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Reid and Higher Order Theories of Consciousness

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The notion of consciousness plays a central role in the philosophy of Reid, featuring in his account of the first two principles of contingent truths and in his account of the powers of the mind in general, for example in his discussion of related notions such as attentive reflection, memory and perception.[1] Given this central role, it is somewhat surprising that the topic of consciousness does not feature more prominently in the literature. This relative neglect has been somewhat remedied, however, by recent attempts to link Reid's conception of consciousness to present-day debates about first- and higher order theories of consciousness.[2] In this paper I attempt to explain and evaluate Reid's account of consciousness by relating it to some of his predecessors with whom he engages, such as Locke and Leibniz, and also to some of his contemporaries and early critics, such as Thomas Brown. I hope that this approach will enable us to evaluate the recent readings of Reid in terms of the present-day debates.

What is Consciousness?

Reid emphasises that consciousness 'is an operation of the understanding of its own kind' (*EIP*, 470) and needs to be distinguished clearly from other

[1] Derek Brookes (ed.), Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Edinburgh, 2002), 24, 41–2, 58–9, 96, 277, 322–3, 420–1, 470–4; hereafter cited in the text as *EIP*.

[2] See, especially, Keith Hossack, 'Reid and Brentano on Consciousness', in Mark Textor (ed.), *The Austrian Contribution to Analytical Philosophy* (London, 2006), 36–63; Rebecca Copenhaver, 'Thomas Reid's Philosophy of Mind: Consciousness and Intentionality', in *Philosophy Compass*, 1 (2006), 279–89; Rebecca Copenhaver, 'Reid on Consciousness: HOP, HOT Or FOR?', in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 57 (2007), 613–34; Keith Lehrer, 'Consciousness and Regress', in *Journal of Scottish Philosophy,* 6 (2008), 45–57. See also Lehrer's earlier article, 'Reid on Consciousness', in *Reid Studies*, 1 (1986–7), 1–9. For discussions of present-day accounts, see for example R. J. Gennaro (ed.), *Higher Order Theories of Consciousness: an Anthology* (Philadelphia, 2004).

mental operations such as perception, reflection and remembering. It is, moreover, an operation that belongs to an 'original power of the mind' (*EIP*, 471). But what kind of mental operation is consciousness? Reid thinks that consciousness, being an original power, 'cannot be logically defined' (*EIP*, 470), but he certainly believes that we can identify its essential features.

First, Reid points out that, like other mental operations, consciousness has certain 'objects' to which it relates. These objects of consciousness 'are our present pains, our pleasures, our hopes, fears, our desires, our doubts, our thoughts of every kind; in a word, all the passions, and all the actions and operations of our minds, while they are present' (*EIP*, 470). That is to say, consciousness is a mental operation that relates to other mental actions or operations. In this sense it relates to one's own mind, and is to be distinguished from perception which relates to external objects.[3] Reid believes, however, that perception and consciousness have several features in common, such as the immediacy in relating to their respective objects.[4] It is worth noting in this context that for Reid perception, but not consciousness, relates to what happens in one's own body. This idea is linked, of course, to his mind-body dualism. 'Certain states or conditions of our own bodies' are the 'immediate objects of perception' (*EIP*, 211). Just as we perceive states of external bodies do we perceive 'disorders in our own bodies' (*EIP*, 211). Consciousness, by contrast, is restricted to mental operations. Obviously, in order to explain phenomena such as pain which are 'in the mind' (*EIP*, 212), Reid needs to link them to bodily disorders that are, for example, 'in the tooth' (*EIP*, 212). Although for Reid, pain is a sensation in the sentient being (*EIP*, 213) and counts as an 'object' of consciousness, he does not seem to invoke the notion of consciousness in his account of pain.

Second, consciousness relates to mental operations while they are present. This is how consciousness is distinguished from memory. 'We may remember them [the mental operations] when they are past; but we are conscious of them only while they are present' (*EIP*, 470). Reid emphasises that consciousness and memory are 'different powers of the mind' (*EIP*, 277) which 'are chiefly distinguished by this, that the first is an immediate knowledge of the present, the second an immediate knowledge of the past' (*EIP*, 277).

