

cannot be a sufficient and necessary condition for belief: 'Suppose the idea to be that of a future state after death; one man believes it firmly; this means no more than he hath a strong and lively idea of it: Another neither believes nor disbelieves; that is, he has a weak and faint idea. Suppose now a third person believes firmly that there is no such thing; I am at a loss to know whether his idea be faint or lively: If it is faint, then there may be a firm belief where the idea is faint; if the idea is lively, then the belief of a future state and the belief of no future state must be one and the same' (*Inquiry* II.5: 30/18–25).

²⁷ We should be wary of considering what Reid calls absurd and therefore ridiculous as always implying a logical contradiction: the argument from ridicule and the use of irony seem to have simply an analogy with the mathematical proof *ad absurdum*. Reid himself seems to have had afterthoughts: in the manuscripts, he deletes the reference to the mathematical proof *ad absurdum* (see *Papers*: 232/18–19, MS 2131/8/1/14). A radical skeptic can consistently deny first principles, and what Reid calls an 'absurdity in practice' is simply an odd and self-destructive form of behavior.

²⁸ On Reid's aesthetic theory, see Kivy (2003): 158–77 and 311–54.

²⁹ Socrates' reference to Aristophanes's play in Plato's *Apology of Socrates* played a role in exposing the dangers of ridicule: see Brown (1751): 54–64, and Gilmore (1970): 19–25.

³⁰ See Brown (1751): 93.

³¹ The particular kind of absurdity that one judges to be present in an opinion and that causes the feeling or sensation of ridicule would have to be different from the kind of absurdity that one can recognize without any accompanying feeling of ridicule. In other terms, the judgment that an opinion is absurd is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of ridicule. (I am indebted to Robert Callergård for this point.)

³² In Reid's lectures on rhetoric, we find some remarks about the abuse of wit: 'Wit an edged tool not to be used without great caution and Prudence. [...] The Character of a Wit is not a respectable Character, it is more dreaded than Loved. He is considered as a Man that has much power to hurt & do ill but little to do good. And a great Share of Wit without a proportionable share of prudence discretion and good Nature, is what no wise man will envy' (*Papers*: 238/12–20, MS 2131/8/1/5).

DISCUSSION

WILLIAM C. DAVIS' *THOMAS REID'S ETHICS: MORAL EPISTEMOLOGY ON LEGAL FOUNDATIONS*

TERENCE CUNEO

Calvin College

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Toward the end of his book *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, Alasdair MacIntyre writes:

Thomas Reid had argued against Hume that there are certain truths evident to almost every human being, denied only by those who are either of unsound mind or in the grip of some unsound philosophical theory. . . . In so arguing Reid had attempted to restore the appeal to evident first principles, so characteristic of the Scottish seventeenth-century tradition, but in the form in which Reid appeals to such principles tradition itself becomes fundamentally irrelevant. (MacIntyre 1988: 320)

In many respects, William Davis' new book on Reid's ethical theory is an extended response to MacIntyre. For fundamental to Davis' argument is that the broadly Scottish philosophical tradition with which Reid identified himself is not irrelevant to the way in which Reid thought about ethics. More specifically, Davis' contention is that the best way to understand Reid's moral epistemology is as one modeled on judicial principles that informed 18th-century Scottish legal practice and theorizing. The result is an illuminating, well-informed, and careful engagement with Reid's views.

At the outset of his book, Davis frames his discussion around a series of six puzzles regarding Reid's understanding of the moral sense.¹ These puzzles are: First, given Reid's desire to model the moral sense on external sense, why do sentiments or feelings play such a limited evidential role in Reid's moral epistemology? Second, how are we to make sense of what Reid says about the objects of moral sense, which are variously described as relations and qualities,

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particular and general propositions? How, thirdly, do we make sense of Reid's claim that duty is plain to everyone, given the complexities of the moral life? And, fourth, is it at all plausible to believe that one faculty could do all the work that the moral sense is supposed to do, yielding both particular and general moral judgments and being a source of motivation? Fifth, given Reid's claims about the evidentness of duty, how can he explain the character of moral disagreement? And, sixth, how can Reid claim that moral knowledge is available to all mature agents and also claim that that moral education is crucial for the development of the moral sense?

These are good questions to ask of Reid's view. And, naturally, one wonders whether Reid had satisfactory answers to them. Davis' argument is that, in most cases, Reid has cogent responses to these questions, which become evident once we carefully work through what he says.

