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Reid and Hume in Agreement on Moral Foundations

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The thesis of this paper is that Reid's moral theory validates the moral theories of other Scots such as Hutcheson, Hume, and Smith. I realize that there is disagreement amongst them. However it is in their agreement that I see an important commonality and contribution to moral theory. This Scottish commonality is that reason and sentiment combine in the forming of morality in a specific moral sense faculty and that there are universal moral agreements. All of these Scots included reason, sentiments and a moral faculty as central to morality.

I argue that Reid's moral theory shares fundamental commonalities with Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith—commonalities that even Reid does not see. It is clear when reading Thomas Reid's *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*¹ that Reid intends to distance and differentiate himself specifically and deliberately from Hume's moral theory. However, on a closer reading of Reid's moral theory, one finds that the two Scots, along with Hutcheson and Smith, were in agreement in some specific, important, and surprising ways. This paper outlines those compatibilities between Reid and Hume, Hutcheson, and Smith and the importance of these agreements for contemporary moral theory. These commonalities are that moral judgments and evaluations include reason and sentiment and that these judgments are facilitated in a moral sense faculty. They also agree that there are universal moral agreements.

The first point of compatibility is the role of reason in moral formation, which is integral for all of them. Reid makes the distinction between one's conscience and reason (*EAPM*, 222). What is 'good upon the whole' is reached using reason for Reid (*EAPM*, 205–6). This does not contradict Hume's use of reason as informing the moral sense and therefore our sentiments. That Hume includes reason is counter to what Reid believed Hume to be doing. Reid's language for reason's role in respect to the passions is that of dominion while Hume presents it as a slave (perhaps an unfortunate image given the

¹ All references and page numbers to Thomas Reid's *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* are taken from Baruch Brody's volume (Boston, Mass, 1969); hereafter cited as *EAPM*.

importance of reason in Hume's account). Yet they are both, along with Hutcheson and Smith, committed to reason playing a central role in either informing (Hutcheson, Hume, and Smith) or informing and directing (Reid) our passions, or so it will be argued here.

Along with the use of reason, the involvement of sentiment and feeling to moral foundations also has similar treatments in Reid and Hume. While Reid calls 'our duty and our real happiness ... ends which are inseparable' and pursued by every man (*EAPM*, 290), Hutcheson, Hume and Smith would describe them as the concern for the self, other, and societal interest and, therefore, sentiments common to humanity that motivate our moral choices and actions. Along these same lines of moral motivation, Reid writes that moral motivation is a factor in our constitution, one whose role is 'to seek the good and avoid the ill' (*EAPM*, 206). Reid also claims that moral determinations are made through a moral faculty, which 'without impropriety [may] be called the *moral sense*' (*EAPM*, 232). Reid compares this faculty to other senses such as sight and hearing and writes that the 'truths immediately testified by our moral faculty, are the first principles of all moral reasoning' (*EAPM*, 233). Though Reid frames his discussion in rationalist terms and rationalist language, what he is describing is in fact compatible with his fellow Scots, Hutcheson, Hume and Smith.

This paper will also add Reid's references to and discussions of the 'universal agreement of men' (*EAPM*, 230), good upon the whole (*EAPM*, 205), and 'what all men praise' (*EAPM*, 223), as further indications that all of the Scots shared this idea of a universal morality and the concept of human moral agreement. In Hume this is called the common or general point of view and the universal or common moral sentiment. This last commonality of human moral agreement, along with the notion that the foundations of morality are founded in a combination of reason and sentiment and formed in a moral sense faculty, are all characteristics that could, or at least should, be of interest to contemporary moral and social theorists. These Scottish moral theorists' compatibilities in the face of their distinct differences make them a model for the contemporary multicultural and multi-religious discussions on moral foundations. The four Scots do seem to reveal the possibility of agreement despite the apparent disagreements in their beliefs.

I begin with the role of reason. Reid frames the question of reason's role in moral formation as one of surprise that there is even a dispute over the nature of our moral judgments. 'The approbation of good actions, and disapprobation of bad, are so familiar to every man come to years of understanding, that it

seems strange there should be any dispute about their nature' (*EAPM*, 457). Hume, too, in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*,² writes that anyone who does not see that we make moral judgments cannot be taken seriously but 'may be ranked among the disingenuous disputants' (*EPM*, 1.2, 3). Hume continues by describing the two approaches to moral foundations, 'whether they be derived from *reason*, or from *sentiment*' (*EPM*, 1.3 3) Reid's description of the dispute also draws an exacting line between the two camps.

