

# First Principles as General, First Principle 7 as Special

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## 1. Introduction

Thomas Reid claimed that his main achievement was having called into question the ‘theory of ideas’, the sceptical tendencies of which he saw Hume as having brought to full fruition (COR, 210-11). But those who’ve studied Reid’s work know that it contains many important positive contributions beyond that. James Van Cleve’s masterful *Problems from Reid* displays the breadth, depth – and, at times, difficulties -- of Reid’s writings, with penetrating critical discussion of his views on perception, memory, personal identity, knowledge, action, and morals, among other topics. The book is a model of clarity and rigor, bringing Reid to life, and his ideas into productive and illuminating contact with contemporary debates and positions.

Below, I focus on Van Cleve’s discussion of Reid’s epistemological views, which many have found to be rich and rewarding – while, tellingly, often disagreeing as to just what they are. After outlining the central issues Van Cleve addresses and the interpretive choices he favors, I’ll raise some questions about the latter and suggest some alternatives. Specifically, I will address the distinction, prominent in Van Cleve’s discussion, between first principles as particular and as general, and argue that the generalist line not only has much more going for it than Van Cleve suggests, but also that this doesn’t come at the cost of sacrificing other of his central claims. Further, I will (much more briefly) suggest that Reid’s seventh first principle *is* special, though not in the way Van Cleve considers and criticizes, and that, here too, the suggested alternative does not compromise Van Cleve’s central theses.

## 2. Van Cleve on Reid

Central to Reid’s epistemology are the First Principles (FPs) he articulates.<sup>1</sup> Some of these are clearly metaphysical. (FP2 tells us that thoughts require a thinker; FP6, that we have some degree of power over our actions.) Others, Van Cleve says, are “plainly intended to have epistemological significance, proclaiming the trustworthiness” of various faculties and types of belief (301). A central question for Van Cleve is whether “the[se] epistemological principles” are principles of truth, or of evidence. (They’re *at least* principles of belief: as Reid stresses, we can’t help assenting to them (*ibid.*.) According to Van Cleve, answering this question requires addressing a crucial but overlooked ambiguity. In stating FP1, e.g., Reid writes,

“I hold, as a first principle, the existence of every thing of which I am conscious”  
(EIP 6.5:470),

which we might symbolize in two quite different ways (using ‘Cp’ for “I am conscious that p”, and “transmut[ing] Reid’s talk of existence into talk of truth”):

- 1.1. It is a first principle that  $(p)(Cp \rightarrow p)$ .
- 1.2.  $(p)(Cp \rightarrow \text{it is a first principle that } p)$ . (305)

Construed along the lines of 1.1, FP1 give us a single, general first principle. Specifically,

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<sup>1</sup> Our focus here is on Reid’s “first principles of contingent truths”, versus his “first principles of necessary truths”.

it gives us a principle of truth telling us that a certain range of beliefs or believed propositions – the deliverances of consciousness -- are true. (Equivalently, that a certain range of things exists.) Construed along the lines of 1.2, FP1 is an *epistemic* principle (or principle of evidence) yielding a multitude of particular first principles. It tells us that each of the deliverances of consciousness has first principle status – that it is justified or evident independently of any other beliefs.<sup>2</sup>

Reid's statements of the relevant principles don't all possess the same degree of syntactic ambiguity, but the general-particular distinction can be applied to each; and there are passages in which Reid himself appears to draw something very much like it (308-9). Also, the distinction helps to explain an apparent inconsistency in Reid – namely, that while FPs are supposed to be such that we can't help believing them, he also allows that we can disagree about them. But if what is disputed are the general principles and what everyone believes are the particular propositions, "the inconsistency vanishes" (309).