To set the stage for the subsequent discussion, Davis provides a very helpful background to Reid's moral epistemology. The thrust of Davis' discussion in chapter two is that Reid attempts to navigate a middle course between broadly rationalist views, such as those defended by Clark and Price, and sentimentalist positions, such as those developed by Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. Rationalists and sentimentalists alike, Davis claims, share a common research program that is committed to both cognitivism with respect to moral discourse and realism with regard to moral truth. They are also united in rejecting Hobbes' egoism, arguing that there are irreducibly benevolent motivations. The disagreements between the adherents to these two schools, if Davis is correct, are more local and concern which aspects of the common research program most deserve development. According to Davis, the rationalists were most concerned to defend the objectivity of morality. Hence, their claim that basic moral principles are necessary truths composed of relations between agents and moral properties. The sentimentalists, by contrast, were more concerned to defend the motivational force of the deliverances of the moral sense. This led them to think that moral features are particular qualities, for, according to them, the objects of sense are always particular qualities. Reid's contribution to this debate, according to Davis, is to employ the concept of a moral sense, thereby aligning himself with the sentimentalists, while at the same time accepting a moral ontology similar to that of the rationalists. How can he do this? In part, says Davis, by rejecting the broadly Lockean faculty psychology, which sharply divides sense from reason. In Reid's hands, the moral sense is a faculty whose intentional objects are both individual qualities and general relations.

In many ways, chapter three is the centerpiece of Davis' book. Here he introduces a contemporary debate about how to understand Reid's conception of evidence. On the one hand, are those, such as Keith Lehrer, who understand Reid to offer an 'objectivist' account of evidence. According to this view, evidence is simply a ground that ought to produce beliefs of certain kinds in normal people.²

On the other, are those, such as William Alston, who understand Reid to accept a 'subjectivist' conception of evidence according to which evidence is not a normative, but a psychological relation. As this view has it, evidence is simply a ground that in fact produces belief in ordinary agents. Davis rightly sees that neither of these views quite captures Reid's position. The key to explicating Reid's position, says Davis, is to pay attention to the legal metaphors to which Reid appeals when he presents his account of evidence. Stated somewhat roughly, Reid's position regarding evidence is this: The evidence of a proposition is a function of the degree of conviction that it would produce in a competent judge were that judge to entertain that proposition.³ (For an independent exploration of Reid's use of judicial metaphors, see James Houston (2004) 'Testimony Contrasted with Judgement and Opinion' in J. Houston (ed.) *Thomas Reid: Context, Influence, Significance*, Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press.)

Reid's view, then, is a virtue theoretic account of evidence, one that appeals not to ideal or ordinary agents, but to competent judges with the requisite epistemic skills. Drawing upon Viscount Stair's *Institutions of the Law of Scotland*, Davis explicates these requisite epistemic skills in some detail. Reid's position, Davis further contends, is also broadly externalist in character. Knowing a proposition, according to Reid, doesn't require that the agent have access to the grounds that warrant a belief nor does it require being able to articulate these grounds in response to skeptical challenges. At any rate, it is here in particular that Davis offers his response to MacIntyre: Despite what the standard interpretation of Reid might suggest, Reid self-consciously sees himself working within a particular tradition of inquiry that is thick with commitments to a particular conception of the epistemic virtues.

With this conception of evidence in hand, in the next three chapters, Davis explicates Reid's general account of knowledge and, in particular, his account of moral knowledge. Chapter four offers a brief account of Reid's conception of knowledge, arguing that, in Reid's view, an agent knows a true proposition *p* if he believes it and a competent judge would be certain that *p* is true were she given the same evidence as that agent. Davis then argues, in chapter five, that Reid's attempt to model the moral sense on external sense is more plausible than some have claimed. Here Davis' claim is that it is important to be clear on what the object of the moral sense is for Reid. According to Davis, on this matter, Reid once again stakes out a middle ground. Unlike the rationalists, he believes that the objects of the moral sense are not general, but particular duties. These, says Davis, consist in a normative relation between a particular agent and an action. Unlike the sentimentalists, he holds that these objects are not character traits, but duties. So, there is a sense in which, for Reid, the particular takes precedence – general moral propositions, in Davis' view, simply express real patterns of relations between particulars. If Davis is right, this primacy of the particular allows Reid to talk in good faith of the moral faculty as being similar to external sense.

