal constraint on perception.

The following example suggests that there must be some appropriate causal contact between the subject and property if the subject is to perceive that property:

Suppose someone has a perceptual experience of a pillar—he sees that there is a pillar 50 yards ahead. And in fact there is such a pillar (call it pillar 1) 50 yards ahead. But suppose there are several mirrors placed such that what the individual actually perceives is the reflection of a different pillar (call it pillar 2).

In this example, which pillar is causally connected to the subject such that he has a perceptual experience of a pillar being 50 yards ahead? It seems the most likely candidate is pillar 2. The upshot of this example is it suggests that for one to have a perceptual experience of X, one must be causally connected to X in certain respects. Accordingly, the causal constraint on perception at least partially explains why the individual perceives pillar 2 rather than pillar 1. It seems the causal constraint on perception should also apply to moral perception; at least, I think it would have to, for otherwise it would be mysterious how moral perception would be a form of external sense perception (McBrayer 2009).

The problem is it is not clear how a non-natural moral property could be causally connected to an individual such that he or she could perceive it. It seems plausible that empirically observable objects could be so connected—such a connection is what makes the natural sciences reliable sources of inquiry. It is unclear, however, how a property distinct entirely from any natural property or object could be causally connected to an individual perceiver. This concern can be characterized by the following argument (call it the causal objection argument):

- (1) For a subject S to perceive a property X, S must be in appropriate causal contact with X (the causal constraint on perception).
- (2) Human subjects are never in appropriate causal contact with non-natural moral properties.
- (3) Therefore, human subjects cannot perceive moral properties.

If sound, this argument has at least two implications for Reid's moral epistemology. First, it renders implausible any interpretation of Reid as a moral perceptionist; for why interpret Reid as thinking we perceive moral reality when such a position is clearly implausible? If we interpret Reid as strictly being a moral intuitionist, then we do not have to interpret Reid as endorsing an implausible view. Second, if Reid is in fact a moral perceptionist, then his moral epistemology is significantly flawed, as he would be endorsing an implausible moral epistemology. That said, I have argued that we have good reason to interpret Reid as a moral perceptionist. So my goal now is to show how Reid would respond to the causal objection. In doing so, I show how Reid might respond to this objection and show how such a response fits with claims he actually makes. In showing how Reid might respond to the causal objection, I draw largely from contemporary sources, particularly Audi (2008, 2014) and McBrayer (2009). Accordingly, I will first explain their response to the causal objection. After doing so, I provide textual evidence supporting the interpretation that Reid might accept and make use of their response.

Now concerning Audi's and McBrayer's response to the causal objection, I understand them as claiming that a moral non-naturalist such as Reid would likely reject premise 1. Accordingly, the moral non-naturalist must show why the causal constraint on perception (that there must be a causal connection between the perceiver and the property

or object perceived) is either false or not applicable to cases of moral perception. The move for the moral non-naturalist, then, is to claim that a causal connection between a subject and the moral property is not necessary.

In order to show that such a connection is not necessary, one option is to maintain that moral properties are in some sense resultant properties, meaning that moral properties only emerge, result, or are in some sense instantiated when various natural properties or events are instantiated. Such moral properties, accordingly, supervene on various non-natural properties. As I understand supervenience, a property A supervenes on property B if any changes in property B necessarily bring about changes to property A. For example, one might maintain that mental states supervene on physical states. If they do, then changes in certain physical states necessarily lead to corresponding changes in certain mental states. Regarding the moral realm, if a moral property supervenes on a natural property, then if the natural property is instantiated in certain circumstances, so is the moral property.

Now the advocate of this view could argue that while the subject is not causally connected to the moral properties, he is nonetheless connected to the natural properties on which the moral properties supervene. A question lingers: if we are only in causal contact with natural properties, how is it that moral properties are represented to us in perception? Without a plausible story as to how we might perceive such properties despite not being causally connected to them, it seems mysterious how such properties might be immediately represented to us in perceptual experience. As I now show, I think the answer to this concern is quite Reidian in nature.

Consider Reid's account of the perception of one's mental qualities, such as being intelligence or being sad. The signs of such qualities are facial expressions, tones of voice, and behaviors. Earlier, I claimed that Reid thinks we have the ability to perceive such qualities immediately; we do not merely infer the existence of such qualities from our beliefs about an individual's facial expression, tone of voice, etc. When one sees that someone else is angry, this person's anger is part of the representational content of the perceiver's perceptual experience. Even though we are causally connected to non-moral natural qualities (e.g., facial expressions or behaviors), we still immediately perceive people as exhibiting certain mental qualities.

Similarly, one might maintain that in moral perception we are causally connected to various signs and other features of the agent or features of the event. For instance, when we come across a group of hoodlums about to set a cat on fire, we are causally connected to the hoodlums, their actions, the cat, and perhaps other objects or qualities. Some of these things are signs, which are indicators of the presence of moral properties. Moreover, it does not seem implausible to say that the moral wrongness of the hoodlums' action supervenes on some of these non-natural properties. It is the instantiation of these non-natural properties that necessarily brings about the instantiation of the action's wrongness. While I am not sure in this instance which non-natural properties the moral properties supervene, I think we can consistently maintain that we can have moral perceptions even if we are not causally connected to the moral properties.

I think Reid's account of moral perception is similar to Audi's and McBrayer's view that we are not causally connected to moral properties but instead the non-moral properties on which the moral properties supervene. Furthermore, this interpretation of

Reid fits with how other philosophers have interpreted Reid. One such philosopher is Cuneo. Cuneo (2003) maintains that, for Reid, aesthetic qualities are similar in kind to moral properties, and he claims that, at least for Reid, our perception of aesthetic qualities is similar to our perception of moral properties. As Cuneo states,

If we take Reid's views about aesthetic qualities to be indicative of his views concerning moral ones--as I think we should--then we can see Reid making two claims.... In the first place, Reid's view is that moral qualities are resultant or supervenient qualities of a sort. They are qualities that are determined by other non-moral qualities. In this sense, at least, Reid's view concerning the nature of moral qualities prefigures the dominant trend among contemporary moral realist views. The second claim that Reid makes is that to perceive a moral quality requires perceiving certain relevant qualities from which it results. (Cuneo 2003, 241)

Cuneo's justification for thinking aesthetic qualities are resultant qualities comes from passage like the following:

Beauty or deformity in an object, results from its nature or structure. To perceive the beauty therefore, we must perceive the nature or structure from which it results. (*EIP* 8.1, p.578)

Furthermore, the next passage suggests that various mental features, such as whether one is happy, intelligent, or virtuous, seem to be characterized as being resultant properties:

Nature seems to have given men a faculty or sense, by which this connection [between sign and signified] is perceived. And the operation of this sense is very analogous to that of the external senses.

When I grasp an ivory ball in my hand, I feel a certain sensation of touch. In the sensation, there is nothing external, nothing corporeal. The sensation is neither round nor hard; it is an act of feeling of the mind, from which I cannot, by reasoning infer the existence of any body. But, by the constitution of my nature, the sensation carries along with it the conception and belief of a round hard body really existing in my hand.

In like manner, when I see the features of an expressive face, I see only figure and colour variously modified. By the constitution of my nature, the visible object brings along with it the conception and belief of a certain passion or sentiment in the mind of the person.

In the former case, a sensation of touch is the sign, and the hardness and roundness of the body I grasp, is signified by that sensation, in the latter case, the

features of the person is the sign, and the passion or sentiment is signified by it; (*EIP* 6.5, p.486)

This last passage suggests that Reid thinks we perceive a certain constellation of colors and figures; and it is such properties that function as signs of mental properties, such as one's intelligence or emotional state of mind. For Reid, we are designed such that signs signify various properties and objects. Moreover, I do not think it is much of a stretch to add that Reid would think such signs also function as indicators of various moral properties.

Furthermore, in agreement with Cuneo, I understand that if Reid thinks moral properties are similar to aesthetic qualities (at least in so far as they are resultant or emergent qualities), then Audi's and McBrayer's response to the causal objection is available to Reid.¹¹¹ Accordingly, leaving aside whether their response is plausible, such a response is consistent with Reid's account of the nature of moral properties. The upshot is that Reid, as a moral non-naturalist, would have a response to the causal objection. I now proceed to talk about another objection, one that attacks my interpretation that Reid may think we obtain moral knowledge by way of external sense perception.

3.2 Objection two: Reidian moral perception is not a genuine case of perception

The second objection challenges whether, at least according to Reid's own account of perception, Reidian moral perception is a genuine form of external

¹¹¹ I should point out that Jaffro (2015) claims that aesthetic perception is a genuine form of external sense perception. While I am not sure Jaffro thinks moral perception is as well, it is interesting that he interprets Reid as maintaining that we literally perceive aesthetic qualities. I bring out this point to indicate that others besides Cuneo and myself think Reidian perception can be extended to non-standard cases, such as aesthetic or moral perception.

sense perception. The objection maintains that, according to Reid's account of perception, there must not be any object that mediates between the perceiver and the object of perception. To illustrate an example of such a mediary, suppose someone sees smoke in the distance and in doing so perceives a fire. Here, the individual's so called perception of the fire is mediated. Or to use Van Cleve's (2004) example, one might come home from work and see his wife's keys on the table. In the past, his wife always leaves her keys on the table when she comes home from work. Now upon seeing his wife's keys on the table, the husband might, in a sense, perceive that his wife is home. In this example, the husband's belief may be psychologically immediate in that his perceptual belief involves no conscious inference. However, the keys (or his perception of the keys) function as a mediary between the husband and the object of his so-called perceptual belief (i.e., his wife).¹¹² Accordingly, if a genuine perception must not have a mediary between the perceiver and object of perception, then it seems the husband does not perceive that his wife is home.

I raise this example in order to show how one might think Reidian moral perception is not a genuine form of external sense perception. For one might

¹¹² Perhaps a good way to get a grasp of what a mediary between a perceiver and the object of perception might be, consider the following analogy. Suppose there are two scenarios. In the first, you simply see that there is a mountain before you. In the second, you see the mountain, but only this time, you see it through a camera lens; in the second case, the image you see is one that is projected by the camera. The camera, so to speak, mediates between you (the perceiver) and the mountain (the object of perception). So while you perceive the mountain, you are not directly acquainted with the mountain; instead, you are directly acquainted with the camera's representation of the mountain—one might call this the representational account of perception (or what Early Modern philosophers called the theory of ideas). Reid thinks sense perception is similar to the first scenario, where there is no object that functions as a mediary between the perceiver and object of perception. Reid argues at length against this so-called representational account of perception or theory of ideas. He thinks that, in one's perceptual experience of X, the perceiver is directly acquainted with the object of perception X.

maintain that perception of moral reality is more like the husband's perception that his wife is home. The idea is that in moral perception, there is in some sense an object or quality that mediates between the perceiver and moral reality. Such mediaries would include behaviors, tones of voice, actions, and facial expressions. In which case, even if Reid thinks moral perceptions are psychologically immediate (and perhaps even epistemically immediate), they would still not be genuine instances of external sense perceptions; for perception of moral reality is always mediated by things like behaviors and facial expressions—one perceives moral reality in virtue of perceiving one's behavior or facial expressions. The objection can be summarized by the following argument:

1. If, according to Reid, a perception P is a genuine instance of external sense perception, then there must not be an object that mediates between the perceiver and the object of perception.
2. In Reidian moral perception, there is an object that mediates between the perceiver and the object of moral perception.
3. Therefore, Reidian moral perception is not a genuine instance of external sense perception.