As to whether Reid understood the relevant principles "in the generalist and truth-oriented style of 1.1, or in the particularist and evidence-oriented style of 1.2" (307), Van Cleve argues that while the textual evidence is mixed, particularism "fits better with Reid's philosophical commitments and occasionally with his explicit pronouncements" (309). Specifically, particular propositions about the contents of consciousness, perception, and memory have a much better claim than general principles like 1.1 to possessing what Reid says are central features of FPs (309). Thus, FPs are supposed to be *self-evident* (or at least immediately evident<sup>3</sup>). But it's much easier to see how contingent particular propositions (*I'm in pain*, *There's a cat before me*) might have that status, as compared with principles of truth like 1.1, which are both contingent and general (309, 321, 365). Second, FPs are supposed to be *irresistibly believed*. But while some (Descartes, e.g.) have doubted whether all deliverances of perception and consciousness, say, are true, it's harder to doubt a specific such deliverance. (This is a point that Reid himself appears to make: see below.) Finally, FPs are supposed to be "*the ultimate premises lying behind all other beliefs*", as Van Cleve puts it (309; italics added). It seems, however, that general principles like 1.1,  $(p)(Cp \rightarrow p)$ , could serve this role only by being enlisted "as a major premise alongside some instance of its antecedent,  $Cq$ , as minor premise; from the two premises together we would then deduce the conclusion  $q$  (*I am now in pain*, [e.g.])" (310). But this has calamitous consequences: on this picture,  $Cq$  would itself need to be deduced from another application of the general principle, launching an infinite regress – this, in addition to the fact that Reid would find ridiculous the suggestion that propositions about the operations and contents of one's own mind, e.g., need to be *deduced* (310).

As we've just seen, principles of truth like 1.1 contribute to our knowledge only insofar as they (and instances of their antecedents) are themselves evident or known. But

<sup>2</sup> There is no presumption that either 1.1 or 1.2 is *itself* a first principle (305, n. 8).

<sup>3</sup> Van Cleve regards Reid's use of "self-evident" as overly liberal. In terms of Alston's (1985) distinction between self-evidentness proper (evidentness merely upon understanding the proposition) and immediate evidentness (evidentness, but not on the basis of other propositions), it seems that only FPs that are necessary truths could be self-evident in the strict sense (304).

principles of evidence like 1.2 need only *be true*: “[w]e do not have to know that they are true; we simply have to fall under them” (310-11). On the particularist reading, then, Reid is an “*epistemological externalist* – someone who thinks that there are important knowledge-making factors that do their work regardless of whether they are themselves known” (317).

Some find externalism implausible, objecting that it makes knowing too easy. Van Cleve replies forcefully, however, that some knowledge must be easy if we’re to have any knowledge at all (343-52). Relatedly, he defends the respectability of the ‘bootstrapping’ that principles of evidence, and so a particularist reading of Reid, enable – that is, arguments establishing the reliability of our faculties through the use of those very faculties. If such principles are correct, then particular deliverances of a given faculty may be immediately evident, and so fit to serve as inputs to a ‘track-record’ argument such as the following:

1. At  $t_1$ , I formed the perceptual belief that  $p$ , and  $p$ .
  2. At  $t_2$ , I formed the perceptual belief that  $q$ , and  $q$ .  
(and so on)
- C. Therefore, sense perception is a reliable source of belief. (315)

Such arguments require a *reliance upon* the relevant faculties, and those faculties can yield knowledge only if they *are* reliable – hence, only if the conclusion of the argument is true. So such arguments are “epistemically circular” (Alston 1985). However, since the conclusion needn’t be *known* to be true, there is no *vicious* circularity involved (313-16). What’s more, Reid himself seems to allow that we can ‘confirm’ the trustworthiness of various faculties; what he denies is that our faculties owe their status as sources of evidence to our being able to give such an argument, or to our *knowing* that they’re reliable (318-19).