Reid's account of moral knowledge, chapter six argues, is an application of his general account of knowledge. Despite Reid's rhetoric concerning the obviousness of duty, Davis points out that Reid allows for numerous ways in which moral judgment can be skewed, including prejudice, ignorance, and false religious beliefs. If Davis is correct, Reid's claims about the evidentness of duty concern those duties that pertain to oneself that commonly arise in the common affairs of life. Novel moral situations and the duties of others present cases about which Reid makes much more modest claims. It is in this context that Davis introduces a helpful threefold distinction between types of moral judgment that Reid himself does not explicitly distinguish: those that concern particular moral duties, those that concern general moral duties, and those that concern moral first principles. (When introducing this distinction, Davis speaks of first principles as being judgments of a certain kind, but I take this not to be his considered view [cf. p. 107]).

This distinction is important because it helps to clear up an ambiguity that Reid himself encourages, which is this: Upon first glance, it is natural to think of the first principles of morals as foundational principles from which other moral principles are derived. As such, they are 'warrant-conferring axioms' (p. 108). But given Reid's defense of the primacy of the particular elsewhere, this creates a puzzle. How could it be that we know particular duties most easily and yet also hold that these judgments gain their warrant from self-evident first principles? If it is the self-evident principles that warrant our particular judgments, wouldn't we have to know these first and then derive particular conclusions? Davis claims that the role of first principles is not as it might appear. Rather than being warrant-conferring axioms, they are 'the starting-points for the scientific task of showing how moral truths hold together. They are... the heart of an explanation of the unity of moral truth' (p. 109). The important point to see, suggests Davis, is Reid's distinction between the principles that are the content of ordinary moral judgments, on the one hand, and those that form a science or system of morals, on the other. Reid's claims about first principles concern only those principles used to construct a system of morals – a system, let it be added, about which virtuous agents can be wholly ignorant. No familiarity with such a system is necessary to know what one morally ought to do.

And as for Reid's apparently ambitious claims about the self-evidence of these principles, Davis notes that Reid's claims come heavily qualified. It is not uncommon, says Reid, for ordinary agents to be ignorant of the first principles. To apprehend their self-evidence, an agent must satisfy three criteria: She must have a sound understanding, have an adequately clear conception of these principles, and be free of prejudice. Since this is difficult for most, knowledge of the first principles is not easily attained. And yet, for all that, they are also plausibly identified, Davis suggests, as 'laws of human thought' (p. 111) or the constitutive rules of moral cognizing. In this sense, they are similar to the other non-moral

first principles that Reid identifies in the *Intellectual Powers*. Still, there is at least this crucial difference between non-moral and moral first principles: The latter are those laws of thought that govern the moral cognizing of an agent who has been properly educated and is 'upright in heart'. The former are not.

The last chapter of Davis' discussion concerns Reid's handling of the phenomenon of moral disagreement. In this case, Davis' discussion is brief. Reid is of the view, says Davis, that 'immaturity, partiality, want of candour, lack of clarity about the issues involved all lead to moral disagreements that should not undermine confidence in a common moral sense' (p. 122). Eliminating these causes of error is the task of moral education. As part of a Scottish educational system that stressed such education, Reid was sensitive to the need for moral instruction and to this end advocated, among other things, an embryonic version of something akin to Rawls' notion of reflective equilibrium in which we adjust moral theory to fit particular moral judgments and vice-versa. Throughout the discussion, Davis is careful to insist that Reid's primary interest is not theoretical. He is not particularly concerned to build a moral theory. Rather, it is practical. His aim is to help ordinary agents become sound moral judges. Like Butler, however, Reid believes that doing so involves getting clear on the principles of moral action and the nature of the moral faculty, and responding to skeptical challenges.

It is a testament to Davis' book that it manages to present such a rich account of Reid's views in ethics in only one hundred thirty pages. I think it is not an overstatement to say that anyone working on Reid's moral philosophy, and his moral epistemology in particular, should read it. Any reader interested in Reid's moral philosophy will, I think, not only gain a much better understanding of the shape of Reid's thought, but also encounter numerous strands of argument that will inspire further reflection. That said, it is also a testament to the richness of Davis' discussion that there is much with which to disagree. Unlike some treatments of Reid's ethics, Davis goes far beyond simply summarizing Reid's views, offering some rather controversial interpretations. In what remains, I want to consider three areas of Davis' discussion that I find controversial: first, his account of Reid's view of moral knowledge; second, his account of Reid's moral ontology; and, third, his claim that Reid is not a nonnaturalist about morality.