[Y]et, for a half a century, it has been a serious dispute among philosophers, what this approbation and disapprobation is, whether there be a real judgement included in it, which, like all other judgement, must be true or false; or, whether it include no more but some agreeable or uneasy feeling, in the person who approves or disapproves. (*EAPM*, 457)

So, for Reid, the dispute is whether moral approval and disapproval involves reason or whether it is only the result of feelings. Reid is characterizing Hume as arguing that 'moral approbation and disapprobation are not judgements, which must be true or false, but barely, agreeable and uneasy feelings or sensations' (*EAPM*, 458). Reid asks if this is the case then 'what is left to the cognitive part of our nature...?' (458). Reid misses here that, though making moral sentiments important and the grounding to the foundations of morals, Hume also adds 'that reason must enter for a considerable share in all decisions of this kind; since nothing but that faculty can instruct us in the tendency of qualities and actions...'² (*EPM*, App. 1.2, 83). So, for Hume, reason has a *considerable share* in what the moral faculty approves or disapproves of. This is not, as Reid has misinterpreted Hume as arguing, a statement that leaves cognition out of moral determination.

Reid also explains the importance of reason's role in morality as his '*rational* principles of action in man'; and, for Reid, these principles have 'no existence in beings not endowed with reason, and, in all their exertions, require, not only intention and will, but judgement or reason' (*EAPM*, 200–1). 'To act from these principles, is what has always been meant by acting according to reason' (*EAPM*, 203). Reid continues, in arguing for the importance of reason in mankind. 'That talent which we call reason ... has ... been conceived to have two offices, to regulate our belief, and to regulate our actions and

² References will be to Tom L. Beauchamp (ed.), David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (Oxford, 1998), hereafter cited as *EPM*.

conduct” (*EAPM*, 201). For Reid, “[w]hatever we believe, we think agreeable to reason, and on that account, yield our assent to it. Whatever we disbelieve, we think contrary to reason, and on that account, dissent from it. Reason therefore is allowed to be the principle by which our belief and opinions ought to be regulated” (*EAPM*, 201). So Reid’s description of reason’s role as the regulator of morality is specific and important. Reid wonders how anyone could question this obvious role for reason. “That it is a part of the office of reason to determine, the proper means to any end which we desire, no man ever denied.” Yet, he characterizes Hume as doing just that: “But some philosophers, particularly Mr. Hume, think that it is no part of the office of reason to determine the ends we ought to pursue, or the preference due to one end above another.” Hume, according to Reid, does not think the job of determining ends pursued or preferring one end rather than another is “the office of reason, but of taste or feeling” (*EAPM*, 202). Reid argues against Hume that “[i]f this be so, reason cannot, with any propriety, be called a principle of action. Its office can only be to minister to the principles of action, by discovering the means of their gratification. Accordingly Mr. Hume maintains, that reason is no principle of action; but that it is, and ought to be, the servant of the passions” (*EAPM*, 202). Reid then, in his own words, “endeavor[s] to show, 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” (*EAPM*, 202). Here Reid is describing interplay between a regard to what we conceive and reason as a principle of action, and he includes regard and reason in how we make our decisions directing our animal passions. So Reid includes a feeling of regard in his principle of action. This represents a basic problem in Reid’s characterization of Hume’s moral formation from feeling. Reid categorizes Hume’s ‘feeling’ as animal passions whereas for Hume these feelings are experienced through the human moral sense faculty and are necessarily informed by reason.