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[3] It is important to note that consciousness, according to Reid, does not take the mind, self, or subject that performs the operations as its object, but only the mental operations themselves.

[4] Rebecca Copenhaver emphasises this aspect of Reid's discussion (Copenhaver, 'Reid on Consciousness', 614–15).

Third, Reid points out that, unlike the objects of perception which may be at rest, mental operations or 'the objects of consciousness are never at rest; the stream of thought flows like a river, without stopping a moment; the whole train of thought passes in succession under the eye of consciousness, which is always employed by the present' (*EIP*, 420–1). This transient and momentary nature applies not only to the objects of consciousness but also to consciousness itself. 'Our consciousness, our memory, and every operation of the mind', Reid says, 'are … flowing like the water of a river, or like time itself' (*EIP*, 278). This means that 'the consciousness I have this moment, can no more be the same consciousness I had last moment, than this moment can be the last moment … Consciousness, and every kind of thought, is transient and momentary, and has no continued existence' (*EIP*, 278).

Fourth, consciousness is characterised by certainty about the existence of its objects, that is, the mental operations. As Reid says, 'When a man is conscious of pain, he is certain of its existence; when he is conscious that he doubts, or believes, he is certain of the existence of those operations' (*EIP*, 470).

This aspect of consciousness is connected to a fifth feature of consciousness, namely that it functions as a foundation of the science of the mind. Reid says that 'a very considerable and important branch of human knowledge rests upon it [consciousness]. For from this source of consciousness is derived all that we know, and indeed all that we can know, of the structure, and of the powers of our own minds; from which we may conclude, that there is no branch of knowledge that stands upon a firmer foundation; for surely no kind of evidence can go beyond that of consciousness' (*EIP*, 471).

Lastly, there is the feature of immediacy which was mentioned in passing above. Reid accounts for this feature by way of distinguishing between consciousness and reflection. As this distinction is directly relevant to the discussion of Reid in terms of first- and higher-order theories of consciousness, I shall look at this distinction in more detail.

Reid, Locke and Leibniz on Consciousness and Reflection

Reid argues that 'the irresistible conviction' we have 'of the reality of those operations' through consciousness 'is not the effect of reasoning; it is immediate and intuitive' (*EIP,* 470). This immediacy of consciousness is linked to the fact that consciousness is always present. Consciousness 'is common to

all men at all times' (*EIP,* 472), Reid says. Although, as we saw, consciousness forms the basis of the science of the mind, Reid notes that consciousness 'is insufficient of itself to give us clear and distinct notions of the operations of which we are conscious, and of their mutual relations, and minute distinctions' (*EIP,* 472). For this reflection is required. Reflection is 'the only source of all our distinct and accurate notions of things' (*EIP,* 269) and is characterised by a certain attention directed at mental operations – something that is lacking in consciousness. We are conscious of many things, Reid says, 'to which we give little or no attention' (*EIP,* 42). But reflection is that act of the mind by which we make 'our own thoughts and passions, and the various operations of our minds' the objects of attention, 'either while they are present, or when they are recent and fresh in our memory' (*EIP*, 42 see also 57–9). According to Reid, unlike consciousness, 'attentive reflection upon those operations, making them the objects of thought, surveying them attentively, and examining them on all sides, is so far from being common to all men, that it is the lot of very few' (*EIP*, 472). Consciousness, then, is the foundation of, and is presupposed by reflection; but only reflection, not consciousness can give us distinct notions of mental operations.[5] Moreover, unlike consciousness, 'reflection is not one power of the mind; it comprehends many; such as recollection, attention, distinguishing, comparing, judging' (*EIP*, 269).[6]

Reid makes a point of engaging with Locke in this context. Unfortunately, his account of Locke is way off the mark, and in fact his own understanding of consciousness and reflection is much closer to Locke's than he would like to think, but there is one important substantive difference, as we shall see. Reid argues that Locke confuses consciousness with both memory and reflection (*EIP*, 268–9, 421). Both charges are mistaken, but here I focus on consciousness and reflection.