I think premise one is false, even on Reid's own account of perception. To see why it is false, consider examples of Reidian acquired perceptions; such examples include the perception of things like cider, brandy, stage-coaches, the weight of a lamb, and an object's three-dimensional figure. Earlier, it was maintained that the signs of such perceptions are sometimes not sensations but instead various qualities or appearances; for example the quality of a liquid having a certain taste is a sign of it being a cup of brandy, or the appearance of circularity is a sign of an object being three-dimensional. The worry, then, is that the objection proves too

much: if a genuine external sense perception cannot be mediated, then it seems that both moral perceptions and acquired perceptions are not genuine cases of external sense perceptions; yet it seems very plausible that perceptions of things like cups of brandy, oak trees, and the like are external sense perceptions.

However, one might maintain that such acquired perceptions are not genuine instances of external sense perception. Van Cleve (2004, 2015) takes such a view. In making such an interpretation, Van Cleve's appeals to Reid's own explicit assertion that acquired perception is not a genuine form of external sense perception:

Acquired perception is not properly the testimony of those sense which God hath given us, but a conclusion drawn from what the senses testify. . . . The appearance of the sign immediately produces the belief of its usual attendant, and we think we perceive the one as well as the other.

That such conclusions are formed even in infancy, no man can doubt; nor is it less certain that they are confounded with the natural and immediate perceptions of sense, and in all languages are called by the same name. We are therefore authorized by language to call them perception, and must often do so, or speak unintelligibly. But philosophy teaches us in this, as in many other instances, to distinguish things which the vulgar confound. I have therefore given the name of acquired perception to such conclusions, to distinguish them from what is naturally, originally, and immediately testified by our senses. (*EIP* 2.22, p.247)

So on the one hand, we call various things perception (including acquired perception) because that is what many people have called such things by custom; on the other, Reid explicitly states that genuine perceptions are only those that are naturally, originally, and immediately testified by our senses. Thus, Reid does not think acquired perception is a genuine case of external sense perception.

Yet I think there are two general problems with such an interpretation: First, Reid emphasizes that he does not want to use technical terms loosely or

ambiguously; for his worry is that a loose use of words is a source of many philosophical errors.¹¹³ Moreover, Reid intends to use ‘perception’ to refer to the process by which our external sense faculties interact with the external world:

‘perception’ is most properly applied to the evidence that our senses give us concerning external objects. But as this is a very clear and compelling kind of evidence, the word ‘perception’ is often applied by analogy to the evidence of reason, or of testimony when it is clear and compelling. But this way of talking is analogical and loose. The perception of external objects through our senses is a very special and individual operation of the mind, and ought to have a name to itself. And in all languages it has. I don’t know of any English word more suitable for expressing this act of the mind than ‘perception’. ‘Seeing’, ‘hearing’, ‘smelling’, ‘tasting’ and ‘touching’ or ‘feeling’ are words that express the operations associated with each sense; ‘perceiving’ expresses what they all have in common. (*EIP* 1.1, p.17)

Here, Reid states that ‘perception’ refers to certain acts of the mind involving either seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching. In which case, if Reid did not think acquired perception was a genuine form of external sense perception, then we should expect him to not refer to it as a type of perception.

Second, there are a number of passages where Reid seems to talk as if acquired perceptions are genuine forms of external sense perception:

From the time that children begin to use their hands, nature directs them to handle every thing over and over, to look at it while they handle it, and to put it in various positions, and at various distances from the eye. We are apt to excuse this as childish diversion... But if we think more justly, we shall find, that they are engaged in the most serious and important study... They are thereby every day acquiring habits of perception, which are of greater importance than anything we can teach them. The original perceptions which Nature gave them are few, and insufficient for the purposes of life; and therefore she make them capable of acquiring many more perceptions by habit. (*IHM* 6.24, p.201)

¹¹³ As Reid states,

...there is no greater impediment to the advancement of knowledge than the ambiguity of words. (*EIP* 1.1, p.17)

From what has been said, I think it appears, that our original powers of perceiving objects by our senses receive great improvement by use and habit; and without this improvement, would be altogether insufficient for the purposes of life. The daily occurrences of life not only add to our stock of knowledge, but give additional perceptive powers to our senses. (*EIP* 2.21, p.239)

Our perceptions are of two kinds: some are natural and original, others acquired and the fruit of experience. When I perceive that this is the taste of cider, that of brandy; that this is the smell of an apple, that of an orange; that this is the noise of thunder, that the ringing of bells; this the sound of a coach passing; that the voice of such a friend; these perceptions, and others of the same kind, are not original, they are acquired. (*IHM* 6.20, p.171)

In such passages, Reid talks as if we develop our perceptual abilities through experience and training. In these passages, he makes no claim that such acquired perceptions are not genuine cases of external sense perception. Again, if Reid did not think such perceptions were external sense perceptions, it is surprising that he so often writes otherwise.

Still, someone might maintain that even if one's perception of a stage-coach or cup of brandy is a genuine form of external sense perception, Reidian moral perception is more like the case of the husband perceiving that his wife is home in virtue of perceiving her keys; accordingly, if we do not think the husband's perception that his wife is home is a genuine form of perception, then we should not think moral perception is either. But how are they similar? Perhaps the similarity lies in the cause of the perceptions. Regarding the stage coach or cup of brandy, there seems to be a sense in which their qualities or properties can cause our perceptual experience of them. However, the wife being upstairs does not cause the husband to perceive that she is home (the keys do); he only perceives that she is home in virtue of perceiving her keys. Similarly, moral

properties, being non-natural, could not in any sense cause one's perception of them; at best, we can only "perceive" them in virtue of perceiving certain behaviors or actions.

However, the response to this revised objection is the same as the moral perceptionist's response to the causal objection. Accordingly, as will be shown shortly, there is a relevant difference between Reidian moral perception and the case where the husband perceives his wife being home. To see this difference, first consider the case made earlier that moral properties for Reid are non-natural resultant or emergent properties. Such properties emerge, result, or obtain when a certain constellation of natural properties or events obtain in the appropriate circumstances. Before, it was stated that this understanding of non-natural moral properties helped Reid respond to the causal objection to moral perception (recall, the causal objection attacks moral perceptionist views for failing to explain how the perceiver could ever be in the right causal relation with non-natural moral properties). As stated earlier, the response to this concern is to maintain that the perceiver is causally connected to the non-moral properties on which the moral properties supervene. It is this causal connection that makes it less mysterious how one might perceive non-natural moral properties.

Accordingly, the important difference between Reidian moral perception and the keys example is that moral properties supervene on non-natural properties, while the property of being upstairs does not supervene on her keys being left on the counter. Her keys being on the counter have no bearing on whether she is upstairs, whereas the existence of various natural non-moral properties would have substantial bearing on

whether certain moral properties obtain. Accordingly, one might maintain that in order for individual S to perceive property X, S must be causally connected to the properties on which X supervenes. In the case of Reidian moral perception (but not in the case of the keys example), one is causally connected to non-moral properties on which the non-natural moral properties supervene.

Now I leave open whether Reid would think moral perception is a genuine case of external sense perception. For maybe he rejects the view that external sense perception of property X requires that one is causally connected to the properties on which X supervenes. Nonetheless, I maintain that such a view is open to Reid, and as I argued earlier, that Reid would accept this view has textual support. As such, if Reid wanted to say that moral perception was a form of external sense perception, then he has the resources to do so. Moreover, such a move allows Reid to explain why moral perception is a genuine form of external sense perception while the man perceiving that his wife is home is not.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Now if moral perceptions are not genuine cases of external sense perception, then what are they? I do not think they are inferences, as Reid maintains that such perceptions are immediate. There may be multiple ways of cashing out what they are, but I think one possible interpretation is that Reid could maintain that they are something like a physical intuition. Accordingly, for Reid, moral perceptions are just moral intuitions of the physical sort. In chapter 2, I defined a physical intuition as an intellectual seeming state (as supposed to a perceptual seeming state, such as in the case where it perceptually seems to me that the grass is becoming brown) that is the result of one's experiences with the physical world. For example, we can imagine a building contractor who looks at a building and then has the intuition that its foundation is built poorly. Through experience, the contractor has developed an ability to form such intuitions upon inspecting various buildings.

The important point in these two examples concerns the nature of the seeming state. I stated that broadly speaking, an intuition is an intellectual seeming state; it is different in kind from the seeming state we have in perceptual experience—e.g., that it seems like the grass is turning brown or that it seems that I smell something pungent. Earlier in this chapter, I said that Reid might think the following: that in some instances, it might perceptually seem to the individual that, say, some action is morally right or wrong. I used references where Reid says that we perceive moral reality as textual evidence that Reid thinks we sometimes externally perceive moral reality (similar to how we perceive that grass is green or that somebody is sad). However, one might press that when Reid says we perceive moral reality, he actually means that we have a physical intuition (or something like it) that something is morally right, praiseworthy, etc. The upshot is that Reid does not think we perceive moral reality; instead, we strictly intuit moral

3.3. Objection three: Reidian moral perception is too limited

The final worry is that Reid's account of moral perception is too limited. His account is limited in that it only explains how one obtains moral knowledge of an individual's character. For as described by Reid, we sometimes perceive someone's moral character (and other mental qualities):

A man's wisdom is known to us only by the signs of his conduct; his eloquence by the signs of his speech. In the same manner we judge of his virtue, of his fortitude, and of all his talents and qualities of mind. (*EIP* 6.6, p.508)

However, it is not clear whether Reid thinks we perceive other aspects of moral reality, such as an action's wrongness or rightness. For example, it is not clear whether Reid thinks we immediately perceive the wrongness of the hoodlums' action of lighting the cat on fire. We might see that they have virtuous or vicious character traits, but it is not clear whether we also perceive their actions as being, for instance, morally wrong or blameworthy. The worry is that, given what Reid actually says, it is not clear moral perception helps us obtain immediate moral knowledge about whether a particular action is morally wrong, right, etc. So while we might learn that some individual is, say,

reality.

If this is Reid's view, then Reidian moral perception must be understood much differently than from how I have understood it so far. Recall, there are three ingredients in moral perception: sign, conception, and immediate judgment. The signs of moral reality, accordingly, are facial expressions, behaviors, and tones of voice; moreover, I extended the scope of such signs to include cases where agents perform actions of certain types in certain contexts (e.g., the hoodlum lighting the cat on fire could possibly function as a sign of moral reality). As I initially understood Reid, signs evoke a conception of some morally relevant property, which in turn evokes a perceptual judgment, which I understood as being a state where it perceptually seems to the individual that a certain action is morally right, wrong, etc. However, the objection maintains that the judgment is not a perceptual seeming state; instead, in such contexts, such judgments are best described as being more like a physical intuition, which has as its content an intellectual seeming state.

virtuous or vicious, it is not clear how we obtain moral knowledge of an action's rightness or wrongness by way of Reidian moral perception.

However, as mentioned in chapter 2, there are numerous passages where Reid says that moral knowledge in general is obtained by perception. Two such passages are as follows:

...whatever is immediately *perceived* to be just, honest, and honorable, in human conduct, carries moral obligation along with it, and the contrary carries demerit and blame; and from those moral obligations that are immediately perceived, all other moral obligations must be deduced by reasoning. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.179)

...[we] *perceive* some things in human conduct to be right, and others to be wrong; that the first principles of morals are the dictates of this faculty; and that we have the same reason to rely upon those dictates, as upon the determinations of our senses, or of our other natural faculties. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p. 180)

What we perceive morally, then, extends beyond an individual's character traits; moral perception includes right and wrong in human conduct. Furthermore, as mentioned above, at *EIP* 6.6, Reid maintains that in order to perceive certain mental features, such as intelligence or moral character, one must first perceive certain behavior as being intelligent or virtuous. In which case, perception of moral character (or at least in order to infer that someone has a certain moral character), one must first perceive certain behavior as exhibiting certain morally relevant features. As such, it seems there is sufficient textual evidence supporting the interpretation that Reid thinks we perceives other aspects of moral reality besides an individual's character traits.