Reid divides human ends into two categories “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” (*EAPM*, 203). This is of interest

when finding his compatibility with Hume, as Reid divides what has been commonly been called reason into distinct principles of action. Especially so because Reid continues in a manner that is decisively empirical as he describes the process in which a rational being knows the ‘good upon the whole’ to involve experiences from the past and ‘what will probably happen in time to come’ (*EAPM*, 205). He describes the moderating of our animal desires as we see ‘discoverable connections and consequences, bring [ing] more good than ill’ (*EAPM*, 205). This process, as necessarily involving the ability to form conceptions of good and evil, then necessitates reason. He calls what is determined in this process ‘rational principle[s] of action’ (*EAPM*, 206). Reid adds to this moral motivation, claiming we are to follow these concepts ‘of what is good or ill for us upon the whole . . . by our constitution, to seek the good and avoid the ill’ (*EAPM*, 206). For Reid this becomes ‘a leading or governing principle to which all our animal principles ought to be subordinate’ (*EAPM*, 206).

Reid’s reference to our constitution is another point of agreement with Hume. Reid explains that we seek the good as a part of our nature and not as a result of our reasoning processes. This becomes more evident in Reid’s self-evident principles that cannot be known through reason, as discussed further below.

Reid then describes various ways that feelings and judgment do not interact. But the most telling discussion is where he describes how feelings and judgment do work together in moral judgments. Reid explains that ‘in most of the operations of mind in which judgment or belief is combined with feeling, the feeling is the consequence of the judgement, and is regulated by it’ (*EAPM*, 463). Or as Hume puts it reason ‘instructs us in the tendency of qualities and actions’ (*EPM*, App. 1.2, p. 81). Reid continues, ‘Thus, an account of the good conduct of a friend at a distance gives me a very agreeable feeling, and a contrary account would give me a very uneasy feeling; but these feelings depend entirely upon my belief of the report’ (*EAPM*, 463). Reid adds in this same description of interplay between feelings and reason that, ‘In the respect we bear to the worthy, and in our contempt of the worthless, there is both judgement and feeling, and the last [feelings] depends entirely upon the first’ (*EAPM*, 463). Could this dependency of feeling on reason in Reid’s description of it, be equally well described in terms of dependency on a servant or slave?

For Reid, Hume is guilty of an abuse of words if he includes under the name ‘passions’ what for Reid has always been called ‘reason’. Actually Reid

accuses Hume of two possible abuses by putting moral determination as a function of the passions and by excluding reason from the determining of the ‘good upon the whole’ (*EAPM*, 208). Reid understandably uses Hume’s statement ‘that reason is, and ought to be, the servant of the passions’ (*EAPM*, 208) to support a claim of abuse of words. I would like to discuss this unfortunately misunderstood phrase from Hume, notably dropped and not to be found in Hume’s *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. The phrase from Hume’s *Treatise* itself is inflammatory as, I believe, a youthful Hume desired it to be, and yet, it does describe exactly what Hume wants it to as regards the foundations of morality. Perhaps Hume can be read here as moving reason to a subservient role or as putting reason in a secondary place. The use of the word ‘servant’ or ‘slave’ is purposeful for Hume believes that reason informs and serves and understands (forming concepts in response to) the passions. The passions that direct one’s actions are, in fact, those informed by one’s reason. Perhaps Reid is correct in thinking that without reason the passions are those of brute animals. But, for Hume, the moral passions or feelings are specific to the moral sense, not just any feelings; and those moral sense feelings are served by our reason both by input, which Reid describes as discovering connections, and by those consequences that bring more good than ill, which he calls ‘good upon the whole’ (*EAPM*, 205). Now the concept that reason is a servant/slave is unfortunate because Hume describes an important and necessary role for reason. I believe he overstated it, however, to impress the idea that feelings, well informed in the sense of a rational person, motivate and are the way we ‘feel’ moral approbation and disapprobation from the moral sense. For Hume, unless I care about others all the good rational and empirical arguments that a certain action will hurt someone—or, indeed, many—does not and cannot affect my practical reasoned action. Under all reasoning and action for Hume there needs to be a desire/passion—a motivating principle. Interestingly, Reid may be referring to just this when he writes that ‘we are led by our constitution to seek the good and avoid the ill’ (*EAPM*, 206), since for Reid this is a principle of action to which all our animal principles ought to be subordinate” (*EAPM*, 206).