Reid is right of course when he says that Locke uses 'reflection' in more than one sense (*EIP*, 269). Locke's official definition is in terms of inner sense: reflection is the only other experiential source of simple ideas, apart from

[5] For a detailed discussion of Reid's account of attention, see Gideon Yaffe, 'Thomas Reid on Consciousness and Attention', in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 39 (2009), 165–94.

[6] In some passages, however, Reid suggests that reflection shares with consciousness its intuitive nature and the certainty about the reality of its objects. Thus, Reid says, that 'reflection is a kind of intuition' (*EIP,* 42), and that 'we take it for granted, therefore, that by attentive reflection, a man may have a clear and certain knowledge of the operations of his own mind; a knowledge no less clear and certain, than that which he has of an external object when it is set before his eyes' (*EIP,* 42).

sensation. It is 'the other Fountain, from which Experience furnisheth the Understanding with *Ideas*'. Our own mental operations, 'when the Soul comes to reflect on, and consider, do furnish the Understanding with another set of *Ideas*, which could not be had from things without: and such are, *Perception*, *Thinking*, *Doubting*, *Believing*, *Reasoning*, *Knowing*, *Willing*, and all the different actings of our own Minds'.[7] In other places however, Locke uses 'reflection' in the more general sense of thinking over an issue or one's thought (*Essay*, II.xxvii.9).[8] Reid's notion of reflection captures only part of Locke's official

[7] P. H. Nidditch (ed.), John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford, 1979), II.i.4; hereafter *Essay*, cited by Book, chapter, paragraph).

[8] Locke does not, however, have a clearly defined set of several notions of reflection, as has been claimed in the literature. Daniel Mishori, for example, distinguishes between precisely 'four meanings of Lockian reflection'. ('Locke on the Inner Sense and Inner Observation', in *Locke Studies*, 4 (2004), 145–81, at 161). Vili Lähteenmäki holds that there are two distinct and clearly defined conceptions of reflection in Locke ('The Sphere of Experience in Locke. The Relations between Reflection, Consciousness and Ideas', in *Locke Studies*, 8 (2008), 59–100): (1) reflection as a *source* of ideas which is completely passive: here, attention and what Locke calls 'contemplation' are not involved. And there are no mental operations on which we do not reflect in this sense, that is to say we acquire ideas of *all* of our mental operations (92 ff); (2) reflection as an operation *about* ideas which is voluntary and attentive; it is only this type of reflection that Locke characterises by the notion of 'contemplation' (59, 68–9). Only this type of reflection presupposes consciousness, namely consciousness of the *ideas* which we have acquired through the first type of reflection (60). In my view, it is problematic, however, to ascribe this distinction to Locke. Although there are passages in which Locke uses the terminology of 'reflection' in a general and indeterminate sense that is not identical with the definition of reflection (in II.i.4) as a source of ideas (see, for example, II.xxviii.12; III.v.16), this does not justify the ascription of two clearly defined and distinct notions of reflection to Locke, as envisaged by Lätheenmäki. For example, the notion of contemplation *is* used by Locke to characterise reflection as a source of ideas. In II.i.7 Locke notes that if we contemplate on the operations of the mind (the operations themselves), we will acquire ideas of them. In order to acquire ideas of mental operations, the mind needs to 'turn[s] its view inward upon it self, and observe[s] its own Actions' (II.vi.1; see also II.i.24). Of course, 'contemplation' is broader than reflection understood as a source of ideas, so that not every act of contemplation can be explained in terms of reflection, but every act of reflection by which we acquire ideas of mental operations involves an activity that Locke characterises through notions such as contemplation and attention. Finally, Locke nowhere states that we acquire ideas of all of our mental operations and that there are no unreflected-on operations. Rather, he says that it is 'pretty late, before most Children get *Ideas* of the Operations of their own Minds' (II.i.8), and that 'in time, the Mind comes to reflect on its own *Operations*, about the *Ideas* got by *Sensation*, and thereby stores it self with a new set of *Ideas*' (II.i.24). We do not necessarily reflect on our mental operations, for Locke says: 'Whoever reflects on what passes in his own Mind, cannot miss it: And *if he does not reflect*, all the Words in the World, cannot make him have any notion of it' (II.ix.2; last emphasis mine).