4. Putting Everything Together: Reidian Moral Intuition and Reidian Moral Perception

4.1. Summarizing Reidian moral perception

So far in this chapter, I have talked about how moral perception works for Reid, and I have defended the interpretation that Reid may be a moral perceptionist against three possible objections. Furthermore, I have argued that Reid could maintain the following two points: (1) that we can immediately perceive an individual's morally relevant qualities or properties, such as a virtuous or vicious character trait; (2) or that we can perceive one's actions or behaviors as exhibiting certain morally relevant qualities or properties. For example, we can notice an individual's behavior toward a subordinate and either immediately perceive that individual as being a bully or perceive his behavior as exhibiting an act of bullying.

I also maintained that Reid could easily extend his account of moral perception to cases where we see an action as being morally wrong, right, etc. I argued that if we grant Reid that we perceive an individual's mental qualities, then it seems possible that we can also perceive an action as being morally wrong or right through the same process. For just as one's behavior, tone of voice, or facial expression function as signs of some morally relevant property, I also think such features can all function as signs that a certain action is morally wrong, right, etc. For example, we can come across a group of hoodlums about to set a cat on fire; here, the hoodlums' behavior in this circumstance could function as signs that their actions are morally wrong. I maintained that given

Reid's account of moral perception, it is possible that we perceive their action as being morally wrong. I also provided textual evidence supporting such a view.

Having argued for how moral perception works for Reid, it is important to note that moral perception alone cannot be the only way Reid thinks we obtain moral knowledge. For as I argued in Chapter 3, Reid thinks we have additional moral knowledge besides that of particular moral propositions—e.g., 'the hoodlums' action is morally wrong' or 'Smith should not steal from Jones's cookie jar'. Reid thinks that we have knowledge of general moral propositions—e.g., that we should not steal, murder, or lie. Some of these propositions are moral first principles, which are necessarily true (albeit in a relativized sense) and known immediately in so far as one has a compulsion or irresistible urge to believe them in virtue of understanding or grasping their contents. In the next section, I further motivate the claim that Reid is a moral intuitionist and suggest how moral intuitionism might work for Reid.

4.2 Reidian moral intuition

So far, I have showed how Reid might say we obtain moral knowledge by way of moral perception. I now proceed to talk about how he might think we obtain moral knowledge by way of intuition. However, the difficulty in explaining Reid's account of moral intuition is that he is vague about how we obtain moral knowledge by intuition (it is this very vagueness that motivated my interpretation that Reid might think we obtain moral knowledge through two distinct processes). Nonetheless, I think that given what he says, we have good reason to think his moral epistemology is partly intuitionistic. For instance, he often refers to the

moral sense as being the same thing as one's conscience, and, as I argued in chapter 2, to say that my conscience says x is wrong or y is right is not much different (at least in any interesting sense) than to say that I intuit that x is wrong or y is right. As I now show, I think Reid is committed to a number of positions that further indicate that his position is intuitionistic.

In chapter 3, I maintained that it is implausible that we perceive (by way of external sense perception) moral first principles. First, first principles (at least as construed by Reid) are general in content. For instance, one such principle, the Golden Rule, says that we ought to treat others as we would like to be treated if we were in their circumstances; the rule prescribes actions that people of a certain type ought to do over a broad range of cases. I think it is doubtful that we perceive such general principles. Instead, it seems more likely that we only perceive particular moral truth.

To see why we can only perceive particular truths, consider Harman's example where someone approaches a group of hoodlums in the process of setting a cat on fire, and suppose that he sees their actions as being morally wrong. It seems plausible that the content of this perception is a particular moral judgment such as the 'hoodlums' actions are morally wrong'. What seems implausible is that the content of this particular judgment, especially if it is immediate, is a general moral principle, such as 'it is wrong to torture or kill sentient creatures for no justifiable reason'. In which case, it seems that such general moral principles are either intuited or deduced or inferred from one's other moral beliefs.

However, since moral first principles are supposed to be known immediately on Reid's account, then it follows that such principles must be known by intuition.

Also, in chapter 3, I maintained that since moral first principles are nomologically necessary, it is most likely that such principles are known by intuition. For again it seems implausible that the content of a perception could be a modal claim such as 'it is necessarily wrong to unjustifiably torture sentient creatures' or that 'it is not possible that stealing could ever be permissible'. Again, it seems the content of a perception is a particular judgment, and such content would not include any modal proposition. In which case, it seems that the most plausible way we might know moral first principles, at least on Reid's account, is by way of intuition.

Finally, Reid characterized moral first principles as being self-evident in so far as one cannot help but believe (or feels some strong compulsion to believe) such principles upon understanding or grasping their contents. Again, it is doubtful that such understanding is involved in perceptual experience. We do not see a group of hoodlums and immediately or non-inferentially grasp the principle that it is always wrong to unjustifiably torture sentient creatures. It seems more likely that such grasping or understanding occurs when we intuit certain moral propositions. Moreover, in so far as Reid describes first principles as being immediately known, we have good reason to assume that first principles are not deduced or inferred from any non-moral or moral belief. Rather, they are intuited.

So far, I have tried to further motivate the view that, given what Reid says about the nature of moral first principles in general, Reid's moral epistemology is

at least partly intuitionistic. Having given reasons for thinking Reid is at least partly a moral intuitionist, I now proceed to explain how we might understand how Reidian moral intuition provides us with knowledge of moral reality. I admit that I do not think Reid himself provides a robust account about how exactly we intuit moral reality. Nonetheless, I think we can place Reid's moral intuitionism under a very broad category of intuitionism. In doing so, we do not risk unjustifiably categorizing his position. So I take what I am about to attribute to Reid as being consistent with Reid's own views.

Accordingly, I take Reidian intuition to be a non-perceptual, non-mnemonic, and non-introspective process or way of obtaining knowledge of moral reality. Moreover, I take an intuition to be an intellectual seeming state, which are the sorts of states we have when we think about a mathematical or logical axiom or ponder a philosophical riddle from our armchairs. Moreover, in such intellectual seeming states, some proposition *P* appears to be true (before one's mind's eye), and *P*'s appearing to be true does not depend on any inference from other beliefs; *P*'s appearing to be true is simply the result of thinking about *P*.

Again this is a very broad account of Reidian intuition. If anything, it is too minimalist of an account of Reid's view. Nonetheless, I think it suffices to show how Reid thinks we might obtain some moral knowledge by way of intuition. On the one hand, it accounts for how one might know moral first principles: *X* is a first principle if upon grasping *X* it intellectually seems to you that *X* is true and it is also the case that *X* is necessarily true relative to a set of conditions. Of course, I do not think everyone who believes *X* will understand it

as being necessarily true in this sense—e.g., children or non-reflective adults. However, one's failure to recognize a self-evident proposition as being necessarily true does not in any way imply that that proposition is not necessarily true.

On the other hand, I do not claim that Reid thinks only moral first principles are obtained by way of intuition. I presume a host of other moral beliefs can, at least in principles, be formed by way of intuition as well. Perhaps other general moral truths could be known this way. For instance, one might think about a trolley problem and form the intuition that it is wrong to push the fat man onto the track; or one could grasp that it is generally wrong for people to torture sentient creatures for fun. Feasibly, these could be instances where one has a moral intuition and the contents of these moral beliefs would not be self-evident propositions. As such, it seems certain moral beliefs can be formed by way of intuition and the content of such beliefs would not be moral first principles.

So far, I have attempted to explain how Reidian moral intuition might go. In doing so, I have interpreted Reid's intuitionism rather broadly so as to not unjustifiably categorize his view. Also, I have maintained that Reidian moral intuition provides one with knowledge of both moral first principles and possibly other non-first moral principles. Ultimately, besides moral first principles, I take no stance concerning which other moral beliefs are formed by intuition, perception, or beliefs inferred from moral first principles and other moral beliefs. This account of Reidian moral intuition is

admittedly broad, but perhaps the details presented here provide a clear enough picture about how Reidian moral intuition might go.¹¹⁵

With this account of Reidian moral intuition in hand, I now consider several other points we can attribute to Reid's view. Such additional points concern the capacities one must have in order to intuit moral reality, whether education is necessary for one to intuit or more accurately intuit moral reality, and whether one will always act in accordance with beliefs formed by way of intuition.

First, according to Reid, our capacity to intuit moral reality can be improved with time and training, but corrupted with poor training and bad influences, such as self-interest, succumbing to our passions and desires, and endorsing what is popular rather than what is true:

...like all our other powers, it [conscience] comes to maturity by insensible degrees, and can be much aided in its strength and vigour by proper culture. All the human faculties have their infancy and state of maturity. (*EAP* 3.3.8, p. 186)

¹¹⁵There are a number of interesting questions that remain about the nature of Reidian moral intuition. For instance, I am not sure whether Reid thinks intuitions are factive. An intuition is factive just in case one having an intuition that P in some sense implies that P is true. For example, one's intuition that it is wrong to set cats on fire would in some sense imply that it is in fact wrong to set cats on fire. However, I think such a view is counterintuitive, for it seems like many of our intuitions are false; accordingly, it seems like someone might have the intuition that it is permissible to set cats on fire; yet it is hard to see how this intuition could be true. In which case, while I am neutral about whether Reid thinks intuitions are factive, I think the more plausible view is that intuitions are non-factive; so for sake of charity, I will understand Reid as endorsing the more plausible view.

Also, I am not sure whether Reid thinks that having an intuition that P implies that the individual believes P. At times, Reid talks as if normal people have an irresistible urge to believe the dictates of their conscience. However, regarding perceptual experience, I interpreted Reid as maintaining that having an urge or compulsion to believe some proposition does not imply that the individual believes it. Moreover, it seems counterintuitive that one always believes what he either perceives or intuits. For example, it might seem to me that the lines in the Muller-Lyer illusion are different lengths, yet I might still not believe that they are the same lengths. Similarly, it might seem to me that I correctly performed a logical proof, yet I might still hesitate to affirm that I correctly performed the proof. Again, in an attempt to be charitable to Reid, I ascribe to him the more plausible view that one's intuition that P does not entail that he or she believes P (although one might still feel an urge or compulsion to believe one's intuitions).

Our intellectual discernment is not so strong and vigorous by nature, as to secure us from errors in speculation...

In like manner, our moral discernment of what we ought, and what we ought not to do, is not so strong and vigorous by nature, as to secure us from very gross mistakes with regard to our duty. (*EAP* 3.3.8, p. 187)

I am far from thinking instruction in morals unnecessary. Many may, to the end of life, be ignorant of self-evident truths. They may, to the end of life, entertain gross absurdities. Experience shows that this happens often in matters that are indifferent. Much more may it happen in matters where interest, passion, prejudice and fashion, as so apt to pervert the judgment. (*EAP* 5.2, p. 278)

Thus, the right kind of moral education is essential in order for one to form true moral beliefs.¹¹⁶

Second, Reid thinks someone who is a rational (or at least a competent) moral agent will believe moral first principles upon grasping or understanding them:

It is a first principle of morals, that we ought not to do to another, what we should think wrong to be done to us in like circumstances. If a man is not capable of perceiving this in cool moments, when he reflects seriously, he is not a moral agent, nor is he capable of being convinced of it by reasoning.