While the track-record arguments it permits are dialectically ineffective against the sceptic (316, n. 16), externalism remains the most powerful anti-sceptical feature of Reid’s epistemology, according to Van Cleve. Perceptual direct realism is neither necessary nor sufficient for avoiding scepticism (329-32); ‘naturalism’ saves us only from unbelief (332-37); and nativism merely permits our having certain conceptions (53-6). But externalism provides a response to the following sceptical dyad:

- (1) We can know that a deliverance of [a potential source of knowledge]  $K$  is true only if we first know that  $K$  is reliable.
- (2) We can know that  $K$  is reliable only if we first know, concerning certain of its deliverances, that they are true. (339)

In particular, externalism tells against (1), the KR (‘knowledge of reliability’) requirement. It thereby makes possible our knowing things, things the knowing of which implies that the sceptic is wrong, even if we cannot *show* that he is wrong (353).

The interpretation of Reid as an externalist is not uncommon. By far the most prevalent such reading, however, is that Reid is some kind of reliabilist;<sup>4</sup> and Van Cleve presents,

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<sup>4</sup> Following de Bary, I use ‘reliabilism’ broadly, to refer to any view on which reliability is central to the explication of some central epistemic concept (2002, 5).

and prefers, a neglected alternative – namely, that Reid is a *normativist*; that is, “someone for whom evidence (that is, the quality of being evident) is a normative category not logically tied to reliability, as in the epistemological writings of R. M. Chisholm” (323). This view is externalist because, since justifying factors needn’t be reliably connected to the truth, they needn’t be *known* to be such in order to do their work (340-41). What makes the view possible is particularism about FPs, as discussed above: as per 1.2 and its fellows, “the mere fact that a proposition is a deliverance of perception, memory, or consciousness suffices to make [it] evident” (341). But particularism is compatible with reliabilism (342-43), and “regardless of whether [Reid’s] externalism is of the normativist or reliabilist variety, it gives him an answer to the skeptical dyad” (343).

### 3. General principles and “instances”

The attention Van Cleve draws to the possibility that Reid is a normativist is one of the most distinctive features of his discussion of Reid’s epistemology. For my own part, I’m less sure than Van Cleve as to how comfortable such a reading of Reid is.<sup>5</sup> However, as the discussion just above suggests, while Van Cleve favors the latter reading, many of his central arguments don’t require it; and where reading Reid as a normativist rather than a reliabilist, say, makes a difference – for instance, on the question of whether epistemic principles are plausibly regarded as first principles (319-25) -- that is noted. Because of this (and for reasons of space), I will focus on another highly distinctive, and more central, feature of Van Cleve’s discussion – namely, the issue of whether Reid’s FPs are general or particular, with Van Cleve coming out strongly in favor of the particularist reading.

As Van Cleve recognizes, particularism about FPs has its costs. For example, Reid thinks it is a central feature of FPs that they are *universally believed* (at least, by every sane adult). But the propositions that qualify as FPs on the particularist reading – e.g., “that I am now seeing a tree or feeling a twinge of pain” (312) – don’t have this feature, and so cannot be FPs of *common sense* (Wolterstorff 2004, 92-3; 313, n. 13). One might worry too that the positing of a vast array of FPs doesn’t do justice to the ‘principlehood’ of FPs (312) and the presumed frugality of nature (see IHM 4.2:50). Finally, as Van Cleve notes, while Reid in places draws something like the distinction between 1.1 and 1.2, he “often seems oblivious or indifferent to [it]” (308). Other things being equal, it would be good to be able to explain Reid’s apparent obliviousness or lack of concern here.

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<sup>5</sup> Briefly, while I agree that Reid has a partly normative conception of evidence – that evidence is not merely what causes, even compels, belief (see 323-24, 335-37) -- I also see it as essentially truth-related. For example, when Reid says that the various forms of evidence “are all fitted by Nature to produce belief in the human mind” (EIP 2.20:228-29), I think that ‘fitted’ is indeed normative (see 343), but that it’s best understood in broadly proper-functionalist terms. Also best read against such a background, in my view, is Reid’s endorsement of Chisholmian-sounding ideas to the effect that “beliefs in certain sorts of propositions are justified by certain sorts of experiences or in certain sorts of conditions” (see 331). (I discuss the general mixing of psychological-descriptive and normative matters in Reid in Rysiew 2002, Reid’s views on evidence in 2005 and 2011a, and the relation between the latter and fallibilism in Rysiew forthcoming.)