MORAL EPISTEMOLOGY

The centerpiece of Davis' discussion, I claimed earlier, is his attempt to understand Reid's moral epistemology as an application of the principles that one finds embedded in 18th-century Scottish legal practice and theory. Recall that, according to this view, evidence is understood not in purely psychological terms,

but in terms of what a competent judge would believe. Knowledge, in turn, is understood in terms of evidence. More precisely, according to Davis' Reid, for any true belief that p:

- (K) S knows that p if
 (i) S believes p, and
 (ii) a generally competent judge would be certain that p given the same evidence as S. (p. 61)

I have two concerns about this proposal.

First, while Reid does say a fair amount about evidence, he says very little about knowledge. So, I am reluctant to attribute to Reid the foregoing account of knowledge. It seems to me that (K) is, at most, an extrapolation of Reid's position that he may or may not have recognized as his own. (In fairness to Davis, he does say that his purpose is a reconstruction of Reid's views [p. 14]. But, in this case, I believe that Davis goes considerably beyond what Reid's texts support, even as a reconstruction.)

Second, I think there is reason to believe that Reid would not have wanted to recognize (K) as his own account of knowledge. As Davis understands it, a competent judge is not ideal, but fallible and, thus, perfectly capable of making mistakes. But if this is true, (K) is subject to all sorts of familiar Gettier-style counterexamples in which S's belief satisfies its two conditions but does not count as knowledge. Moreover, there is a further question of whether (K) is genuinely informative. Clause (ii) is, in effect, a statement of Reid's account of evidence, with a fillip about S having the same evidence as a competent judge. Presumably, however, we should understand the occurrence of the term 'evidence' in clause (ii) in terms of Reid's legal conception of evidence. And thus, we would have to unpack this occurrence of the term 'evidence' in terms of what a competent judge would believe. But then clause (ii) of Davis' proposal forces us to understand what a competent judge would be certain of in terms of itself, which is not informative.

I imagine this last concern can be addressed. For example, if we were to distinguish informational content (i.e., how reality is presented to an agent) from evidence, we could then formulate clause (ii) of (K) in terms of not evidence, but informational content. In this case, the idea is that, given that a competent judge and S were presented with the same informational content relevant to p, a competent judge would be certain that p. But I think that a deeper problem lurks.

Consider a case modeled on one Davis presents in which an agent, Duke, witnesses a policeman using physical force to subdue a member of an ethnic minority (p. 101). Duke judges that what the policeman does is right. As it happens, according to the case that Davis describes, this judgment is true. Does Duke know that the policeman has acted rightly?

According to (K), that all depends on what a competent judge would believe if he were presented with the same informational content that Duke has. But suppose now that we distinguish epistemic skills, on the one hand, from cognitive programming, on the other. Epistemic skills are abilities or competences that concern how to handle evidence. They involve knowing when to discount irrelevant claims, knowing how to weigh pieces of evidence fairly against others, knowing when to search for more evidence, and so on. Cognitive programming, by contrast, is what an agent takes for granted when exercising his epistemic skills. It includes specific convictions about the way the world is as well as ways of viewing reality. For example, it includes ways of seeing things that accentuate certain features of a situation but not others.

As Davis glosses judicial competence in chapter three, he does so almost entirely in terms of epistemic skills. Cognitive programming plays only a minor role. (Davis briefly addresses the role of prejudice. But the prejudice of a judge is limited to 'affinity and interest': ways in which he or she might be linked to the relevant parties by blood or friendship or personally profit from a particular type of ruling [pp. 39, 57].) Suppose, however, we were to modify the case of Duke. In particular, let's suppose, for argument's sake, that there are two competent judges, each possessing the requisite epistemic skills and possessing the same informational content as Duke. Suppose, furthermore, that they have different programming. The first judge, let's say, is a consequentialist who believes that the use of violence by police is highly effective in lowering crime. The second is not a consequentialist and believes no such thing. Accordingly, these judges render different verdicts: One believes that what the police officer has done is right, the other does not.

Now we have a problem. Both judges are competent in the sense of the term that Davis employs. But we cannot appeal to the verdicts of both judges, since that would imply that Duke both knows and does not know that the policeman has acted rightly. Nor can we say that there is no fact of the matter as to which competent judge we should appeal. For that would imply that (K) does not offer us a sufficiently determinate account of moral knowledge.