From what topic can you reason with such a man? You may possibly convince him by reasoning, that it is his interest to observe this rule; but this is not to convince him that it is his duty. To reason about justice with a man who sees nothing to be just or unjust; or about benevolence with a man who sees nothing in benevolence preferable to malice, is like reasoning with a blind man about colour, or with a deaf man about sound (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.177-178).

Some individuals will fail to understand such principles; others may understand them but not believe they are true. For Reid, such people are not moral agents,

¹¹⁶ That Reid says various factors can negatively affect our ability to form true moral beliefs I take as putting him in a position to respond to the argument from disagreement. One variant of the argument from disagreement is if people are naturally endowed with a faculty that enables them to make moral judgments and if all morally competent people are able to intuit moral reality (and also perceive moral reality), then why is there so much moral disagreement? If such a faculty is a real feature of all (or mostly all) humans, then we should not expect so much moral disagreement. However, if Reid is right, then bad education, succumbing to one's passions and desires (at least in some cases), and naively following popular opinion are all factors that can negatively influence one's moral decision making. Even if one has a moral faculty and is also a competent moral agent, then it is still possible that they make errors in moral judgment.

and you can no more instruct them on right and wrong than you explain the difference in phenomenal appearance of red and green to a blind man. On my understanding, people such as psychopaths (e.g., consider Hume's sensible knave), sociopaths, and perhaps some egoists may not be moral agents in this Reidian sense.¹¹⁷

Third, grasping and believing moral principles does not imply that we will always act in accordance (or be motivated to act in accordance) with our moral beliefs or judgments:

But there is a depression of mind...which debilitates the spring of action, and freezes every sentiment that should lead to any noble exertion or enterprise....

Depression of mind...throws a dismal gloom upon every object of thought, cuts all the sinews of action, and often gives rise to strange and absurd opinions....(*EAP* 3.2.8, p.190)

Factors like depression and perhaps other negative (or even positive) emotional states may keep us from action. While Reid does not explicitly say so, I take this passage as indication that even if one has true moral beliefs and makes accurate moral judgments, there are various factors (especially emotion-based ones) that might prevent an individual from acting in accordance with his or her moral judgments.

With these three points in hand, we can perhaps add to Reid's account of moral intuition. First, Reid says that rational or competent moral agents will

¹¹⁷ Reid is a bit vague when he says that such people are not moral agents. For sake of charity, I assume that moral agents can still perform morally wrong actions (e.g., psychopaths are morally wrong to take advantage of, torture, and murder their victims). Perhaps Reid means that in so far as they are defective, they are not necessarily blameworthy for their actions. But this might be controversial as well, especially if someone is morally responsible for creating a character that lacks moral agency (e.g., he freely takes a pill that he knows will make him morally defective). Any rate, I flag this point in order to suggest that Reid hopefully not commit to the controversial claim that psychopaths do not commit morally wrong actions.

believe (or at least feel a strong urge or compulsion to believe) moral first principles upon intuiting such principles. Second, education and experience can improve one's ability to intuit (and probably also perceive) moral reality; similarly, poor education, acting in accordance with the wrong desires, and other factors can prevent one from forming true moral beliefs; moreover, even if one has true moral beliefs and makes accurate moral judgments, one may still not act (or be motivated to act) in accordance with such judgments.

Finally, earlier I said that it seems possible that one might grasp and believe moral first principles and still not understand them as being relatively necessary. At least, it seems too strong to say that a necessary requirement for grasping a moral first principle is that one sees it as being necessarily true. For example, children might understand the Golden Rule or believe that it is morally wrong to maim and kill others, and they can do so without understanding that such principles are necessarily true. However, I also maintained that Reidian moral first principles are nomological necessary: in all worlds where various conditions obtain, such moral first principles will obtain. Such conditions might include facts about human nature and the environment in which they are placed; perhaps such conditions obtain when there exists autonomous and rational creatures capable of experiencing pleasure and pain.

Now I think that in order to understand that moral first principles are necessary propositions, one must grasp these various conditions (or at least some set of these conditions). Reid does not explicitly make this claim, but I do not see it conflicting with his other philosophical commitments (moral or otherwise). In

which case, while perhaps anyone can grasp moral first principles, it is only rational or competent moral agents (or at least individuals with a certain degree of moral and rational maturity) who grasp these principles as being necessarily true in a nomological sense. Such concepts one must grasp may include the concept of logical necessity, the concept of a rational moral agent, or the concepts of duty and obligation.

4.3 An objection to Reidian moral intuitionism

However, there are a number of objections to the claim that intuition provides us with knowledge of moral reality, and so Reid's account of moral intuition likely faces similar objections. One such objection concerns how we can obtain moral knowledge when moral properties are supposedly causally inert. The idea is that moral properties such as wrongness, rightness, etc. are supposed to be non-natural, at least according to Reid. Since they are non-natural, they are likely to be outside of time and space. Since they are outside of time and space, it is not clear how such properties could enter into any type of causal relationship with those who attempt to obtain knowledge of them (particularly since such individuals exist in time and space). This concern is similar to the causal objection against moral perception, and so a variant of the causal objection also surfaces as a problem for moral intuitionism.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ This variant of the causal objection against moral intuitionism comes from Huemer (2005).

An example will illustrate the problem. Consider a case of ordinary sense experience. For instance, suppose there is a Ford Mustang parked in my driveway, and I form the belief that this is so. My capacity to know this proposition is largely due to the fact that there is a Ford Mustang in my driveway and that this object is causing in me (by way of affecting my perceptual faculties in certain ways) a type of perceptual experience of there being a Ford Mustang in my driveway. However, it is not clear how moral properties, being non-natural, could cause such an experience, where such an experience is understood as an intellectual state where some moral proposition seems true. I might form beliefs about moral reality, but in so far as various components of moral reality could not cause my beliefs about it, it seems that such beliefs would at best be accidentally true. Yet, a belief formed accidentally, even if true, does not seem to be the sort of belief that one knows. The problem can be formulated by the following argument:

1. If something is causally inert, then we cannot obtain knowledge about it.
2. The moral realm is causally inert.
3. Therefore, we cannot obtain knowledge about the moral realm.

The moral intuitionist, however, can perhaps respond to this argument in a number of ways. One such way is to reject premise one and provide counterexamples where one obtains moral knowledge of something even though that something is seemingly causally inert. Accordingly, one could maintain that there are all sorts of plausible non-moral cases where we know things, and the things we purportedly know are causally inert. For example, consider various mathematical or logical truths. It seems we know that $2+2=4$ even though the

number 2 and the number 4 are not the sort of thing that exists in time and space: we cannot bump into numbers on the street, detect them with a microscope or telescope, or discover them in the rain forest or deep blue sea.¹¹⁹

Other examples of knowledge of causally inert things perhaps includes that of universals. Roughly, a universal is a property or relation that can be possessed by multiple objects at the same time in different locations. Moreover, according to some philosophers, some universals are not in time or space; in which case, they do not seem to be the type of properties that can be causally efficacious (e.g., Plato, Frege (1884), and Russell (1912)). Colors are possible examples of such universals. For example, consider the color yellow; yellow can be a property of ducks, rain jackets, stars, bricks, roads, etc. Now one might think that colors are dispositional properties (other such qualities include warmth or various smells and sounds) that ultimately supervene on a set of basic, physical properties (e.g., physical properties such as wavelengths); such dispositional properties obtain in virtue of their physical bases obtaining. Moreover (and perhaps quite controversially), one could maintain that such dispositional properties are causally inert, albeit the properties on which they supervene are not. Nonetheless, we still obtain knowledge of colors (and universals more broadly) even though such properties are causally inert.

¹¹⁹ To be fair, some claim that we do not have mathematical knowledge or at least, strictly speaking, there are no mathematical facts (e.g., for example, in conversations with Kenny Boyce, he has expressed his claim that there are no mathematical facts, at least in any abstract or Platonic sense). I do not wish to get into this debate here, but merely point out that I think the view that there are mathematical facts is quite plausible.

The bottom-line is that there seem to be multiple examples where we obtain knowledge of causally inert things. In which case, something being causally inert does not entail that we cannot know things about it, and so the objection ultimately fails to show that we cannot obtain knowledge of moral reality. Admittedly, I am not sure Reid has such an objection or response in mind when he describes his moral epistemology. Nonetheless, it seems Reid could easily maintain that to claim we do not obtain such moral knowledge by way of intuition has the implication that we also do not have knowledge of (arguably) uncontroversial things such as mathematical or logical principles (or even universals such as colors).

Still, someone (for example, Mackie (1977)) might think that the process of moral intuition is itself mysterious. In addition to the moral realm being causally inert, it is in virtue of being mysterious that makes moral intuition implausible. The worry is that moral intuition involves postulating the existence of a belief-forming process or faculty unlike any other process or belief-forming faculty in which we know (e.g., our perceptual faculties or reasoning in general) As Mackie states the worry:

If there were objective values, then they would be entities or qualities or relations of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe. Correspondingly, if we were aware of them, it would have to be by some special faculty of moral perception or intuition, utterly different from our ordinary ways of knowing everything else.... [regarding knowledge of such objective moral values], none of our ordinary accounts of sensory perception or introspection or the framing and confirming or explanatory hypotheses or inference or logical construction or conceptual analysis, or any combination of these, will provide a satisfactory answer; 'a special sort of intuition' is a lame answer, but it is the one to which the clearheaded objectivist is compelled to resort. (38-39)

For Mackie, moral intuition is a belief-forming processes unlike any other kind of process. As I understand the worry, since moral intuition is unlike other belief-forming processes, it is in some sense mysterious or poorly understood; it is being mysterious in this sense that make it unlikely that there is such a faculty or process that enables us to obtain moral knowledge.

However, for two reasons, I am not sure Mackie's objection poses a problem for Reid's account of moral intuition. First, there seem to be many facts or processes about the world we do not clearly understand. However, just because we do not understand something (or understand something completely), it does not follow that it does not exist (or that we are not justified in believing it exists). We may not understand how the mind interacts with the body, but we still know that in some fashion the mind interacts with the body. By someone's voice or hand-writing, I recognize that person, and I do so even though I'm not sure why I can make such recognitions. Some people can distinguish between different kinds of paintings, music compositions, and other; or whether a baby chick is a male or female; and such people may have no idea how they can make such distinctions. At a sub-atomic level, we may not know why certain physical phenomenon occur, but we still believe they do. The bottom-line is that just because a fact or process is poorly understood does not count as evidence against its existence. In which case, moral intuition being poorly understood does not count as evidence against its plausibility.

Second, as described earlier in this chapter, a moral intuition is simply an intellectual seeming state—a state one has in virtue of thinking about a moral

proposition—where a moral proposition seems true. With exception to its content, a moral intuitionism functions the same way as other forms of rational intuitionism, particularly mathematical and logical intuitionism—such intuitions are intellectual seeming states where mathematical or logical propositions seem true. We may not understand how exactly mathematical or logical intuition gets us knowledge of mathematical or logical reality, but we nonetheless think we have such knowledge. In which case, since moral intuition functions the same way as mathematical or logical intuition, it seems to be no more mysterious than mathematical or logical intuition; as such, it seems we have no more reason to doubt that moral intuition provides us with moral knowledge than to doubt that mathematical intuition provides us with mathematical knowledge.