Reid also includes sentiment when he describes the observation of a man ‘exerting himself nobly in a good cause . . .’ Reid writes, ‘I look up to his virtue, I approve, I admit it . . . I have pleasure indeed, or an agreeable feeling . . . This is affection; it is love and esteem, which is more than mere feeling’ (*EAPM*, 263). This again is Reid affirming the presence of feeling as an integral part of moral analysis. He, of course, does not see that this is not in opposition

to Hume's own interplay of feelings and reason. Equally, in his discussion of honour, Reid speaks of it as not including a blush, '[n]o man would allow him to be a man of honour, who should plead his interest to justify what he acknowledged to be dishonourable; but to sacrifice interest to honour never costs a blush' (*EAPM*, 224). This seemingly and perhaps actually insignificant reference Reid makes to one's not blushing when choosing honor over self-interest may be similar to the breast test which is Hume's suggestion for how to find a moral attitude. Hume claims that one need only enter one's own breast for a moment and choose those attributes you would want attributed to you to find what is morally good, and what you would not want attributed to you as morally bad (*EPM*, 1.10, 6). For Reid the moral thing would be what would not *cost a blush*. In other words we would not feel an embarrassment from the action. And for Hume we would want the action to be attributed to us. For Joseph Butler, moral actions are those 'every man you meet, puts on a show of . . . ' (Butler, 379).³ In other words for Reid, Hume and Butler the moral actions are those we are proud of and those characteristics we want to be thought of having.

Reid describes affections and feelings as parts of the human constitution that indicate moral judgment of right and wrong. Reid expresses it this way: '[t]he natural affections of respect to worthy characters, of resentment of injuries, of gratitude for favors, of indignation against the worthless, are parts of the human constitution which suppose a right and a wrong in conduct' (*EAPM*, 225). For Reid, a regard to duty is what makes one virtuous, not a Kantian intent or commitment to duty and rationality. Reid's motivation necessitates a feeling of regard. For Reid, '[a] man is prudent when he consults his real interest, but he cannot be virtuous, if he has no regard to duty. I proceed now to consider this regard to duty as a rational principle of action in man, and as that principle alone by which he is capable either of virtue or vice' (*EAPM*, 223). Reid adds that, '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 a regard to his interest' (*EAPM*, 224). In these statements Reid is referring to the necessity of having a *regard*, in the first case to duty, in the second to what is honorable or dishonorable. This *regard* again in both cases is distinct from self-interest for Reid. The regard to duty is the rational principle of action. Is there any other way to consider this

³ Joseph Butler, 'Dissertation II', in D. D. Raphael (ed.), *British Moralists 1650–1800*, Volume II (Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1991) 378–86, at 379; hereafter cited in the text as *BM*.

use of *regard* than as a feeling of esteem or respect? In other words, for Reid, one has to have a feeling of regard towards duty and what is honorable in order to be virtuous. This is similar to what Hutcheson, Hume, and Smith also claim. Reason does not work alone to motivate or to make moral judgments. A feeling has to be there, not in the sense of animal passions, as Reid would like to reduce Hume's passions to, but in the sense of well-informed human passions, and not just any passion, but the special kind of sentiment felt in the moral sense faculty. In this way moral feelings move and reason informs the moral sentiments of approval and disapproval. Reid, again, discusses this involvement of feelings in motivation. "In the approbation of a good action, therefore, there is a feeling, indeed, but there is also esteem of the agent; and both feeling and the esteem depend upon the judgment we form of his conduct." (*EAPM*, 349). Here judgment and feeling are involved in moral motivation. Reid is in fact much more like Hume on moral motivation than Reid seems to realize he is. I am not claiming that the way Reid's reason and sentiment interact to form moral foundations is exactly the same as Hume's, but they both describe a complex interplay that Reid's account of Hume fails to acknowledge. However, it is clear that, for both, reason and sentiment are integral to the formation of morality.

All of the Scots had an account of a moral faculty which involved reason and feeling in producing moral sentiments. Reid explains it this way, '[w]hen I exercise my moral faculty about my own actions or those of other men, I am conscious that I judge as well as feel' (*EAPM*, 464). Reid continues further that, '... men judge ... of virtue and vice by their moral faculty' (*EAPM*, 467). Reid sees and discusses his agreement with Hume that "the moral sense therefore is the power of judging in morals" (*EAPM*, 468). Reid though believes he differs from Hume because again Reid interprets Hume to have 'the moral sense to be only a power of feeling, without judging...' (468). It is for Reid an abuse of the word, *sense*, not to include reason (*EAPM*, 468). Reid continues that 'authors who place moral approbation in feeling only, very often use the word *sentiment*, to express feeling without judgement... the word *sentiment*, in the English language, never, as I conceive, signifies mere feeling, but judgement accompanied with feeling' (*EAPM*, 468–9). Here again Reid is missing the fact that Hume's sentiment as felt in the moral sense faculty does involve reason, and that they are therefore in agreement.