account of reflection. It is much broader than the latter (*EIP*, 421).[9] Reflection, for Reid, is not even restricted to operations of the mind. 'For surely', Reid says, 'I may reflect upon what I have seen or heard, as well as upon what I have thought' (*EIP,* 421)—we can reflect even on external things.

Locke's account of reflection, too, involves attention and the turning to one's own mental operations into objects.[10] Reflection, in Locke, is a higher order operation turning mental operations into objects, and generating ideas of these operations. Moreover, although Reid accuses Locke of confusing consciousness with reflection, in fact he thinks that Locke is right in accounting for consciousness in terms of inner sense. He states that 'Mr LOCKE very properly calls consciousness an internal sense' (*EIP,* 420), and he endorses this independently of Locke as well (*EIP,* 421). But since reflection in Locke just is inner sense, Reid could have accepted an account of consciousness in terms of Lockean reflection.

The point is, however, that Locke neither confounds consciousness with reflection, nor does he confound it with inner sense, as Reid seems to do. Like Reid, Locke accounts for consciousness in terms of immediacy; and for Locke too, consciousness does not relate to external things but to 'what passes in a Man's own mind' (*Essay*, II.i.19) or to 'things in the mind', as Reid puts it (*EIP*, 24). In this regard, Locke's notion has more in common with Reid's than Reid would want to acknowledge. Importantly, however, in contrast to Reid, Locke does not hold that consciousness is 'a kind of inner sense'. For Locke, consciousness is not a mental operation that relates to other mental operations as its 'objects'.[11] But what is consciousness, then, for Locke?[12]

On this point, then, I am in agreement with Kevin Scharp who holds that, for Locke, 'the mind does not reflect on all its mental operations'. See Kevin Scharp, 'Locke's Theory of Reflection', in *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 16 (2008), 25–63, at 27, 34–6.

[9] For a discussion of this, see Daniel Mishori, 'The Dilemmas of the Dual Channel: Reid on Consciousness and Reflection', in *Journal of Scottish Philosophy*, 1 (2003), 141–55, at 147–8.

[10] 'The understanding turns inwards upon it self, *reflects* on its own *Operations*, and makes them the Object of its own Contemplation' (*Essay*, II.i.8). 'Unless he turn[s] his Thoughts that way, and considers them [Operations of his Mind] *attentively*', he will have no clear and distinct ideas of his operations. He has to apply '*himself with attention*' (*Essay*, II.i.7).

[11] The following passage in Locke concerns reflection, not consciousness, as Copenhaver ('Reid on Consciousness', 614) assumes: 'This Source of *Ideas*, every man has wholly in himself: And though it be not Sense, as having nothing to do with external Objects; yet it is very like it, and might properly enough be call'd internal Sense' (*Essay*, II.i.4).

[12] For a more detailed discussion of this question, see Udo Thiel, 'Leibniz and the

Of course, if consciousness were the same as reflection or inner sense, consciousness, too, would be a higher order perception. And Locke has often been read in this way.[13] Indeed, this reading of Locke was put forward very early, in Leibniz, for example.[14] I shall suggest that Reid's account of Lockean consciousness in terms of inner sense is essentially Leibnizian – for all Reid's critique of Leibniz's system. In *Nouveaux Essais*, II.i.19, Leibniz comments on a corresponding passage in Locke's *Essay* where the latter states that for him thought is always (and necessarily) conscious thought. Now Leibniz takes Locke to be saying here that thought is always accompanied by an act of reflection, a higher order act of perception. It is clear from Leibniz's critique of Locke that he reads Lockean 'consciousness' in terms of reflection. He first translates Locke's 'being conscious' (of thoughts) as 's'apercevoir de'. But then he makes use of the terminology of reflection and says:

> it is impossible that we should always reflect explicitly on all our thoughts; for if we did, the mind would reflect on each reflection, *ad infinitum*, without ever being able to move on to a new thought. For example, in being aware of ('en m'appercevant de') some present feeling, I should have always to think that I think about that feeling, and further to think that I think of thinking about it, and so on *ad infinitum*. It must be that I stop reflecting on all these reflections, and that eventually some thought is allowed to occur without being thought about; otherwise I would dwell for ever on the same thing.[15]

Concept of Apperception', in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 76 (1994), 195–209, and Udo Thiel, 'Der Begriff der Intuition bei Locke', in *Aufklärung*, 18 (2006), 95–112.

[13] According to William Lycan, for example, 'Locke put forward the theory of consciousness as "internal sense" or "reflection" – on that theory, consciousness is perception-like second order representing of our own psychological states' (William Lycan, 'Consciousness as Internal Monitoring', in N. J. Block, O. Flanagan, and G. Guzeldere (eds), *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), 755–71, at 755). See also G. Guzeldere, 'Is Consciousness the Perception of What Passes in a Man's own Mind?', in T. Metzinger (ed.), *Conscious Experience* (Paderborn, 1995), 335–58, at 335; P. Carruthers, 'HOP over FOR, HOT Theory', in Gennaro (ed.), *Higher Order Theories of Consciousness*, 115–58, at 118.

[14] Reid claims that 'Mr LOCKE has … confounded reflection with consciousness, and seems not to have been aware that they are different powers' (*EIP,* 421.).

[15] The English translation is from G W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. and ed. P. Remnant and J. Bennett (Cambridge, 1981), 118. The French original reads: 'il n'est pas possible que nous reflechissions tousjours expressement sur toutes nos pensées; autrement l'Esprit feroit reflexion sur chaque reflexion à l'infini sans

As a critique of Locke, this (old) argument from infinite regress makes sense only if it is assumed that consciousness is an act of reflection, a higher order mental act. Even if we assumed a distinction between consciousness and reflection in Locke, however, this would not by itself be sufficient to defend Locke against Leibniz's critique. It would then still be possible that Locke conceives of consciousness in terms of a higher order perception, only of a kind that is different from reflection.[16]

More recent discussions of Locke, however, have rejected the standard, Leibnizian reading of Locke as a proponent of a higher order perception account of consciousness.[17] If this is correct, Leibniz's critique in terms of the infinite regress issue misses the mark. Indeed, it is evident from a number of other passages in the *Essay* that (i) Locke implies a distinction between consciousness and reflection, and (ii) this is not a distinction between two types of higher order perceptions. For Locke, 'being conscious' denotes an immediate awareness that is an integral part of all acts of thinking as such. He says that 'thinking *consists* in being conscious that one thinks' (*Essay*, II.i.19; my emphasis). For Locke, unlike reflection, 'consciousness … is *inseparable* from thinking, and … essential to it'.[18] In order for reflection to be able to relate to operations, the latter must always already be characterised as *mental* operations, that is to say, they must have that inherent reflexivity that Locke

pouvoir jamais passer à une nouvelle pensée. Par exemple, en m'appercevant de quelque sentiment present, je devrois tousjours penser que j'y pense, et penser encor que je pense d'y penser, et ainsi à l'infini. Mais il faut bien que je cesse de reflechir sur toutes ces reflexions et qu'il y ait enfin quelque pensée qu'on laisse passer sans y penser; autrement on demeureroit tousjours sur la même chose'; *Die Philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, ed. C. I. Gerhardt, vol. 5 (Berlin, 1882), 108.

[16] This is an interpretation suggested by Mark Kulstad, for example. Kulstad thinks that Locke is confused about the relation between consciousness and reflection and argues that, if there is a distinction between the two in Locke, it would be a distinction between two kinds of higher order perceptions; Mark Kulstad, *Leibniz on Apperception, Consciousness, and Reflection* (Munich, 1991), 86 f, 115.