Even so, the particularist reading of Reid may be the best among the available options. Thus, in response to the worry about losing the commonness of FPs, Van Cleve says that, while legitimate, the objection “is trumped by other considerations, and that Reid should have relaxed or reformulated the requirement of commonality” – especially since, otherwise, we’ll have to hold that only general principles are first principles, which has the disastrous consequences mentioned above (313, n. 13).

It’s not clear, however, whether taking FPs to be general *is* so implausible. Let me suggest an alternative, one that gives greater prominence to the psychological orientation and ambitions of Reid’s project. Quite apart from the particulars-versus-generals issue, Reid’s view as to the *sort* of thing FPs are is hard to pin down. As framed by Van Cleve, the choice between particularism and generalism features FPs in their propositional guise. But, as others have suggested,<sup>6</sup> Reid also encourages our thinking of FPs as (general) *psychological* principles -- as basic features of the human mind, operating so as to produce beliefs of various sorts in us according to our having various types of experience. So understood, such a principle is nothing propositional, but rather an “actuating power or tendency” of the human mind, as Ferreira (1986, 101) puts it; and its generality is a function, not of its content (*qua* psychological principle, it has none), but rather of its range of application. (The same principle that gets me believing immediately that there’s a dog before me when I see one gets me believing that there’s a cat before me when I see it, etc.) We can articulate the principle, however, rendering it in propositional form; and when we do so, putting words to what careful observation suggests be fundamental principles of the human mind, we get Reid’s list of FPs.

To illustrate, consider a passage that Van Cleve cites (308) as suggesting a distinction similar to that between 1.1 and 1.2:

“It is another property of this and of many first principles that they force their assent in particular instances, more powerfully than when they are turned into a general proposition” (EIP 6.5:482).

On the reading being suggested, what Reid is saying here is this: the (general) principle forces assent in particular cases (in its token operations) more powerfully than when it is stated as (“turned into”) a general proposition. On this reading, there is a single, general principle throughout, with token instances in which it produces its effects. When the principle is put into propositional form – e.g., “That those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be” (FP5; EIP 6.5:476) – there is indeed a logical relation between it and a specific belief I might form in accordance with it – e.g., *there is a dog before me*. But it’s not in virtue of *that* relation that I form the latter belief; certainly, I needn’t (don’t normally) use the former as a premise, reasoning to the latter.<sup>7</sup> As Reid says (EIP 6.5:482), FPs typically produce their

<sup>6</sup> The psychological aspect of FPs has been emphasized by, e.g., Marciel-Lacoste (1982), Ferreira (1986), de Bary (2002), and Thébert (2015); Sosa (2009, 72) speaks of FPs as ‘inference patterns’ to which we’re committed.

<sup>7</sup> Note that, on the view being suggested, whether or not perceiving is always attended by belief that one perceives, what prompts the formation of a perceptual belief, e.g., is my perceiving and not my belief or awareness that I am. (Compare the discussion at 356-57.)

effects without one's thinking of them at all. (Hence, without one's knowing that they're reliable: on the present account too, Reid is an epistemological externalist.) For this same reason, the specific belief formed may be immediately justified – in this case, provided “the proper circumstances concur”, the belief is justified by “the evidence of sense” (EIP 2.20:229), the operation of which the statement of FP5 is naturally read as being meant to capture.<sup>8</sup>

Van Cleve takes it that “the defining mark of a first principle is its self-evidence” (314). However, in at least one place Reid suggests that self-evidence is not sufficient for first-principlehood (Thébert 2015, 197-98; cf. Marciel-Lacoste 1982, 98, n. 43). He does so, in fact, in the other passage van Cleve cites (308) as illustrating Reid's own drawing of a distinction similar to that between 1.1 and 1.2. Here, Reid says that while “the particular propositions contained under a general axiom are no less self-evident than the general axiom,” they “have neither dignity nor utility, and therefore deserve not the name of axioms” (EIP 6.7:520-21).