Ultimately, I think Reid can employ the following general strategy: certainly moral intuition as a process by which we obtain moral knowledge has its mysteries. However, so are other kinds of processes, especially other forms of intuition. To say that we should reject moral intuitionism on such grounds is to apply an arbitrary double standard to it; for, without a principled reason for doing so, we are accepting other belief-forming processes even though they are subject to the same problems or mysteries as moral intuitionism.¹²⁰

There are certainly more objections one might raise against Reid's account of intuitionism. However, I will not consider them here, and so will (perhaps too naively) presume that Reid may have a plausible response to such objections. So far, I have talked about how Reidian moral perception and moral intuition might

¹²⁰This type of response to the argument from weirdness comes from Huemer (2005).

go; I close this chapter by discussing reasons why Reid might think we obtain moral knowledge through two distinct processes.

4.4. Why both moral intuition and moral perception?

Having explained how moral perception and moral intuition might work for Reid, I close this chapter by discussing one final objection to my interpretation. My interpretation maintains that Reid may think we obtain moral knowledge through both moral intuition and moral perception. The final objection challenges what motivation Reid might have for thinking we perceive moral reality if in fact moral intuition (and inferences from intuited beliefs) alone is sufficient at enabling the individual to obtain any kind of moral knowledge. Accordingly, Reid's moral epistemology seems needlessly complex, unless of course there is some advantage to thinking we obtain moral knowledge through two distinct processes.¹²¹

Now according to my interpretation, in addition to intuiting moral first principles, Reid might also think that we intuit moral non-first principles. Accordingly, we might have intuitions about particular cases such as trolley problems or even a particular event (I read about the hoodlums' behavior in the newspaper and during time form the intuition that their behavior is morally wrong). In which case, it seems that for any moral truth moral fact, such a truth can in principle we known by way of intuition. For we can consider any particular case, and in virtue of having an intuition about that case, make an accurate moral judgment. The problem, then, is that it seems like moral perception is not necessary for obtaining moral knowledge about even particular cases. Moral intuition

¹²¹ I am indebted to Marina Folescu for bringing this objection to my attention.

alone (and inferences based on our intuited moral beliefs) is sufficient for obtaining moral knowledge of both first principles and particular moral cases (or any moral facts that are not moral first principles). Why then does Reid need to add moral perception to his moral epistemology if it is unnecessary to do so? Doing so seems to only make his moral epistemology unnecessarily complex.

This concern lends support to the Strict Intuitionist interpretation of Reid's moral Epistemology, the interpretation that Reid thinks we obtain moral knowledge either by intuition or by inferences from intuited moral beliefs. For whenever Reid says that we perceive moral reality, what he really means is that by our mind's eye (so to speak) we perceive rightness, wrongness, duty, obligation etc. Accordingly, the Multiple-Process View (that Reid thinks we obtain moral knowledge by way of two distinct processes) is unnecessarily complex, and so we can provide a plausible and far simpler interpretation of Reid's moral epistemology. Moreover, one benefit of the Strict Intuitionist interpretation is that we no longer have to deal with either interpretive or philosophical objections faced by interpreting Reid's moral epistemology as including some kind of moral perception.

However, I think there are multiple ways to respond to this concern. First, maybe an ability to perceive moral reality is redundant since all moral knowledge can in principle be obtained by way of intuition or inferred from intuited beliefs. Nonetheless, Reid says what he says, and he stresses that 'perception' is what occurs when our external sense faculties interact with the world in certain ways. Accordingly, I am merely taking what Reid says and seeing how his account of moral intuition and moral perception might work for him. So even though there is no benefit to thinking we can both perceive and

intuit moral reality, I think we can plausibly interpret Reid as committing to some form of moral perception. A needlessly complex moral epistemology is simply a consequence of accepting the Multiple-Process View.

Second, it does not seem absurd to think we might obtain moral knowledge through two distinct processes; for it seems we also obtain types of non-moral knowledge through two distinct processes. For example, consider ways in which we obtain mathematical or logical knowledge. In some cases, we might intuit a mathematical or logical axiom; yet in other cases, we might obtain such knowledge on the bases of a mathematician's or logician's testimony—rather than working out the axiom myself, I trust the expert's judgment. As such, it seems possible I can know the same mathematical theorem or axiom in two distinct ways: by intuition and also by testimony. Accordingly, it is far from absurd that we might obtain the same type of knowledge through two distinct belief-forming processes, and so maybe the same moral knowledge could be obtained through two distinct types of belief-forming processes.¹²²

Third, Reid seems committed to the view that some particular moral knowledge can only be known by way of perception. Consider the passage where Reid says that by seeing one's virtuous behavior we infer that he or she is virtuous (*EIP* 6.6). Now it is hard to see how one's behavior being virtuous could be known by intuition. From the armchair, I might obtain knowledge of conditionals (e.g., if X's behavior is such an such, then X is virtuous) or general moral propositions (e.g., we ought to treat people as we would like to be treated if we were in there circumstances); however, it does not seem the armchair is a place where we can obtain certain particular moral knowledge, especially

¹²² I am indebted to Peter Markie for bringing this point to my attention.

knowledge about a particular individual's behavior or character. Or to use another example, consider the case where the hoodlums set the cat on fire. I might intuit that if X sets a cat on fire, X has acted wrongly; however, knowledge of the particular case of the hoodlums lighting a cat on fire does not seem obtained by rational intuition.¹²³

The upshot is that, even on Reid's own account, there is a benefit to obtaining moral knowledge by way of two distinct processes. For on the one hand, moral intuition helps us obtain moral knowledge of moral first principles and perhaps other general moral principles. On the other, some particular moral knowledge (e.g., that one's behavior or character is virtuous or vicious) could perhaps only be obtained by way of perception. Ultimately, then, having the capacity to perceive moral reality helps us obtain some moral knowledge we may not be able to obtain by way of rational intuition.

In this chapter, I started by discussing how I think moral perception would work for Reid. I then raised and responded to three objections one might raise against interpreting Reid as being a moral perceptionist. I then discussed ways in which moral intuitionism might work for Reid, and noted how Reid could be both a moral perceptionist and moral intuitionist. I closed this chapter by explaining why I do not think it is problematic for Reid to maintain that we obtain moral knowledge through two distinct processes. I now proceed to conclude this dissertation by first summarizing my arguments and interpretations made in chapters 2-4; I then close by discussing three other

¹²³ One might maintain that regarding the case of the hoodlum's lighting the cat on fire, we do not obtain knowledge that their action is wrong by way of perception. Instead, we have an intuition (albeit not necessarily a rational intuition) that their action is morally wrong. I grant that this might be the case. However, as I argued in chapter 2, we have good reason to think Reid believes we sometimes perceive certain behaviors as being morally wrong or right.

concerns about Reid's moral philosophy that I think are worth exploring but have largely neglected in this dissertation.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

1. A Review of the Positions Defended

I conclude this dissertation by first summarizing the arguments defended in chapter's 2-4. I then proceed to briefly discuss three concerns regarding Reid's moral philosophy that have been largely neglected in this dissertation.

1.1 Review of Chapter 2

In chapter 2, I discussed whether Reid's moral epistemology is best understood as being a form of moral intuitionism or moral perception. One of the frustrating aspects of studying Reid's moral philosophy is that he is often vague or unclear, especially when it comes to how one obtains moral knowledge. On the one hand, there are passages where Reid describes the moral sense—the faculty by which one (a) makes moral judgments and (b) experiences emotions that are in accordance with his or her moral judgments—as being the same thing as one's conscience (E.g., *EAP* 3.3.8, p. 190-192; *EAP* 5.1, p. 276-277). I assumed that one's conscience is best understood as a faculty or process by which certain moral propositions seem to be true; accordingly, it seems as if Reid's moral epistemology is best understood as a form of moral intuitionism, the view (broadly construed) where foundational or basic moral knowledge is obtained by way of intuition.

On the other hand, however, Reid often says that by the moral sense we perceive moral reality, such as rightness, wrongness, duty, obligation, etc. Moreover, he frequently compares the moral sense as functioning similarly to our external sense faculties, such as

our faculties of vision and hearing. Furthermore, he maintains that some of our basic moral knowledge is obtained by way of such perception, similar to how some of our basic knowledge of the external world is obtained by way of our external sense faculties (e.g., see *EAP* 3.3.6, p. 175; *PA* 5, p.43). In which case, Reid's moral epistemology seems to involve moral perception; according to such a view, some of our basic, foundational moral knowledge is obtained by external sense perception. The upshot is that Reid seems to describe two different ways or processes by which we obtain moral knowledge: (1) through moral intuition and through (2) moral perception.

I considered four possible ways one might interpret Reid's moral epistemology; first, Reid might strictly be a moral intuitionist. On this view, for Reid, all moral knowledge is ultimately obtained by intuition or deduced from already intuited moral propositions. According to this interpretation, whenever Reid says that we perceive moral reality, he does not use 'perceive' to refer to a type of external sense perception. Instead, he uses perceive in a figurative or metaphorical sense in order to refer to a type of intuition one has when presented with various moral scenarios (e.g., trolley problems and other thought experiments). To see that something is wrong, accordingly, is similar to how one might see that Donald Trump is ahead in the polls, or how a blind man sees that the Yankees are in second place, or how a mathematician perceives that some axiom.

However, there is a problem with this interpretation. Not only does Reid say that many problems arise when philosophers use technical terms incorrectly or vaguely (*EIP* 1.1, p.17), he also maintains that he does not want to court confusion by using 'perceive' loosely or metaphorically; accordingly, he claims that perception is what occurs when our external sense faculties interact with the external world in certain ways (*EIP* 1.1). If Reid

did not want to court confusion, then why does he frequently state that we perceive moral reality? The strict intuitionist view must maintain that Reid always uses ‘perception’ metaphorically when discussing moral perception, yet such an interpretative strategy seems arbitrary; for it forces us to take some passages as Reid being metaphorical and other as him being literal. The problem is that it is not clear why we should accept some passages as Reid being metaphorical while others as him being literal.

The second interpretative strategy is that Reid is strictly a moral perceptionist, meaning that all moral knowledge is either obtained through moral perception (which I take to be a type of external sense perception) or deduced from moral propositions known by way of perception. This strategy, however, must dismiss or explain away passages where Reid says the moral sense functions like a conscience, where a conscience is best understood as a faculty or process by which one intuits moral reality. Accordingly, an advocate of this strategy must show why Reid does not use the term conscience in its literal sense, but in some other metaphorical or non-literal sense instead. The worry, however, is that such a strategy is also arbitrary, for it forces us to treat some passages as literal and others as metaphorical, and it is not clear there is a principled reason to treat some passages literally and others metaphorically.

Another problem with this interpretation, one that was further drawn out in Chapter 3, is that it is not clear how one acquires knowledge of moral first principles by way of moral perception. It was argued that Reidian moral first principles are not only general (they apply to a broad range of cases) in structure but necessarily true as well—at least in a nomological sense; further, such propositions are known immediately or non-inferentially—one believes them or at least has some compulsion to believe them in

virtue of understanding or grasping their contents. Now in a particular perception, it seems the content of that perception would have to be a particular proposition. For example, suppose I approach a group of hoodlums setting a cat on fire, and suppose that I perceive their action as being morally wrong. Here, the content of my moral perception seems to be a particular moral proposition—mainly, that the hoodlums' actions are morally wrong. The content does not seem to be a general or necessary proposition such as 'it is morally wrong to torture or kill sentient creatures'. The upshot is that even if Reid thinks some moral knowledge is obtained by way of perception, it is doubtful that he thinks we perceive such general and necessary first principles. In which case, the strict perceptionist view is problematic because it cannot account for how one obtains moral knowledge of such first principles.