There is a way to fix this problem, which is to supplement our understanding of what it is to be a competent judge. In particular, we could stipulate that being a competent judge involves having the right sort of cognitive programming. My own view is that it will prove tricky to specify what exactly counts as the right and relevant sort of cognitive programming. But suppose we succeed in this. Still, a problem looms. For suppose a competent judge who possesses the right sort of epistemic skills and cognitive programming were to judge that, in this case, the policeman has acted rightly. Why would that be relevant to whether *Duke* knows whether the policeman has acted as he ought to? Duke, after all, lacks both the skills and the programming of the relevant cognitive judge.⁴

In short, it looks as if Davis' reconstruction of Reid's position is subject to a dilemma. If, on the one hand, we understand a competent judge in a fairly minimalist way such that he is an agent who possesses the relevant epistemic skills, there is the problem of competent judges who possess the same informational content, but render incompatible verdicts with respect to the same proposition. If, on the other hand, we understand a competent judge in a maximalist way such that he is an agent who possesses both the right and relevant epistemic skills and cognitive programming, it is difficult to see why his verdicts would have any bearing upon whether Duke knows whether the policeman has acted rightly.

MORAL ONTOLOGY

I turn now to the second topic in Davis' book with which I'd like to engage, which is Davis' account of Reid's understanding of moral duty. I indicated earlier that, according to Davis, Reid accepts the primacy of the particular. By this Davis has three things in mind. First, Davis holds that, according to Reid, 'the reality apprehended in moral judgment is a token, not a type' (p. 76). In particular, it is a relation – that of being obligated to act – that holds between a particular agent and an act token. In this sense, the 'primary locus' of moral reality is at the level of particulars (p. 82). Second, general moral claims, which concern general duties, 'express real patterns... of uniformity... in relations between particulars', their referents being relations, but not between abstract objects (pp. 79, 82). Third, unlike the rationalists, Reid does not hold that particular acts are 'morally significant only as instances of... abstract types or relations' (p. 81). So, according to Davis' Reid, acts do not gain their moral significance by virtue of falling under some general moral law or norm.

I believe, by contrast, that Reid rejects each of these three claims. Consider the first claim, which says that moral obligations are relations that hold between particular agents and act tokens. At the outset of his discussion of the notion of duty, Reid says that what separates those creatures that are governed only by the animal principles of action, on the one hand, and those governed by the rational principles of action, on the other, is that the latter can regulate all their actions 'according to a certain general rule, or law', which is duty (EAP III.iii.v: 222). What might such a general rule look like? I agree with Davis that Reid does not believe that it is simply a relation between agent and act types. But I do not think it is merely a relation between particular agents and act tokens, as Davis suggests. For that would not make good sense of Reid's claim that duty is law-like. Nor would it allow for Reid to work with the category of imperfect obligations, which are obligations to perform acts of a certain type, since they are such that they can be discharged in a variety of ways. (See also EAP V.vii: 477, where Reid

clearly claims that the obligation relation holds between agents and act types.) My suggestion is that, for Reid, moral obligation is a relation between particular agents of a certain kind and acts that belong to a certain type. The kinds of agents in question are what we might call 'morally assessable'. These are agents, as Reid specifies, who have understanding, will, 'some degree of active power', and 'the means of knowing... [their] obligation' (EAP III.iii.v: 230). If this is right, for Reid, locutions of the sort 'there is an obligation for everyone to A' should be glossed as:

For any agent S who is morally assessable, there exists an act type A such that S stands in the relation of being obligated to perform a token of A.

If this is correct, Reid's view regarding duty comes much closer to the rationalists than Davis claims. Moral obligations, according to the present suggestion, are law-like and, hence, are relations that hold between agents and act types. To which I would add the following point: Davis supports his own interpretation of Reid by pointing out that Reid's concerns were ultimately practical (see Ch. 5). If I understand Davis correctly, it is supposed to follow from this that Reid's concern was primarily with particular agents and actions; appealing to relations between agent and act types, as the rationalists did, would be insufficiently action guiding. But if we were to understand moral laws along the lines just suggested, they would certainly suffice to guide action. In a sense, they would be better guides to actions than particular duties, as they would instruct an agent how to act in a wide array of circumstances.

Consider now the second component of the primacy of the particular, which tells us that general moral claims simply express patterns of uniformity in relations between particulars. I also believe this is not Reid's view. Reid writes that 'if there be any such thing as right and wrong in the conduct of moral agents, it must be the same to all in the same circumstances' (EAP V.i: 366). While the modal status of this claim isn't entirely clear, I think we have excellent reason to believe that Reid endorses the strong supervenience of the moral on the nonmoral, according to which, necessarily, acts that are right and wrong in the conduct of moral agents are the same in all circumstances (see, e.g., EAP V.ii: 480). But if general moral claims were to concern only patterns of uniformity among particulars, the strong supervenience of the moral on the nonmoral would not be guaranteed. For there would be no assurance that, necessarily, an act of a particular type in such and such circumstances is wrong. Of course, one might claim that what guarantees that acts of a certain range are necessarily wrong is the fact that they belong to a certain type. But that, in effect, is what rationalists such as Price claim. And, so, once more, Reid's view would represent not so much a *via media* between rationalists and sentimentalists as a particular version of rationalism.