Reid does, it is true, sometimes speak of particular propositions as first principles (313, n. 13). For instance:

“The truths immediately testified by the external senses are the first principles from which we reason, with regard to the material world, and from which all our knowledge of it is deduced.” (EAP 3.3.6:176)

But perhaps the relevant point is that our knowledge of the material world starts with observations gleaned from the senses, with us then moving to more and more general principles.<sup>9</sup> However, the order of discovery needn't reflect the order of dependence: in knowledge of any particular matter, we take various (general) FPs for granted; and Reid's focus in understanding our intellectual powers is on these, the most general and fundamental ones.<sup>10</sup>

The way of thinking about FPs sketched above sits well (I claim) with the text, and preserves the commonness and ‘principlehood’ of FPs. It also, as we saw just above, allays the concern that taking FPs to be general has the disastrous consequences Van Cleve describes: since it is only in a figurative sense that the (general) FP must serve as a premise for any particular belief formed in accordance with it – one needn't *reason from* (general) FPs -- no regress threatens; and there's nothing preventing *I am now in pain*, say, from being immediately evident. Further, and relatedly, track-record arguments for

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<sup>8</sup> I disagree, then, that “it is only the construal of Reid's principles in the particularist style [Van Cleve] recommend[s]...that accommodates the interpretation of [Reid] as an externalist foundationalist” (317, n. 19).

<sup>9</sup> Reid writes: “Human Knowledge is like the steps of a Ladder. The first step consists of particular Truths discovered by observation or Experiment. The second collects these into more general Truths. The third into still more general[.] But there are many such steps before we come to the top; that is, to the most general Truths” (COR, 93).

<sup>10</sup> That the FPs of primary interest to Reid are general is the more fundamental point on which I want to insist. I agree with Van Cleve that particular deliverances of our faculties can be immediately evident for Reid. Perhaps whether they thereby qualify as FPs is at least partly terminological.

the reliability of a faculty are still possible, as is the rejection of KR. In short, the alternative take on where Reid stands on the ‘general-or-particular’ question that I have suggested appears to preserve the (other) main results for which Van Cleve argues.

What about Van Cleve’s suggestion that the particular deliverances of the relevant faculties have a much better claim to self-evidence and irresistibility (309-10), and the apparent inconsistency between our alleged inability to doubt FPs and there being disputes about them? Importantly, while Reid says that FPs “are no sooner understood than they are believed” (EIP 6.4:452), such comprehension is not assured – one needs “ripeness of understanding” (EIP 6.4:453) and to possess the relevant “general notions” (EIP 6.7:521); further, assent to FPs requires “freedom from prejudice” (EIP 6.4:453). But while one may therefore fail to (immediately) assent to the relevant general proposition, and may even deny it, the principle “invariably governs [one’s] opinions” (EIP 6.5:482). One manifests an “implicit belief” in it when one forms the particular beliefs one does,<sup>11</sup> with the former (implicit) belief being as powerful as are the particular beliefs formed on its basis – the latter beliefs *just are* manifestations of the relevant principle operating in us.<sup>12,13</sup>

Still *how could* something that is both contingent and general -- as FPs stated as (“turned into”) propositions are, on the present view -- be self-evident (or at least, immediately evident; recall n. 3)? Van Cleve is dubious. As he allows, however, how one answers will depend on one’s prior epistemological commitments.<sup>14</sup> And while Van Cleve suspects that only *necessary* general propositions (e.g., *all triangles have three sides*) could be self- or immediately evident (321), Reid seems to think that the distinction between necessary and contingent propositions is not in itself epistemically significant (e.g., EIP 2.20 and 7.3), and that it is only because we’re constituted as we are that evidence compels assent (EIP 6.5:481)<sup>15</sup> – which, if true, suggests that it’s never *simply* in virtue of

<sup>11</sup> Reid speaks of our thought and conduct as manifesting an “implicit belief” (e.g., IHM 1.3:17; 6.20:170; EAP: 3.1.2:87), “instinctive belief” (EAP 3.1.2:86), ‘implied conviction’ (EIP 6.5:479), “inward conviction” (EIP 6.5:482), and/or “implicit faith” (EIP 6.5:477) in the FPs.