[17] See for example, Thiel, 'Leibniz and the Concept of Apperception'; Thiel, 'Hume's Notions of Consciousness and Reflection in Context', in *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 2 (1994), 75 – 115; Thiel, 'Der Begriff der Intuition bei Locke'. See also Mishori, 'Locke on the Inner Sense and Inner Observation', 160; Shelley Weinberg, 'The Coherence of Consciousness in Locke's *Essay*', in *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 25 (2008), 21 – 39; Angela Coventry and Uriah Kriegel, 'Locke on Consciousness', in *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 25 (2008), 221 – 42.

[18] *Essay*, II.xxvii.9; my emphasis. See also II.i.10: 'Our being sensible of it is not necessary to any thing, but to our thoughts; and to them it is; and to them it will always be necessary, till we can think without being conscious of it'.

calls 'consciousness'.[19] Consciousness is not something that needs to be added to thinking externally; rather it is an aspect of thinking itself.

Reid and Consciousness as a Higher Order Operation

As indicated, I argue that in spite of his rejection of Leibniz's philosophy as a whole, Reid (1) interprets Lockean consciousness, like Leibniz, in terms of inner sense or a higher order mental operation, and (2) endorses this account of consciousness. Reid's only problem is with the term 'reflection', a term that, according to Reid, stands for a different mental operation. For, although Reid points out the immediacy of consciousness, he implies that the operations to which consciousness relates are objects distinct from the operation of consciousness that relates to them.[20] We saw that consciousness is described by Reid as a distinct operation of the mind, 'of its own kind', and mental operations (including consciousness), Reid says are to be thought of as distinct from the objects to which they relate: 'In most operations of the mind, there must be an object distinct from the operation itself' (*EIP*, 44). Clearly, 'most' does not mean 'all', but Reid does not say that consciousness is an exception.

Philosophers relating Reid's account of consciousness to present-day debates, however, typically interpret it in terms of first order theories of consciousness. Keith Hossack, for example, holds that Reid endorses an 'identity theory' of consciousness 'according to which an experience, and the consciousness of the experience, involve only a single mental event',[21] and Keith Lehrer argues that Reid's notion of consciousness can be reconstructed in terms of the notion of mental self-signification.[22] The most detailed discussion of this issue, however, is in the work of Rebecca Copenhaver. I shall therefore focus on her account. Copenhaver argues that, although 'Reid's view resembles higher-order views of consciousness in some respects', his view is 'interestingly distinct from standard higher-order perception theories', and she holds that 'Reid does not in fact hold an inner-sense theory of consciousness'

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[19] This does not mean of course that we must be conscious of all aspects and elements or details of these complex processes. Compare *Essay*, II.viii.10, on implicit judgements. I am indebted to Martin Lenz for this point.

[20] On this point I seem to be in agreement with Daniel Mishori's reading of Reid (Mishori, 'The Dilemmas of the Dual Channel', 150–1, 155).

[21] Hossack, 'Reid and Brentano on Consciousness', 36.

[22] Lehrer, 'Consciousness and Regress', 51–6.

but sees 'consciousness as a first-order representational process'.[23] Although Reid's claims – such as that consciousness is 'an operation that takes one's own internal states as its intentional objects' – make it 'tempting to regard these claims as making Reid ipso facto a higher order theorist', [24] Copenhaver argues that such temptations must be resisted. She concedes that there are difficulties with interpreting Reid in terms of the present-day theories, saying that the conceptual distinctions central to latter 'would have been unrecognizable to moderns such as Locke or Reid'.[25] Moreover she states that there is a 'sense in which Reid is neither a higher-order nor a first-order theorist', as 'both these theories are reductive theories of consciousness aimed at providing a constitutive account of state consciousness'.[26] Indeed, there is clearly a sense in which it may even be a futile task to try and match up Reid with either present-day account. However we read his discussion of consciousness, obviously, Reid did not develop a systematic theory of consciousness in terms of the technical present-day terminological and conceptual apparatus. There are bound to be crucial differences with respect to both present-day views.