Reid argues that '... our moral faculty .. [has] both the original conceptions of right and wrong in conduct, of merit and demerit, and the original judgements that this conduct is right, that is wrong; that this character has

worth, that, demerit. The testimony of our moral faculty, like that of the external senses, is the testimony of nature, and we have the same reason to rely upon it. 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' (*EAPM*, 233). In this passage Reid declares the self-evident nature of the truths as known by his moral sense faculty. That the moral faculty is where moral evaluations come from is in exact agreement with his fellow Scots.

That there is a moral faculty in all men, and its universal implications, is equally clear in Reid. "[T]he names of the virtues which it [the moral faculty] commands, and of the vices which it forbids ... expresses its dictates ... [and is] an essential part of every language. The natural affections of respect to worthy characters, of resentment of injuries, of gratitude for favors, of indignation against the worthless, are parts of the human constitution which suppose a right and wrong in conduct" (*EAPM*, 225). Again, in speaking of the moral faculty, Reid is pointing to human commonalities. 'Many transactions that are found necessary in the rudest societies ... there is necessarily implied a moral obligation on one party, and a trust in the other ...' He adds that the 'variety of opinions among men in points of morality [are] much less than in speculative points ...' (*EAPM*, 225–6). Reid finds specific common principles that are the basis for a whole moral system and 'that every man of common understanding, who wishes to know his duty, may know it [the system of moral conduct]' (*EAPM*, 370).

There is nothing in the other Scots that parallels Reid's first principles, however. These seem to be unique to Reid's theory of moral foundation and integral to the forming of morality for Reid. 'All reasoning must be grounded on first principles'. In all reasoning there are first principles and "[t]here must therefore be in morals, as in all other sciences, first or self-evident principles, on which all moral reasoning is grounded, and on which it ultimately rests'. It is from these 'self-evident principles [that] conclusions may be drawn synthetically with regard to the moral conduct of life ...' Reid argues that our 'particular duties or virtues [can] be traced back to such principles, analytically'. And in a dramatic way Reid claims that 'without such principles, we can no more establish any conclusion in morals, than we can build a castle in the air, without any foundation' (*EAPM*, 234). So reasoning, for Reid, is inert without first principles and without feelings of regard. Thus for Reid, "[t]he first principles of morals are not deductions. They are self-evident; and their truth, like that of other axioms, is perceived

without reasoning or deductions. And moral truths that are not self-evident are deduced, not from relations quite different from them, but from the first principles of morals” (*EAPM*, 471). Initially, it might appear that Reid means that these truths themselves were implanted, that we were born with them, given to us by God. And, yet, Reid speaks of what God implants as ‘the faculty of perceiving the right and the wrong in conduct’ (*EAPM*, 481). Reid explains this as a seed implanted by God, not as an already formed set of principles. Rather, ‘our moral judgment or conscience grows to maturity from an imperceptible seed, planted by our creator’ (*EAPM*, 369). This faculty which starts as a seed, of course, for Reid as well as Hume, is the moral faculty in which our moral sentiments of approval and disapproval are formed and felt. So it is in the moral faculty that the first principles of morality are known. Reid makes the case that the first principles are those that all thoughtful mature persons would agree to. Reid adds that from these first principles ‘the whole system of moral conduct follows so easily, and with so little aid of reasoning, that every man of common understanding, who wishes to know his duty, may know it’ (*EAPM*, 370). That every person comes to know them is significant, as they are not, for Reid, innate nor accessed or formed using reason.