Turn, finally, to the third component of the primacy of the particular, which says that acts do not possess one or another moral status by way of their falling under some type or abstract relation. I have already voiced my worries regarding this claim. If Reid really held this, he could not defend the strong supervenience of the moral on the nonmoral. But since he does defend this, it is plausible to believe that he rejects the claim that acts do not possess one or another moral status by way of their falling under some type or relation. But it is also worth noting a closely related point that underscores Reid's commitment to the explanatory work that is done by general principles. A moment ago, I claimed that we have good reason to believe that general moral principles are not simply codifications of patterns of uniformity among particular agents and their acts, for then we would have no guarantee that acts of a certain type are always wrong, as Reid believes. Notice, however, that in addition to preserving the strong supervenience of the moral on the nonmoral, we also want an *explanation* of why it is that acts of a certain range are necessarily wrong. General moral principles provide that explanation. In fact, says Reid, these moral principles are 'the rules which God has prescribed to his rational creatures for their conduct' (EAP IV.ix: 336). In my estimation, however, it would be very odd to say that God's rules simply express general patterns of behavior among particulars. Presumably, they do more explanatory work than this. For a theist such as Reid, they are what lie deepest in moral reality. They *account for* why these particulars have the features they do.

I have argued that Reid does not endorse the primacy of the particular, as it is understood by Davis. It will be noticed, however, that the alternate account of obligation that I offer as Reid's is silent about whether Reid believed that moral obligations are *prima facie* in character. Davis argues that, when it comes to the first principles of morals at least, they are not. It is true, Davis admits, that according to Reid:

between particular external actions, which different virtues would lead to, there may be an opposition. Thus, the same man may be in his heart, generous, grateful, and just. . . . Yet it may happen, that an external action which generosity or gratitude solicits, justice may forbid. (EAP V.i: 368)

But Davis maintains that this is a claim not about the character of duties, but about virtues. Moreover, Davis argues, to claim that moral duties are merely *prima facie* would conflict with what the Church of Scotland teaches. The Westminster Standards, for example, make no mention of 'exceptions to commands that are merely *prima facie* duties, nor do they suggest that one command may have to be disobeyed in order to obey another' (p. 119). Otherwise put, Reid is not a Rossian intuitionist born out of season.

I find this interpretation of Reid puzzling for several reasons. First, Davis' question is whether, for Reid, the first principles of morals are *prima facie*

in character. Suppose, for argument's sake, they aren't. It is important to see, however, that the class of basic duties regarding benevolence, promise keeping, and so forth that Ross identified as being *prima facie* do not overlap with Reid's first principles. So, even if Reid's first principles are not *prima facie*, it does not follow that other general moral obligations, for Reid, are not *prima facie*. Moreover, given the fact that the duties with which the Westminster Standards are concerned – namely, those contained in the Decalogue – also do not overlap with Reid's first principles, appealing to the former's exceptionless character would not imply anything about whether the first principles are *prima facie* duties.

Second, while it is true that the passage just quoted from Reid concerns not duties, but virtues, Reid also holds that the connections between the virtues and duties are intimate. Reid writes: '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' (EAP III.iii.vi: 236). Suppose, then, that virtues imply obligations to act in certain ways. Suppose, further, that the acts that virtue requires may conflict: Gratitude, say, recommends one course of action, while justice requires the performance of an incompatible action. If this is right, it follows that our moral duties can also conflict. Since Reid does not believe in moral dilemmas, it would appear that he is committed to the *prima facie* character of some duties. For example, according to this interpretation, Reid maintains that duties of gratitude are only *prima facie*, as they give way to duties of justice. To which I should add that, it is generally clear, according to Reid, how these conflicts are to be resolved.

Third, Davis holds that, if one believes that certain obligations are *prima facie*, one duty 'may have to be disobeyed in order to obey another'. This, I think, is incorrect. To hold that a duty is *prima facie* does not imply that it can in certain circumstances be disobeyed. Rather, it implies only that the reasons to which that duty gives rise can be overridden by other considerations. This, I think, both Reid and friends of the Westminster Standards would find entirely acceptable.