<sup>12</sup> As Thébert puts it, “Perceptual judgments are the applied principle” (2015, 198).

<sup>13</sup> As another reason for seeing Reid as a particularist, Van Cleve cites Reid’s views on our knowledge of others’ states of mind (311-12). Van Cleve argues that it both must be, and evidently is Reid’s view, that there is a plurality of particular first principles in play – i.e., immediately justified “beliefs in particular psychophysical correlations, such as that between smiling and approval or affirmation” (311). In reply, Reid clearly does hold that we have a native grasp of such correlations, but these seem to concern *types* of signs and signified states of mind; if so, an immediate grasp of them is of something general. Also, it’s plausible that my believing that a particular smiling person is happy, e.g., requires my presuming (though not my using as a premise) the still more general principle “that certain features of the countenance, sounds of the voice, and gestures of the body, indicate certain thoughts and dispositions of mind” (FP9; EIP 6.5:484).

<sup>14</sup> “If I came to believe immediately in the reliability of some faculty through a faculty that was itself reliable, would it not follow on reliabilist assumptions that my belief was immediately justified?” (321, n. 27).

<sup>15</sup> Van Cleve notes this, in arguing that the compelling power of evidence is not definitional (336).

understanding its content, and so never just a function of its modal features, that we see a proposition to be true (cf. n. 3, and 321, n. 26). Further, Reid says that elements in the processes of perception (EIP 2.1:71) and memory (EIP 3.2:255), for example, are “unaccountable” – though they yield knowledge all the same. So perhaps, even if “the evidence of reasoning, and that of some necessary and self-evident truths, seems to be the least mysterious” (EIP 2.20:233), that there would be some mystery to our knowing certain contingent and general propositions immediately is not itself grounds for doubting that we do.

#### 4. First Principle 7

While Van Cleve reads Reid as an externalist who denies KR, he sees the following passage in particular as suggesting that Reid might endorse the latter requirement after all (341-42):

“If any truth can be said to be prior to all others in the order of nature, this seems to have the best claim; because, in every instance of assent, whether upon intuitive, demonstrative, or probable evidence, the truth of our faculties is taken for granted, and is, as it were, one of the premises on which our assent is grounded.” (EIP 6.5:481).

The “truth” to which Reid is referring here is FP7, which states:

“...that the natural faculties, by which we distinguish truth from error, are not fallacious” (EIP 6.5:480).

FP7 itself poses an interpretive problem largely because we seem to already have principles “proclaiming the trustworthiness” of consciousness (FP1), memory (FP3), and perception (FP5), for example (301). So FP7 appears to be superfluous and not, contrary to Reid, special at all. But if FP7 is non-redundant, and indeed special, how does it go beyond the other FPs? In answer, Keith Lehrer (1989, 1990) has suggested that FP7 plugs an apparent gap in the epistemological claims of principles 1, 3, and 5, assuring us that those (reliability) principles are not just believed but true; in addition, FP7 is a metaprinciple that “loops around and supports itself” (Lehrer 1990, 43), affording the needed knowledge of its own truth as well.

Van Cleve finds Lehrer’s interpretation of FP7 problematic (358ff.), and I tend to agree. For one thing, as de Bary (2002, 75-9) argues, if Reid’s other reliability principles (FPs 1, 3, 5, etc.) leave a ‘truth gap’ needing to be closed, it’s hard to see how adding another such principle, even a perfectly general one that subsumes itself, could help. De Bary himself has suggested that FP7 in fact speaks only to the faculties of judgment and reasoning. As Van Cleve argues (358-60), however, that interpretation is not very compelling, not least because memory and perception, for example, already *include* judgment.<sup>16</sup> So we are back to regarding FP7, as Van Cleve is inclined to do, as at best merely summative and not special at all (360). As for Reid’s claim that “in every instance of assent...the truth of our faculties is taken for granted, and is, as it were, one of the premises on which our assent is grounded,” Van Cleve holds that Reid “should not have said that” – at least, not if he’s endorsing KR, and so contradicting his view of the deliverances of consciousness, memory, and perception, say, as immediately justified

<sup>16</sup> Van Cleve’s criticisms of de Bary overlap with my own (2011b, 172-74).