The third strategy was to say that Reid should be interpreted as being neither a moral perceptionist nor moral intuitionist. The motivation for this interpretation is that Reid is writing in the 18th century, and so it may not be the case that he would use or recognize many contemporary philosophical ideas or positions. By saying Reid is a moral perceptionist or moral intuitionist, one projects onto Reid a view that he would likely neither recognize nor accept. As such, one is mistaken to interpret Reid as being either a moral intuitionist or moral perceptionist, although some elements of his moral philosophy might seem intuitionist or perceptionist.

There are two problems with this strategy, however. First, it makes Reid's moral philosophy mysterious. If it is neither a form of moral intuitionism nor moral perception, then what is it? To be fair, one does not want to unjustifiably place Reid under a certain contemporary category; yet it seems that unless we place him under any category, it is not

clear how to make sense of his claims. Moreover, given what Reid says, it seems that we have strong textual evidence that he thinks we obtain basic moral knowledge by way of intuition or perception. Although perhaps controversially, it seems such an interpretation is warranted. Second, I am skeptical that Reid would not recognize some variant of moral intuitionism; for his contemporary, Richard Price, seems to defend a version of moral intuition that shares striking similarities to contemporary intuitionist accounts (e.g., Audi and Huemer). Accordingly, moral intuitionism does not seem to be a position foreign or unrecognizable among Reid and his contemporaries.

I argue that the final interpretative strategy—what I call the Multiple Process View—is the most plausible. According to the Multiple Process View, we can interpret Reid as maintaining that we obtain moral knowledge through two distinct processes: through moral intuition and through moral perception. There are two primary benefits to the Multiple Process View: First, we need not interpret Reid as being metaphorical or as speaking loosely in some passages but literally in others. In which case, we do not run the risk of arbitrarily dismissing or explaining away some passages as not capturing Reid's views. Second, if we accept the Multiple Process View, then we do not have to admit that Reid's moral philosophy (or at least some elements of it) is mysterious. According to my account, Reid thinks we obtain moral knowledge in either of two ways, and so we need not admit that Reid's moral epistemology is mysterious.

1.2 Review of Chapter 3

Having discussed two ways Reid might think we obtain moral knowledge in chapter 2, in chapter 3 I delved into what kind of moral knowledge Reid thinks we obtain by way of

moral perception or moral intuition. In this chapter, I started by discussing Reid's account of the nature of moral facts. I provided textual evidence supporting the interpretation that Reid thinks moral facts are non-natural and objective (or not in any sense subjective or response-dependent). Moreover, I attempted to resolve an apparent tension in Reid's moral ontology: Reid at one point characterizes moral facts as being necessarily true (*EIP* 6.6, p.495); however, he also says they are contingent (*EIP* 7.2, p.550-551), or at least not necessary in a logical or metaphysical sense. In this chapter, I first considered Cuneo's response to this concern: Cuneo argues that, for Reid, moral principles are necessarily true, but in a relativized sense. Such moral principles are necessarily true, but only when a particular set of conditions obtain—such conditions being various facts about human nature and the environment in which they exist.

However, one such worry with treating moral facts as being necessarily true in this relativized sense is that it seems any metaphysically contingent proposition can be relatively necessary. In which case, it is not clear Cuneo's account shows how moral facts (particularly moral first principles) are necessary in any interesting, non-trivial sense.

To overcome this concern, I proposed that, we should think of moral first principles as being nomologically necessary, similar to how some philosophers (e.g., Armstrong) think laws of nature (the fundamental physical laws of the universe) are nomologically necessary. According to such a view, given the physical nature of the world, it must be the case that certain laws or forces obtains (e.g., laws of gravity, thermodynamics, and $E=MC^2$). Similarly, given facts about human nature—e.g., that humans are rational autonomous creatures capable of experiencing happiness and suffering—certain moral principles must apply or obtain. While some moral principles

might be nomologically necessary, it would not be the case that other metaphysically contingent facts would also be nomologically necessary. For facts about human nature would have no necessary bearing on whether such contingent facts obtain.

I then proceeded to talk about what exactly distinguished a moral first principle from a moral non-first principle. I maintained that in addition to being necessarily true, Reid describes moral first principles as being self-evident. Now there might be two different ways a proposition is self-evident: in a narrow sense and in a broad sense. In short, a proposition is self-evident in the broad sense just in case it is known or believed non-inferentially. This broader sense permits beliefs formed through either intuition or perception as being self-evident. In contrast, according to the narrow sense of self-evident, a proposition is self-evident just in case it is believed upon being grasped or understood. This narrower sense restricts self-evident propositions to those that are intuited. For presumably, in perceptual experience, one only perceives and does not grasp or understand some proposition.

For two reasons, I think Reid believes first principles are self-evident in the narrow sense. First, I think this interpretation is well supported by the text.¹²⁴ Second, it fits well with the claim that moral first principles are general and necessarily true in a nomological sense. For on the one hand, it seems odd that we might perceive general or

¹²⁴ As Reid states,

I call these first principles, because they appear to me to have in themselves an intuitive evidence which I cannot resist. I find I can express them in other words. I can illustrate them by examples and authorities, and perhaps can deduce one of them from another; but I am not able to deduce them from other principles that are more evident. And I find the best moral reasonings of authors I am acquainted with, ancient and modern, heathen and Christian, to be grounded upon one or more of them. (*EAP* 5.1, p. 276)

necessary truths, as they do not seem to be the sort of facts that one can perceive by way of his or her external sense faculties. For example, one might approach some hoodlums and perceive their actions as being morally wrong; yet I doubt that the content of their perception could be a necessary principle such as 'it is wrong to torture sentient creatures'. Instead, it seems likely that such facts are most likely intuited, similar to how one intuits basic mathematical or logical principles. In which case, moral first principles are self-evident in the sense that they are believed or known in virtue of being understood or grasped.

Furthermore, thinking of first principles as being self-evident, nomologically necessary, and only known by intuition does not imply that we cannot obtain moral knowledge by way of moral perception. For it seems possible that in perception, it might immediately seem to someone that a certain action is morally right or morally wrong. Such a belief might be immediate or non-inferential, albeit it is only a belief about a moral particular. Ultimately, even if only moral first principles can be known by intuition, I still think it is possible that one might obtain immediate moral knowledge by way of moral perception. Accordingly, interpreting first principles as I have is consistent with the Multiple Process View, the interpretation that Reid thinks we obtain moral knowledge through two distinct processes. Moreover, it is consistent with Reid's claim that, regarding our knowledge of the external world, some contingent truths are epistemically basic or foundational (*EIP* 6.5). So while certain judgments about the natural world (e.g., grass is green, water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit) could be basic or foundational despite being contingent, so can particular moral judgments (including

those formed in perception) be foundational or basic (even if they are not first principles) despite also being contingent.

The next issue discussed in chapter 3 concerned the worry that Reid's list of moral first principles is too limited since the principles Reid provides either fail to be action-guiding (they fail to inform us what we ought to do in particular cases) or fail to provide any plausible standard by which to determine what is morally right, wrong, etc. For instance, Reid places the Golden Rule—the principle that we ought to treat others as we would like to be treated if we were in their circumstances—in his list of moral first principles. However, the principle itself is flawed because it lacks a plausible standard by which one can determine how we should want to be treated in various circumstances. So as it stands, Reid's list of moral first principles is problematic, for what good are moral principles if they either fail to tell us what we ought to do or fail to provide a plausible standard by which we can determine right, wrong, duty, obligation, etc.?

One solution was to propose that Reid actually thinks the Golden Rule is the most comprehensive moral first principle (*EAP* 5.1, p.275). As I take it, the Golden Rule is the most comprehensive since all other moral principles or judgments are ultimately true in virtue of being applications of or derived from the Golden Rule. Reid need only come up with a more plausible version of the Golden Rule.

However, a problem with this interpretation is that it conflicts with Reid's claim that his list of moral first principles is incomplete; this interpretation also conflicts with Reid's claim that other principles, such as the principles of justice and benevolence, are known in the same way one might know the Golden Rule: they are self-evident such that

a rational, morally mature individual will assent (or at least feel some strong inclination) to them upon sufficiently understanding or grasping them.

The interpretation is also problematic in that it conflicts with thinking of Reid as a moral intuitionist. For if we can ultimately derive what we ought or ought not to do by applying the Golden Rule, then it seems like we need not intuit any other moral principle or make any particular intuitive judgment. Yet, this view conflicts with Reid's claim that a system of morals is not like a system of geometry, where all knowledge is obtained by applying a single axiom or principle to particular cases (*EAP* 5.2, p.281). In this passage, Reid seems to maintain that some moral knowledge need not be derived from some all-comprehensive moral principle. Instead, it seems like we can intuit rightness, wrongness, duty, obligation, etc. As such, in so far as there is strong textual support that Reid is at least partly an intuitionist, it seems we have good reason to think Reid does not believe all moral knowledge can ultimately be derived by a single principle such as the Golden Rule.

Two questions linger: (1) is Reid's moral philosophy problematic because it fails to mention such principles? and (2) what principles could we add to Reid's list of first principles?

In response to (1), Reid could maintain that it is not his task to determine which principles should be added to his list of first principles. It is simply his goal to explain what constitutes a moral first principle and how we might go about knowing it. Moreover, such a move is not uncommon in epistemology, where, for example, the goal of an epistemic foundationalist is not to provide a complete list of foundational principles, but to instead explain what constitutes a foundational principle and how one

goes about knowing it. Yet, it does not seem like epistemic foundationalism is false just because the foundationalist fails to provide a complete list of foundational principles. In which case, a failure to provide an exhaustive list of first principles is not necessarily a problem with Reid's position.

Furthermore, Reid could also maintain that he need only provide the Golden Rule as an action guiding moral first principle. For he even admits that the Golden Rule is the most comprehensive (which I understood as meaning that all other moral principles can in principle be derived from this principle). Moreover, it is not a problem that the Golden Rule—at least as he constructs it—fails to provide a clear standard by which we can determine right from wrong. For the Golden Rule is merely a metaphysical principle about what makes an action morally right or wrong; on its own, it is not designed to inform us what we ought to do in every situation. Instead, through experience and training, we observe which actions or principles generally have beneficial results, and we then implement such principles when determining our moral behavior. However, what ultimately makes these actions or principles the right ones is that they are applications of the Golden Rule. Further, as I argued earlier, Mill seems to make a similar move, and I think such a move is available to Reid.

Finally, in Chapter 3, I investigated whether Reid provides any clues about which principles might be added to his list of moral first principles. One such clue is in passages where Reid includes the principles of justice and principles of benevolence among the list of moral first principles (*EAP* 3.3.6, p.177-178); in such passages, Reid maintains that a rational, normally functioning individual will assent to these principles, and that anyone who fails to understand these principles is in some sense either morally defective or

irrational. I take these passages as suggesting that similar to how (at least for Reid) one will believe a moral first principle upon fully grasping or understanding its meaning, so will someone believe the principles of justice and principles of benevolence upon sufficiently grasping or understanding them. While I do not think these additional principles complete Reid's amended list of moral first principles, I take them as principles that are strong candidates to be included among them.

1.3 Review of Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, I attempted to explain how moral perception and moral intuition might work for Reid. I started by providing background into Reid's general account of external sense perception. My reason for doing so is that Reid's account of moral perception is structurally similar to his account of external sense perception, and so I think having Reid's account of external sense perception in hand makes it easier to grasp his account of moral perception. That being said, I showed that Reid's account of moral perception has three ingredients: (1) sign, (2) conception, and (3) immediate judgment and belief.