NONNATURALISM

Davis' discussion, as I have already indicated, takes Reid's Scottish Presbyterian identity with full seriousness. This is a virtue and it helps, in general, to explain why Reid says what he does. Toward the beginning of his book, however, Davis makes what strikes me as a controversial claim about how best to characterize Reid's view. According to Davis, moral realists such as Reid 'were not *non-naturalists*, they were *super-naturalists*. They sought to give theologically subtle answers to the questions that Moore called "open"' (p. 19).

I disagree. I do not think that moral nonnaturalism and supernaturalism are logical contraries; one can accept both. And I think Reid does accept both positions. True, 'non-naturalism' is a philosopher's term of art. But few doubt that Moore himself was a nonnaturalist. And I think it is fairly apparent that Reid's moral philosophy and Moore's share a great deal. Indeed, given that Moore is, in many respects, Reid's intellectual heir, it would be very surprising if they didn't.

To be more specific, consider the following three defining features of Moorean nonnaturalism. First, Moorean nonnaturalism maintains that there are moral concepts. Second, it claims that these concepts are irreducibly normative, their predicative use implying that there are moral reasons. And, third, Moorean nonnaturalism maintains that these concepts refer not to natural descriptive features, but to irreducibly moral ones.

Reid accepts all of these claims. Putative moral concepts are not disguised prudential or welfare notions. 'I observe in the next place, that the notion of duty cannot be resolved into that of interest, or what is most for our happiness' (EAP III.iii.v: 223; see also EAP V.v). Moreover, Reid claims that these concepts are irreducibly normative. They cannot be defined in nonnormative terms. In fact, as Davis himself points out, Reid holds that the concept *being a moral duty* cannot be defined at all (see EAP III.iii.v: 223). While this moral notion is, in Reid's view, undefinable, he nevertheless elucidates other moral concepts such as *being morally good* and *being a moral virtue* in terms of duty. In short, goodness is what one ought to prize or pursue, and virtue is a firm commitment to conform to one's moral obligations. Admittedly, Moore held that what is indefinable is not the concept *being a moral duty*, but *being good*. (In this sense, Reid's view approximates not Moore's, but A. C. Ewing's.) But the commonality between the two is clear. Each takes one central moral concept to be both irreducibly normative and indefinable. At any rate, it is also clear that, according to Reid, the gulf between moral features and those that are the subject of the natural sciences is significant. Entities that belong to each domain are of very different sorts. (More on this in a moment.) If this is right, the types of questions that Moore thought were open, Reid also believed to be open. Reid, no more than Moore, thought that we could define primitive normative concepts such as *being a moral duty* or identify moral properties with natural ones.

Which brings me to a second point. A defining mark of moral nonnaturalism is what is commonly referred to as the 'autonomy of morality'. Broadly naturalist approaches to ethics, such as those defended by Hobbes and Hume, maintain that ethical inquiry is continuous with that of the natural sciences, as it employs similar methods and evidential standards as natural scientific inquiry. In contrast to this, nonnaturalists hold that ethics is an autonomous discipline distinct from other forms of inquiry such as psychology or biology. Ethics, according to this view, asks its own questions and offers its own types of answers to these questions, appealing to its own canons of explanation and justification. According

to the nonnaturalists, were we told by our best science, for example, that we are genetically predisposed to act aggressively toward others, no ethical issues would thereby be settled. For we can always ask whether such aggressive action *ought* to be pursued. And no appeal to what biology or psychology tells us will settle that question. Rather, we would have to engage in ethical deliberation.

Reid accepted the autonomy of morality. Consider the following passage from his unpublished reply to Priestley's defense of materialism:

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 Mathematicks and Metaphysicks; 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. (Reid 1995: 186)

The reason I want to highlight this text is that, at various points, Davis maintains that Reid is trying to develop a moral science. Davis writes:

Always fascinated by both mathematics and natural science, he [Reid] saw extensive similarities between these disciplines and moral philosophy. With his contemporaries, Reid was concerned to establish the scientific character of moral philosophy. . . . The empirical natural sciences have similar methods of inquiry to morals. . . . Seeing the benefit of linking natural science and morals, he set off in a new direction, developing morals as an *a posteriori* science concerned with necessary truths. (pp. 25–6)

In my judgment, this is misleading. Reid was not engaged in constructing a moral science in the sense of a medieval *scientia* – a body of certain propositions from which we can derive more particular principles. Davis, in effect, makes this very point when he says that Reid is not a Classical Foundationalist. Nor was Reid, in Humean fashion, applying Newtonian methods to moral philosophy (in our sense). The passage just quoted makes that clear. Finally, given that there is a sense in which Reid was interested in formulating a system of morals, it's pretty clear that it is in no interesting sense *a posteriori*. The principles of morality are necessary, self-evident truths. We grasp them in an *a priori* fashion. If this is right, the only sense in which Reid can be said to develop a moral science is in the rather minimal sense of constructing a systematically elegant moral theory. Nonetheless, a theory such as this has rather little in common with the methods of the natural sciences.