One reason for Copenhaver to link Reid's account to first order rather than to higher order theories concerns his distinction between consciousness and reflection. Present-day higher order theories take the (allegedly) Lockean view of consciousness as reflection as their starting point. We saw, however, that although Reid distinguishes between consciousness and reflection, he still considers consciousness, like reflection, as a mental operation that is distinct from the mental operations to which it relates. Obviously, this does not turn Reid's account into a complex *present-day* higher order theory, but his emphasis on the distinction between consciousness and reflection cannot be used as evidence that, for him, consciousness is not a higher order operation.

More importantly, Copenhaver argues that Reid is not committed to the constitutive claim of present-day higher order theories, that is, the claim that a mental operation's or a state's being conscious *consists* in its being an object of consciousness.[27] It is certainly true, as Copenhaver states, that the notion of a mental operation's or state's being conscious is foreign to Reid. There is, however, a sense in which Reid's thesis is stronger than Copenhaver suggests. Although Reid thinks of consciousness only in terms of what is called today

[23] Copenhaver, 'Reid on Consciousness', 613.
[24] Ibid., 625.
[25] Ibid., 616.
[26] Ibid., 619.
[27] Ibid., 619–20; see also 625.

'creature consciousness', it is not the case that for Reid consciousness merely 'takes mental operations as its objects', to use Copenhaver's formulation. Rather, consciousness is an essential feature of mental operations. It is what constitutes mentality for Reid. We saw above that for Reid consciousness 'is common to all men at all times' (*EIP*, 472). For Reid, there can be no mental operation of which we are not in some elementary sense conscious. He makes the point most explicitly in his rejection of Leibniz's distinction between perception and apperception and, that is, of the notion of unconscious perceptions. Leibniz's distinction is, according to Reid, 'obscure and unphilosophical' (*EIP*, 190). Reid emphasises against Leibniz that 'every operation of our mind is attended with consciousness' (*EIP*, 191) and that 'no man can perceive an object, without being conscious that he perceives it. No man can think, without being conscious that he thinks' (*EIP*, 191). As these passages indicate, Reid's point is not merely an epistemic one, as other formulations might suggest, for example when he says that 'to speak of a perception of which we are not conscious, is to speak without any meaning' (*EIP*, 191). Rather, Reid argues that there is, in reality, no such thing as an unconscious mental operation, and that it is for that reason that 'if we will suppose operations of mind, of which we are not conscious, and give a name to such creatures of our imagination, that name must signify what we know nothing about' (*EIP*, 191).[28] In short, Copenhaver's view that for Reid consciousness is not essential to mentality is not consistent with Reid's explicit rejection of Leibniz's metaphysical distinction between perception and apperception.

Thus Reid combines two views about consciousness, and this combination creates a problem for his account. First, the view that consciousness is a mental operation, 'of its own kind', distinct from the mental operations to which it relates; and second the view that this mental operation called consciousness is essential to the objects or mental operations to which it relates. This combination creates a problem as it generates precisely the regress with which Leibniz (mistakenly) charged Locke.[29] Leibniz avoids the

[28] In a letter to Dugald Stewart of 1791 Reid argues that it is difficult 'to conceive thought … to exist without consciousness'; Paul Wood (ed.), *The Correspondence of Thomas Reid*, 214. I am indebted to Martin Brecher for providing me with this reference.

[29] This is discussed in Lehrer, 'Reid on Consciousness', 5–8. In his later paper on the topic Lehrer argues that Reid can avoid the regress if consciousness is interpreted in terms of the notion of mental self-signification; Lehrer, 'Consciousness and Regress', 52 ff. According to Copenhaver, the regress in Reid's account cannot be avoided but its viciousness can be mitigated; Copenhaver, 'Reid on Consciousness',

regress by arguing that not all mental operations are conscious, a view Reid cannot endorse; Locke avoids the regress by adopting a first order reflexive understanding of consciousness, which is not Reid's view either. Rather, Reid combines the Lockean thesis that consciousness accompanies all mental operations with the Leibnizian view that consciousness is a mental operation separate from the mental operations to which it relates. That is why the regress threatens his account. Had Reid adopted a Lockean first order understanding of consciousness, there would have been no threat of regress in his theory.