For Reid, in many cases of perception, signs are sensations: the way something looks, feels, smells, tastes, or sounds. In one's perceptual experience, features of one's environment affect the sense faculties in certain ways, causing the individual to experience certain sensations. For example, a red rose might affect one's vision faculty, causing him or her to experience red sensations (*IHM* 6.21, p. 108). Signs, moreover, evoke or suggest a conception of some quality, where a conception is understood as being a mental notion or simply apprehension of some property or object. For instance, the sensation of red evokes a conception or mental notion of the quality of red (*IHM* 6.1,

p.161). In addition to having a conception of red, one forms an immediate (or non-inferential) judgment or belief that red exists in his or her environment (*EIP* 2.5, p. 51). Furthermore, I understood belief/judgment as a state where one neither affirms nor denies some proposition. While I do not think Reid explicitly makes this claim, I think it is counterintuitive to claim otherwise, and so I do not attribute Reid as maintaining that we always believe or affirm what we (think we) perceive.

Furthermore, on Reid's account, perceptions can either be original or acquired (*IHM* 2.21, p. 125). Original perceptions include those of various primary and secondary qualities. In order to perceive qualities like redness, hardness, or warmth, one does not need prior experience or training; instead, one is naturally disposed to perceive such qualities upon being affected by certain mind-external features. In contrast, acquired perceptions are those that require some requisite training or experience. Such acquired perceptions include seeing an object as three-dimensional, as well as perceiving something as being a cup of brandy (rather than a cup of vodka), an oriole (rather than a warbler), or an oak tree (rather than a maple). So while a novice birder cannot perceive some object as being, say, an oriole or warbler, that same birder can eventually develop the perceptual ability to perceive something as being an oriole or warbler.

Moreover, unlike in original perception, there are some instances of acquired perception where the signs are not sensations; instead, signs include primary qualities, secondary qualities, and appearances. For instance, the appearance of a circular object is a sign of that object's three-dimensionality (*EIP* 6.23, p. 116). Or, perhaps more controversially, the appearance of an object with a certain shape and colorization is a sign of an oriole or warbler. I raised this point about such signs in acquired perception, as I

think qualities and appearances function as signs in Reidian moral perception.

Accordingly, in Reidian moral perception, signs are not sensations, but qualities and appearances instead. For example, the sound of a menacing voice might be a sign that an individual possesses some evil character trait. Or one's behavior/actions and facial expressions may also be signs of various morally relevant features (e.g., that individual's character traits or an action's rightness or wrongness). Furthermore, just as in ordinary Reidian external sense perception, such signs evoke conceptions and beliefs/judgments.

Having discussed the basic idea underlying Reidian moral perception, I then explained why I think Reid's account fits under a broad notion of moral perception. Accordingly, I maintained that any account of moral perception must have the following three features: (1) the perceptual belief must not be inferred from other beliefs; it must in some sense be epistemically or psychologically immediate; (2) Second, the content of the perception must be a perceptual seeming state, and not an intellectual or introspective seeming state; it must perceptually seem to the individual that a certain action is morally right or wrong, similar to how it might perceptually seem to someone that it is raining or that grass is green. (3) Third, the perception must involve the individual either seeing an action as being morally right or morally wrong or seeing an individual as possessing a virtuous or vicious character trait. I provided textual evidence indicating that Reid's account of moral perception meets each of these conditions, and so claimed that his moral epistemology (at least partly) involves moral perceptions.

Having shown how Reidian moral perception works, I then raised and responded to three objections against my interpretation. The first objection is what is referred to as the causal objection. The objection states that since Reid is a moral non-naturalist, he

cannot account for the causal connection that must obtain between a subject and the object or quality of this subject's perception. The idea is that in order to perceive some object or quality, the subject must be in the right causal relation between the object or quality of perception. Since, on Reid's account, moral properties are non-natural, it is hard to see how they could be in the right causal relation such that they could be perceived.

I responded to this objection by claiming that moral properties might be emergent or resultant properties that supervene on various non-moral physical properties. In moral perception, subjects are causally connected with these non-moral physical properties. For example, suppose someone approaches a group of hoodlums about to set a cat on fire, and this individual perceives their actions as being morally wrong. Here, the action's wrongness could supervene on various non-moral properties or features (e.g., the hoodlums' action of inflicting immense pain upon the cat and perhaps other non-moral qualities). Furthermore, I added that there was sufficient textual evidence for the interpretation that Reid thinks moral qualities or properties are emergent or resultant properties, and so Reid could use this line of response against the causal objection (e.g., see *EIP* 6.5, p.486).

The second objection stated that, even on Reid's own account of perception, moral perception is not a genuine form of external sense perception. The worry concerns Reid's claim that qualities and appearances function as signs of moral reality. If so, then it seems moral perceptions are mediated by such qualities and appearances, and such a view conflicts with Reid's account that a genuine moral perception is not mediated by any object, quality, or idea. My response was that such an objection proves too much; for

it would ultimately imply that most of our acquired perceptions are not genuine forms of perception— for example, it would imply that one's perception of an object's three dimensionality, or an oriole, or an oak tree are not instances of external sense perception (as such perceptions also seem to be mediated by qualities and appearances). However, such a view seems counterintuitive since it seems like we actually perceive things as being, say, three-dimensional, an oriole, or an oak tree.

Yet one might press that there is a relevant difference between one's perception of something as being three-dimensional or as being an oriole and one's perception of moral reality. The idea is that moral perception is more like a husband seeing his wife's keys on the table and in virtue of seeing these keys (in some sense) perceives that she is home. However, surely the husband's perception that his wife is home is not an external sense perception. Accordingly, Reidian moral perception functions the same way as the husband's perception (or so the objection goes), and so it seems that it is also not a genuine form of external sense perception. My response to this concern was that Reid could maintain the following: in moral perception, the moral qualities supervene on various non-moral physical properties, and it is these physical properties in which we are causally connected. However, the husband's wife being home does not supervene on her keys. As such, there is a relevant difference between the husband's perception and Reidian moral perception; Reid, moreover, could use this difference to preserve the claim that there are genuine moral perceptions.

The third objection was that, on Reid's own account, we only perceive an individual's character traits. The worry is that while we might perceive someone as being virtuous or vicious, we do not perceive an action or behavior as being morally right,

wrong, etc. However, I think Reid's account of moral perception could easily be extended to cases where one sees certain actions or behaviors as being morally wrong, right, etc. Furthermore, I think there is plenty of textual support for the claim that Reid thinks we perceive actions and behaviors as being morally right or wrong (e.g., *EIP* 6.6, p.503-504).

After, discussing Reid's account of moral perception at length, I then discussed Reid's account of moral intuition. I maintained that even though Reid does not provide a very robust account of how his moral intuitionism is supposed to work, I think there is sufficient textual evidence indicating that his moral epistemology is at least partly intuitionist. For instance, Reid frequently refers to the moral sense (or moral faculty) as being the same thing as one's conscience, and I claimed that we can plausibly understand 'conscience' as referring to a faculty or process by which we intuit moral reality. Furthermore, since Reid describes moral first principles as being necessarily true (in a nomological sense) and believed or known in virtue of being understood or grasped, we have good reason to think that such principles are known by way of intuition.

I also attempted to characterize Reid's account under a very broad notion of moral intuition, I described a moral intuition as an intellectual seeming state where some proposition seems true. It is sort of seeming state one has in virtue of thinking about some proposition. While this account is admittedly broad (perhaps too much so), I think it suffices to show how Reid's moral epistemology can be understood as being at least partly intuitionistic.

Finally, in chapter 4 I raised and responded to two possible objections to Reid's account (at least my interpretation of it). The first objection concerned the claim that since moral facts are non-natural (and so outside of time and space), it is not clear how

they could cause us to form beliefs about them. At least, it seems most of our beliefs about the world are ultimately (in some sense) caused by objects and properties in the world; however, it is not clear how things outside of time and space could cause us to form beliefs about them.

I addressed this concern by maintaining that we seem to know all sorts of things about mathematics, logic, and universal. However, such properties are outside of time and space, and so seem to be causally inert. So presumably if we obtain knowledge of these things, so we could also obtain knowledge of moral reality (even though it is also causally inert). Furthermore, in so far as moral intuition (at least here) has been described as an intellectual seeming state that we have in virtue of thinking about a proposition, the process of moral intuition seems to be quite similar to the process of mathematical or logical intuition. If we do not find it mysterious how we might obtain mathematical or logical knowledge by way of intuition, neither should we find moral intuition to be mysterious.

Lastly, as I have described Reid's account of moral intuition, one could maintain that intuition and inference from intuition is adequate or sufficient when it comes to helping us obtain moral knowledge. In which case, moral perception is unnecessary, and so Reid's moral epistemology seems to be unnecessarily complicated. It is not clear there is any practical advantage to thinking we obtain moral knowledge through two distinct processes. Why overly complicate his view when you do not have to?

However, one response to this concern is to simply maintain that Reid says way he says, and there is strong textual evidence that he is committed to there being two distinct ways of obtaining moral knowledge. Second, it does not seem absurd to think we

can obtain the same moral knowledge through two distinct processes; when it comes to obtaining knowledge of various mathematical or logical axioms, it seems we could obtain the same knowledge through two distinct processes (e.g., intuition and testimony). So it seems plausible that we could also obtain moral knowledge through two distinct processes. Finally, there may be some areas of moral reality (e.g., particular moral scenarios or the character of particular moral agents) that can only be known by way of moral perception. In which case, there are some parts of moral reality in which moral intuition fails to provide us with knowledge.

Thus, I think I have answered the three questions concerning Reid's moral epistemology that were raised back in the opening chapter: The first question concerned how to best understand the nature of Reid's moral faculty; the second question concerned what was the nature of moral reality for Reid; and the third concerned how the moral faculty provides us with knowledge of this moral reality. Having reviewed by answers to these questions, I now proceed to discuss some areas in Reid's moral philosophy that I have not explored (at least at length) in this dissertation but nonetheless think are worth future investigation.

2. Other Issues in Reidian Moral Philosophy

I close this chapter by indicating three areas in Reid's moral epistemology largely neglected in this dissertation. These areas focus on objections one might raise against Reid's moral epistemology in general. So while I will not (at least in a vigorous way) show how Reid might respond to these objections, I flag them in order to indicate that they may strike a substantial blow to the plausibility of Reid's moral theory. Accordingly,

the first issue concerns the role (or lack thereof) of moral emotions in Reidian moral judgment. The second concerns what I call the problem of moral conflicts. And the third concerns Mackie's concern about moral properties being supervenient properties. Although I do not respond to these objections, I point them out as issues for further philosophical investigation.

