

REID AND LEHRER: METAMIND IN HISTORY

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Introduction

With his recent book on Thomas Reid,¹ Keith Lehrer has contributed to draw the Scottish philosopher from the relative neglect he had suffered for many years. One wonders of course about the connections between this contribution to the history of philosophy and Lehrer's own work in epistemology. In this paper, I briefly set the historical stage on which Reid appears – as far as epistemology is concerned. Then, I give a sketch of Reid's view of epistemic justification and try to locate the 'Reidian insight' which has been praised by Lehrer. Two roles of this insight in Lehrer's epistemology will be distinguished. A doubt will be voiced concerning the reality, in Reid's philosophy, of the second role this insight plays in Lehrer's epistemology. Some questions will finally be raised concerning an epistemology which integrates the Reidian insight.

I. Epistemology before Reid

It is often said, with some reason, that in the modern era, epistemology plays a determinant role in theoretical philosophy: what is taken as real is determined from the standpoint of what can be known.² Hence the central role of the (often largely implicit) concept

1. *Thomas Reid*, London, Routledge, 1989 (Arguments of the Philosophers).

2. The story goes on: the philosophy of language takes over with Frege at the end of the XIXth century (what is taken as real is determined from the standpoint of what can be said). See e.g. M. Dummett, "Can Analytical Philosophy be Systematic, and Ought it to be?" (1975), in *Truth and Other Enigmas*, London, Duckworth, 1978, p. 441: "Frege's fundamental achievement was to alter our perspective in philosophy, to replace epistemology, as the starting point of the