In conclusion, Davis has done us the favor of advocating a rich and, at certain points, controversial interpretation of Reid. Although I have highlighted several

areas where I find myself disagreeing with the version of Reid that Davis offers us, the fact that he has offered us such a provocative construal of Reid's position is something for which we are in his debt.⁵

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NOTES

- ¹ Davis claims to present seven puzzles (p. 3). But by my counting, there are only six.
² As Patrick Rysiew points out in 'Reidian Evidence' (this *Journal* 3.2 [2005]), Lehrer offers different accounts of Reid's conception of evidence, only some of which are objectivist in character. Davis picks up on only part of Lehrer's view and counts him among not the objectivists, but the subjectivists. Rysiew, I should also add, defends a view that has much in common with Davis' position. It too seeks a via media between objectivist and subjectivist accounts of evidence.
³ There is a concern about what Davis says that I can't pursue on this occasion, which is this: In what he calls 'Reid's Legal Concept of Evidence', Davis says that, according to Reid, the evidence of a proposition is measured by the degree of subjective confidence that a competent judge would have in it, were he to entertain that proposition (p. 43). But, as stated, this tells us not what evidence is, but how to measure it. And, so, I believe there is still a question about what, in Davis' view, evidence is for Reid.
⁴ A reply: Suppose one were to say that for Duke to have the same evidence as a competent judge implies that he has the same epistemic skills and programming as that judge. Would that solve the problem? I don't think so, for this proposal implies that rather few ordinary people will have moral knowledge. After all, gaining the requisite skills and programming requires time, maturity, and a proper moral education, which many ordinary agents lack. But, according to Davis, it is precisely the desire to safeguard the possibility of gaining moral knowledge for ordinary folk that was supposed to recommend Reid's judicial approach to evidence. So, accepting this horn of the dilemma gives up on a main desideratum regarding knowledge that Reid wants to satisfy.
⁵ Thanks to Erika Cuneo, Lee Hardy, Ryan Nichols, and Luke Reinsma for their comments on an earlier version of this review.

DISCUSSION

REID'S TRADITION OF INQUIRY: A GRATEFUL RESPONSE TO CUNEO

WILLIAM C. DAVIS
Covenant College

Prof. Cuneo's treatment of my work on Reid is perceptive, challenging and provocative in an uncommonly helpful way. His review is a model of philosophical compassion: even where he finds fault, he does so charitably, turning deficiencies in my work into occasions for advancing productive lines of inquiry into Reid's thought and Scottish philosophy more generally. His analysis of my interpretation of Reid is both generous and insightful, raising important questions about the nature and intent of Reid's moral philosophy. After providing a summary of my book that grasps the heart of my project – vindicating Reid against MacIntyre's criticisms in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* – Cuneo takes issue with three of my central interpretive claims. The first concerns my reconstruction of Reid on evidence; the second objects to my treatment of Reid's moral ontology; and the third questions my claim that Reid was not a nonnaturalist.

This response will address all three of Cuneo's worries. Each worry deserves more attention than I will give any of them here. While I hope to suggest ways of answering the many sub-questions included in his analysis, I believe that his concerns all arise from a fundamental disagreement with my interpretation of Reid's project. As I hope to explain, Reid's ability to answer MacIntyre's complaints depends crucially upon the kind of moral philosophy Reid is doing. I am worried that Cuneo's interpretation of Reid – that Reid is working in the Rationalist tradition – will leave Reid's interpreters unable to answer MacIntyre's challenge. My interpretation equips Reid's defenders by recognizing Reid's place in a different tradition of moral inquiry.

I wish I could say that I had a clear position on Reid's place in a moral tradition prior to reading Cuneo's review. While I knew that MacIntyre's critique could only be answered by locating Reid outside the groundlessness of Enlightenment liberalism, I was content in my book to show that Reid's commitments are too theologically rich to lump his work with Rationalists and other anti-traditionalist liberals. Early on, Cuneo's review alludes to Reid's tradition, and before reading