For Reid, then, we come to know the first principles as we have experiences and grow to maturity. Reid states that ‘[w]hen 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, of honourable and base, of right and wrong, and to feel the sentiments of moral approbation and disapprobation’ (*EAPM*, 369). For Reid, therefore, the foundation of morality is, as it is for Hume, to be found in the moral sense; and it starts there, not from reasoning, but from self-evident principles that we know from our interactions and observations of others. Morality is a result of human experience, formed using the God-given moral sense faculty. The self-evident truths formed in our moral sense faculty are, for Reid, quite distinct from anything in Hume’s moral theory and yet the fact that there is no innate content to the moral sense—that it starts as an empirical blank slate—is in complete agreement with Hume.

Another of Reid’s specific points that differs from the other Scots is his claim that social interaction is part of human nature, ‘[t]he social operations to be as simple in their [human] nature as the solitary. They are found in every individual of the species, even before the use of reason’ (*EAPM*, 239). And then again,

The power which man has of holding social intercourse with his kind, by asking and refusing, threatening and supplicating, commanding and obeying, testifying and promising, must either be a distinct faculty given by our Maker, and a part of our constitution, like the power of seeing, and hearing, or it must be a human invention... I think it is likewise evident, that this intercourse, in its beginning at least, must be carried on by natural signs, whose meaning is understood by both parties, previous to all compacts or agreement. (*EAPM*, 439)

Reid argues, then, that social interaction is not a human convention: it must be a natural tendency since it is found in and understood by everyone. For Hume and the other sentimentalists, social interaction is also both basic and necessary for moral formation. However, this human propensity is not born but is developed quickly after birth and then forms part of human healthy development. I do not think it important whether it is an innate tendency or whether this social need and concern is developed soon after birth. All of the Scots, Reid included, did see, not that we should care about others and society, but that we naturally do.

This regard for society and need for social interaction play significant roles in what our moral faculty responds to in its development of morality and what is approved of and disapproved of. Hume called it utility, that we approve of what is good for society and disapprove of what is harmful. Hume argues that ‘no qualities are more entitled to the general good-will and approbation of mankind, than benevolence and humanity... natural affection and public spirit... a generous concern for our kind and species’ (*EPM*, II.I.5, 9) Reid, also, includes in his discussion of the self-evident truths that human kind ‘when uncorrupted by vicious habits, and under the government of the leading principles of reason and conscience, are excellently fitted for the rational and social life’ (*EAPM*, 364). And Reid, again, as part of what we come to realize as self-evident says, that “[n]o man is born for himself only. Every man, therefore, ought to consider himself as a member of the common society of mankind... To do as much good as he can, and as little hurt to the societies of which he is a part’ (*EAPM*, 365). This is another point in his agreement with Hume.

According to Reid a more prominent role in modern era morality, as Terence Cuneo and René Van Woudenberg argue in their introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Reid*, would underline also the importance of what he, Hutcheson, Hume and Smith realized, and which has been disregarded by

those adopting a Kantian approach. The Kantian approach took humanity as feeling rational beings out of the moral equation mostly because of Kant's suspicion of inclinations which he—incorrectly—assumed shaped Hume's moral feelings. There is no murky area for Kant. Morality is about duty to one's rationality and treating everyone with that same respect. For the Scots, including Reid, humans have not only the power of rationality; they also have *regard* for others and for society or for the *good upon the whole* as Reid puts it. These are not inclinations and/or feelings that should be suspect but, rather, are valuable qualities that are an integral part of moral foundations. These are the attributes that also cross cultural lines. The ability to care about others and our action in the midst of others sets humans apart from animals just as much as rationality does. When looking for commonality in practice or when trying to find common ground between peoples a rational argument needs to be accompanied by an appeal to our human commonality of regard towards others and for our own self-regard. Not seeing this murky complexity at the heart of moral foundations is to miss a commonality from which moral conversations can begin.

Also, it seems to me, the Scots, including Reid, were describing a complex and, yet, clearly understandable process, not of how humans should form moral judgments, but that they do form morality in their moral faculty using reason and sentiment. This again is of potential significance to contemporary moral theorists if their goal is to find commonality across cultures and religions. Without understanding the complexity that the Scots describe, moral discussions and language can involve the overlay of rules, albeit reasonable ones, rather than the developing of a more informed and inclusive moral system. Taking the Scots seriously in moral formation means to acknowledge and allow into our understanding of moral development a complexity of reason and sentiment. It also means realizing that human commonality in moral formulation is there whether it is obvious or not, and needs to be identified in every moral dispute.

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