(342).<sup>17</sup>

Let me very quickly suggest an alternative take on FP7, one that sides with Lehrer -- and Reid, if we take him at his word -- in seeing it as special, but not in the way Lehrer suggests.<sup>18</sup> The key is to rethink the assumption that by the time we get to FP7 in Reid's enumeration, he has *already* claimed that various of our faculties are reliable. What else might FPs 1, 3, and 5 be asserting, if not the reliability of consciousness, memory, and perception? They may, I suggest, be merely metaphysical; more specifically, they may "relat[e] to existence" (cf. EIP 6.5:482), telling us that the things of which one is conscious, the past events one distinctly remembers, and the things that one distinctly perceives *do really exist* or *did really happen*. Or, viewing the principles as psychological, the relevant point is that the reality of these things is something that all normal humans (naturally, irresistibly, and most often only implicitly) believe, as evidenced by our forming the specific beliefs we do on the basis of consciousness, memory, and perception.

Interpreted as relating to existence, the principles in question may indeed *imply* the reliability of the relevant faculties. However, that the table I distinctly perceive exists and that perception is reliable, for example, are clearly different beliefs, and the principle lying behind the one needn't be what lies behind the other. Granted, Reid's discussion of FPs 1, 3, and 5 does sometimes turn epistemological, with him mentioning arguments for thinking a given faculty might be fallacious. However, critical consideration of any matter is bound to quickly turn epistemological, even where the former is itself clearly not. Relatedly, that issues concerning the trustworthiness of various faculties (the purview of FP7) creep into the discussion of other FPs is predicted by the reading on which FP7 is distinctively epistemological, concerning the reliability of the faculties -- all of them -- by which we gain knowledge of the world. For, on this reading, FP7's 'priority' and specialness consists in the fact that, just as Reid says, *it* is taken for granted whenever one forms any beliefs at all, including any beliefs about, or formed in accordance with, the other FPs.<sup>19, 20</sup>

Of course, that FP7 is true is itself a deliverance of our faculties; and if, as FP7 says, the latter are not fallacious, then FP7 is trustworthy too. On the present interpretation, however, there is no need to think that it is FP7's reflexive character, or whatever knowledge one might have of the faculties' reliability, that's doing the epistemic work. As with the earlier suggestion as to the generality of FPs, then, the proposed interpretation of FP7, and of its specialness, poses no threat either to Reid's externalism or to Van Cleve's main claims about the character of his epistemological views.

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<sup>17</sup> Likewise, Lemos refers to this passage as "Reid's wrong turn" (2004, Ch. 4), and de Bary calls it "embarrassing" and "simply 'bad Reid'" (2002, 82).

<sup>18</sup> For elaboration and defense of the ideas to follow, see Rysiew 2011b.

<sup>19</sup> FP10, "That there is a certain regard due to human testimony in matters of fact, and even to human authority in matters of opinion," is directly epistemological too. Unlike FP7, however, in many of one's belief-formings FP10 does not enter in at all.

<sup>20</sup> As argued above, the relevant principle or belief needn't serve as a premise from which we reason; the "as it were" in Reid's 'priority' passage above is doing real work (cf. 342, n. 19).

## 5. Conclusion

The discussion here has concerned only a portion of Van Cleve's book; and even then, it has been selective, and far briefer than Van Cleve's (and Reid's) ideas and arguments deserve. I have raised some points on which I disagree with Van Cleve. If I'm right, however, the alternative suggestions I've made also leave intact the central core of what, according to him, is most distinctive and worthwhile in Reid's epistemology.<sup>21</sup>

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