There is a passage, however, which seems to suggest that Reid endorses a first order account of consciousness after all. Keith Lehrer discusses an early manuscript note of 1748 where Reid says: 'I know nothing that is meant … by Consciousness of Present Perceptions but the perceiving that we perceive them. I cannot imagine there is anything more in perceiving that I perceive a Star than in perceiving a Star Simply otherwise there might be perceptions of perceptions in Infinitum'.[30] As Lehrer points out, this passage shows that Reid was at one point aware of the regress issue. The passage cannot, however, be taken as an endorsement by Reid of a first order account of consciousness because, as Lehrer concedes, it is an early note in which Reid does not even distinguish between perception and consciousness, a distinction central to his philosophy of mind. It cannot be used as evidence for Reid's considered view on consciousness.

Certainly Reid's early critics, referring only to Reid's published views and arguments, do not seem to think of Reid's account in terms of a first order understanding of consciousness. Dugald Stewart distinguishes between consciousness and reflection very much as does Reid. Reflection, he says, 'bears precisely the same relation to *Consciousness* which *Observation* does to *Perception*; the former supplying us with the facts which form the only solid basis of the Science of the Mind, as we are indebted to the latter for the ground-work of the whole fabric of Natural Philosophy'.[31] Unlike Stewart, however, Thomas Brown, criticises and rejects Reid's understanding of consciousness. In particular, he rejects Reid's view that consciousness relates to thoughts and feelings as operations that are separate from consciousness itself. According to Brown, Reid attempts 'to *double*, as it were our various feelings, by making

627 – 32.

[30] Reprinted in Derek Brookes' edition of Reid's *Inquiry*, 228. See Lehrer, 'Consciousness and Regress', 49.

[31] Dugald Stewart, *Philosophical Essays* (1810), in Sir W. Hamilton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, vol. V (Edinburgh, 1855), 56.

them not to *constitute our consciousness*, but *to be the objects of it*, as of a distinct intellectual power'; and this attempt does not describe the 'phenomena of the mind' accurately; rather it 'is founded, partly on a confusion of thought, and still more on a confusion of language'.[32] For according to Brown, there is no difference between consciousness and a sensation or thought: 'Sensation is not the *object* of consciousness different from itself, but a *particular sensation* is the *consciousness of the moment*'.[33] It is absurd, argues Brown, 'to suppose the mind to exist in two different states, in the same moment'.[34] He insists that 'the consciousness of the sensation … [is] only a tautological expression of the sensation itself'.[35] When we speak of the 'evidence of consciousness', Brown says, 'we mean nothing more, than the evidence implied in the mere existence of our sensations, thoughts, desires'.[36] In short, there seems to be a basis for a first order account of consciousness in Brown, but not in Reid.

Examining Reid's notion of consciousness highlights the fact that, in order to understand Reid, his engagement with the thinkers that preceded him needs careful consideration. And this is no mean feat as Reid not only discusses Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, Clarke, Butler, Hume, Berkeley, Wolff at length, but also somewhat lesser known thinkers and scientists such as Porterfield. This historical context is largely absent, however, in recent attempts to discuss Reid in terms of present-day debates about consciousness. And yet Reid is a prime example of a thinker who does philosophy historically, and it is critical to take that history into account when examining his views and arguments. Certainly this seems to hold true for his view on consciousness. As Reid says, it is the historical study of philosophy that may 'give us views of the human understanding, which could not easily be had any other way' (*EIP*, 57).[37]

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[32] Thomas Brown, *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (London, 1820), 244.

[33] Ibid., 244–5.

[34] Ibid., 245.

[35] Ibid., 247.

[36] Ibid., 256.

[37] I am grateful to Rebecca Copenhaver, Keith Lehrer, Lucas Thorpe, Martin Brecher and other participants of the 2010 Reid Conference in Aberdeen and Glasgow for their comments and discussion.