2.1 The role of emotions in Reidian moral judgment

The first issue concerns the role of moral emotions or sentiments in Reid's moral philosophy. As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, Reid does not think moral emotions or sentiments can be reliable signs of moral reality. Even though Reid thinks emotions play a significant role in moral judgment (upon making a moral judgment, we experience some feeling of approbation or disapprobation toward the individual who performed the morally relevant action as well as a certain positive or negative feeling within ourselves), Reid does not think moral judgments or beliefs (especially judgments and beliefs formed in moral perception) can ultimately be grounded in or based on one's moral emotions or sentiments. To use a more Reidian terminology, Reid does not think emotions or sentiments (call such things moral sensations) can be reliable signs of objective moral value, whereas for Reid qualities and appearances may in some instances be such reliable signs. For, as mentioned in chapter 3, Reid thinks the position that emotions or sentiments are signs of moral reality ultimately collapses into some version of moral subjectivism or moral non-cognitivism; on such a picture (call it the sentimentalist account of moral judgement), moral judgments are ultimately determined by or grounded in our sentimental or emotional responses (what one might call moral sensations) (*EAP*

5.5, p.361-362). I do not think it would be too far a stretch to say that the sentimentalist would maintain the following claim: that emotions or sentiments are often, if not always, the signs that evoke our moral conceptions and moral judgments/beliefs. While for the sentimentalist, emotions or sentiments evoke moral conceptions and moral judgments/beliefs, Reid instead thinks only qualities and appearances reliably evoke such conceptions of and judgments/beliefs about objective moral reality.¹²⁵

Putting aside whether Reid has strong reasons for rejecting this sentimentalist account of moral judgment, there is a serious worry to Reid's view. The worry is that Reid's view seems to conflict with recent empirical accounts of moral judgment. Accordingly, there is strong empirical support for the claim that most, if not all of our moral judgments, are ultimately grounded in or in some sense determined by our emotional responses to certain morally relevant situations (Haidt 2001, Prinz 2006).¹²⁶ The idea is that when people are subject to various morally relevant scenarios (e.g.,

¹²⁵ This is not to say that Reid does not think moral emotions do not play any role in moral experience. Reid thinks that after we make a moral judgment, we will then feel some degree of approbation or disapprobation towards the individual whose action or behavior we judged—e.g., we will feel approbation towards those who commit actions we judge to be morally permissible or praiseworthy) as well as a feeling within ourselves (e.g., disgust if we judged the action to be morally wrong. Reid just thinks emotions and signs are not reliable signs of moral value.

¹²⁶As Prinz states,

Recent work in cognitive science provides overwhelming evidence for a link between emotion and moral judgment. I review findings from psychology, cognitive neuroscience, and research on psychopathology and conclude that emotions are not merely correlated with moral judgments but they are also, in some sense, both necessary and sufficient. I then use these findings along with some anthropological observations to support several philosophical theories: first, I argue that sentimentalism is true: to judge that something is wrong is to have a sentiment of disapprobation towards it. Second, I argue that moral facts are response-dependent: the bad just is that which causes disapprobation in a community of moralizers. (29)

While Reid thinks emotions play a role in moral judgment (e.g., when all goes well in moral judgment, we not only judge that, say, someone acted wrongly, we also feel a negative feeling such as disapprobation towards the individual who acted wrongly). However, I think Reid would reject the claim that our judgments are ultimately determined by our emotional responses and he would reject the claim that moral facts are response dependent.

trolley problems), they first experience some emotional response and then make a moral judgment on the bases of this emotional response. Their judgment is in some sense determined by or grounded in their emotional responses or dispositions. The worry, then, is that Reid's account of moral judgment does not accommodate the empirical or philosophical evidence that suggests emotions in many respects influence or determine one's moral judgments. Accordingly, one might press that Reid's account of moral judgment is implausible unless he can somehow accommodate the view that emotions or sentiments often (if not always) determine or heavily influence our moral judgments.

I do not have anything new to add this to debate, especially from a Reidian angle, and so I am admittedly not sure what to make of the empirical data; nor am I certain how Reid might attempt to salvage his moral epistemology from the threat of such data. However, I point out that the issue has been discussed at length by several philosophers (e.g., Cuneo 2006; Roeser 2001, 2009; Kroeker 2014). I take that part of their project is to show how Reid might think emotions or sentiments could, at least in some cases, be reliable signs of objective moral reality. While I do not know whether moral objectivism is compatible with the view that emotions are signs of value, I nonetheless direct the reader to the work of such philosophers. Ultimately, if they succeed in showing how Reid might accommodate such concerns, then they have perhaps helped Reid overcome such concerns.

2.2 The problem of moral conflicts

As mentioned in chapter 3, I take Reid as committed to the view that there are multiple action prescribing/guiding moral first principles. Such first principles include the

principles of justice and the principles of benevolence. The worry is that it seems possible that these principles could prescribe conflicting actions. For example, consider a scenario where one must lie in order to save an innocent person's life. Here, it seems possible that 'it is wrong to lie' and 'it is wrong to let innocent people die' are moral first principles (perhaps Reid would not characterize these principles as such, but for sake of illustration, I assume he thinks they are first principles). In this scenario, it seems these principles prescribe conflicting actions. On the one hand, you can tell the truth and let an innocent person die; on the other, you can lie and save an innocent person's life. However, if both principles are first principles, then which principle should guide our action in this scenario?

The problem—and this is a general problem for any moral theory that has multiple first (or foundational or basic) moral principles—is that it is not clear what we should do when such moral conflicts arise (I call this problem of moral conflicts). Since, as I have argued, Reid thinks there are such multiple first principles, his view also faces the problem of moral conflicts.

Reid may have a number of responses to this problem. First, he could maintain that one's moral faculty, if functioning properly, will always prescribe the appropriate course of action. One may not understand why, say, lying to save a person's life is better than telling the truth and letting an innocent person die; nonetheless, one's ability to intuit or perceive right and wrong will enable the individual to make the correct or accurate moral judgment (at least, the moral faculty will do so just as long as the individual has undergone good moral education and is not influenced by prejudice or emotion). Such a

response may have textual support, especially from passages where Reid says that the moral sense equips us with moral knowledge:

As we rely upon the clear and distinct testimony of our eyes, concerning the colours and figures of the bodies about us, we have the same reason to rely with security upon the clear and unbiased testimony of our *conscience*, with regard to what we ought, and ought not to do. In many cases, moral worth and demerit are discerned no less clearly by the last of those natural faculties, than figure and color by the first. (*EAP* 3.3.6, p. 179)

Our moral faculty helps us decide what we ought and ought not to do, and we have just as much reason to trust it dictates as we have reason to trust the dictates of our perceptual faculties. It seems possible, then, that when moral conflicts arise, our moral faculty will reliably help us make the right moral judgments.

However, as mentioned before, the moral faculty was supposed to provide us with the first principles of morality, among which are action-guiding moral principles. If the moral faculty can help us decide what to do in any morally relevant scenarios, then it is not clear why moral principles are needed at all. While I do not think this concern refutes the interpretation that the moral faculty will help us decide what to do when moral conflicts arise, it raises the question about why we need moral first principles at all, especially if the moral sense or faculty can ultimately prescribe what we ought to do.

Still, perhaps other options are available to Reid. Another option is to appeal to Reid's claim that the Golden Rule is a moral first principle. Consider the moral conflict where one must decide whether to lie and save an innocent person's life or to tell the truth and let an innocent person die. Perhaps part of the answer is to consider how I would like to be treated if I were in their circumstances. Accordingly, it may be permissible to lie in this circumstance since, if I were an innocent person, I would not

want to be killed. The upshot is that moral conflicts can ultimately be resolved by applying the Golden Rule to such circumstances.

Of course, there are a number of problems with this response: First, it seems the problems that plague the Golden Rule resurface (e.g., if one is a psychopath or masochist, then we would not want that person to treat others as he would like to be treated if he were in that person's shoes), and so this solution to the problem of moral conflicts invites a host of additional problems. Second, it is not clear whose perspective we should consider when deciding whose shoes to step in: true, if we are an innocent person, we would not want to die; yet if we were the person seeking the innocent person, we would not want to be lied to. Accordingly, how to apply the Golden Rule is unclear. Third, if the Golden Rule ultimately determines how we ought to act, then it is not clear why Reid thinks there are additional action-guiding moral first principles; such first principles seem unnecessary if the Golden Rule ultimately settles what we ought or ought not to do.

Here, I will not attempt to defend a way in which Reid might address the problem of moral conflicts. I merely point out two possible answers, each of which I think fits with what Reid says elsewhere. I bring up the issue since I think it is an issue worth further exploration; moreover, if Reid has a plausible answer to this problem, then perhaps his response (or components of his response) can be used by others to defend their own positions against the problem of moral conflicts (e.g. the moral intuitionists positions of (Ross (1930); Audi (2013); and Huemer (2005)).

2.3 Mackie and supervenience

The final issue concerns one component of Mackie's (1977) argument from queerness.

To see where this concern surfaces for Reid, first recall the claim in chapter 4 that Reid could defend the view that moral qualities supervene on natural, non-moral properties.

The idea is that moral properties are in some sense emergent or resultant properties: they obtain in virtue of other non-moral properties obtaining. Now Mackie grants that the moral objectivist (e.g., such as Reid) could maintain that moral properties supervene on non-natural properties; for example, Reid could maintain that the wrongness of the hoodlums' actions supervene on various non-moral properties. Here, the hoodlums' actions are wrong ultimately *because* these non-moral properties are instantiated.

Mackie, however, finds the 'because' relation mysterious:

Another way of bringing out this queerness is to ask, about anything that is supposed to have some objective moral quality, how this is linked with its natural features. What is the connection between the natural fact that an action is a piece of deliberate cruelty - say, causing pain just for fun...[It] is not merely that the two features occur together. The wrongness must somehow be 'consequential' or 'supervenient'; it is wrong because it is a piece of deliberate cruelty. But just what in the world is signified by this 'because'? And how do we know the relation that it signifies, if this is something more than such actions being socially condemned, and condemned by us too, perhaps through our having absorbed attitudes from our social environment? It is not even sufficient to postulate the faculty which 'sees' the wrongness: something must be postulated which can see at once the natural features that constitute the cruelty, and the wrongness, and the mysterious consequential link between the two. (41)

Mackie claims that we must know why certain non-moral properties obtaining has the consequence that certain moral properties obtain; for unless we answer this question, then it seems mysterious why certain moral qualities supervene on non-natural properties.

Mackie, ultimately, is skeptical that there is a plausible answer to this concern.

Again, there may be multiple ways Reid might respond to Mackie's concern. One such response might be very Reidian: it is just a fact about how God made the world that

certain moral properties supervene on non-natural properties; moreover, we are constituted (by nature or God) such that we can either intuit or perceive the rightness or wrongness of various actions. End of story. Of course, such an answer seems quite unsatisfying, especially to those inclined not to bring God into the picture when attempting to unravel philosophical mysteries. Moreover, this answer still leaves unanswered the question concerning why moral properties supervene on certain non-moral properties.

Another response is to suggest that we ultimately have good reasons for thinking our moral judgments refer to non-natural moral properties. So while it might seem mysterious why such moral non-natural properties supervene on non-moral natural properties, the notion of moral properties supervening on natural properties is still the most plausible account available—one that explains how we might have epistemic access to properties that are non-natural and so neither in time nor space (of course, this assumes that we have good reason for thinking non-natural moral qualities exist). I will not consider the other options here; still, one might maintain that any account of supervenience has its mysteries (e.g., consider the ongoing debate concerning how to understand the supervenience relation between mental properties and physical properties)¹²⁷, and so while it is mysterious how moral properties supervene on certain non-moral properties, such a mystery is not unique to the view that moral properties supervene on non-natural properties. In which case, the supervenience account may still

¹²⁷ Consider McLaughlin's and Bennett's (2014) Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy article on supervenience in order to see the extent of the ongoing debates concerning supervenience.

be the most plausible account about how we might have epistemic access to non-natural morally objective properties.

Perhaps a more plausible or satisfying answer is available to Reid. Yet I leave an investigation into such an answer for another time and place. For now, I merely bring the issue to the reader's attention. Of course, there are likely many more areas of Reid's moral philosophy worthy of further investigation. I also leave inquiry into these issues for another time and place.

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