

The Plurality of Philosophical Discourse in the 18th Century : The Case of Thomas Reid

Shinichi Nagao

The aim of this paper is to discuss how to read 18th century philosophical manuscripts as discourses and to point out the importance of treating them as the products of speech-act. The introduction of this paper will explain the importance of examining manuscripts. Then it will give several examples of discrepancy between manuscripts and printed books as discourses, firstly, of 18th century British mathematics and, secondly, one of Thomas Reid's handwritten papers dealing political and social philosophy. The study of 18th century manuscripts as the forms of discourses shed light, not only on the contents of the materials, but also on the very nature of the printed books of the same authors.

They are the products of speech acts and the every action to write something must have been activated by somebody's desire at the first moment. In other words, there must be a human being behind the bulky volumes of papers called "classics". The viewpoint of looking at 18th century texts as discourse would remind us of this very simple fact that, along with the textuality of a text, contextuality cannot be ignored, too.

(1) Introduction

The aim of this paper is to discuss how to read 18th century philosophical manuscripts as discourses and to point out the importance of looking manuscripts of philosophers as the products of speech-act. The introduction of this paper will explain the importance of examining manuscripts. Then it will give the examples of discrepancy between manuscripts and printed books as discourses, firstly, of 18th century British mathematics and, secondly, one of Thomas Reid's handwritten papers dealing political and social philosophy.

The following two episodes that the author of this paper encountered at the International Reid Symposium held at Aberdeen University in 2000 will be useful

to illustrate the difficulty of reading the writings of 18th century philosophers. The attendants of the symposium were the scholars from different disciplines, philosophers and historians. Thomas Reid, the most important philosopher in the Scottish common sense school and widely known by his criticism against David Hume, has been ignored for a long time, although, at the end of his career, Reid became one of the most prominent philosophers in the 18th century Scotland, and after his death, his doctrine became dominant in Scottish philosophy for more than a half century. Recently there was a quiet revival of his philosophy.

Philosophical interest in Reid's realist philosophy has been revived because the philosophical realism became one of the

focal points in the contemporary discussion of the philosophy of science. His philosophy is spotlighted also from Richard Rorty's post-modernist arguments in his *The Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, for Reid was the first critic of the theory of "the idea" of Lockean philosophy, which Rorty regarded as one of the representations of the Western philosophical obsession to look human mind as "the mirror of nature." Therefore, there are good reasons that philosophers rediscovered Thomas Reid in the end of 20th century.

Also Reid is an important figure in the study of today's Scottish intellectual history because of his surviving manuscripts. The unusually large collection of his handwritings owned by Aberdeen University, mostly included under the title of Birkwood Collection, enables historians who are studying Scottish thought in the 18th century to examine, not only the intellectual developments of Reid, but also the inner life of 18th century Scottish intellectuals in general. Therefore, two kinds of interest in Thomas Reid, one is philosophical and the other is historical, would create a stimulating forum to discuss 18th century philosophy, if they combined together well.

But the reality is, not so simple as hoped. At the end of this small meeting of Reid specialists, Paul Wood, a Canadian historian of science and the expert of his manuscripts, made a challenging speech to the philosophers in the audience. Reid was, he told them, not exactly a philosopher, for

more than a half of his manuscripts was dedicated, not to philosophical subjects, but to mathematical problems. If Isaac Newton was "the last magician" rather than being a scientist in contemporary terminology, as J. M. Keynes called him on the ground that there are fewer notes on scientific study than those on Biblical study and alchemy in his manuscripts preserved in Cambridge. There is no interruption in his enthusiastic pursuit of mathematical and natural scientific questions. In his last days, he looked himself as an heir of famous Gregory family, the family of mathematical genius and the Scottish ally of Isaac Newton. Reid was a Christian scientist who devoted most of his time into scientific researches in order to demonstrate the rationality of Christian beliefs.

Peter Kivy, an American philosopher,¹⁾ responded to Wood's challenge in saying that it was difficult for him to accept the presenter's point. Instead of replying him, Wood asked him, facing such clear biographical evidence, why he could still insist that Reid was a philosopher. Kivy's answer was rather blunt. He said that he could not agree with him because he, Kivy, was a philosopher. Then Wood replied "I don't have your problem since I am a historian!" This was really a very interesting lively exchange within Reid specialists that embodied the crucial difference of methodological views between historians and philosophers.

On the next day, I had an opportunity to

talk to another American philosopher, Nicholas Wolterstorff²⁾ at lunchtime. He told me that he was still certain that all of the arguments worth investigated were found in his major philosophical works and his manuscripts might be valuable to biographers but not to the students of his philosophical ideas.

Then he said;

“If he have thought the things in the manuscripts original and important, he would have published them. Why not?”

The rest of the paper will try to find an answer to his question.

(2) Lecture notes and Letters

When considered to be the author of Aberdeen University's manuscripts and other letters and lecture notes, Reid is found to be a different person who has been known through the standard history of British philosophy. His short publication list, *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principle of Common Sense* in 1764—the first and the masterpiece, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* in 1785 and *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* in 1788, gives the impression that Reid invested most of his time into philosophical studies, not in the 18th century usage of the term, that is, the theoretical investigations of any kind of subject, but in today's sense, the disciplinary study of philosophical questions. He looked almost obsessed by the study of “human nature”, the 18th century

expression of the psychology and functions of human brain. Reid dedicated three books to the same subject. His other publications are a small philosophical paper, *An Essay on Quantity*, treating the laws of motions of body and the adaptations of mathematical means to moral subjects, and a critical essay on Aristotelian logic published in 1774 as an appendix to Lord Kames' book.

The considerable part of the works of Locke, Berkeley and Hume, three major figures in British empirical philosophy, is related to the wide range of matters in natural and social world, other than the philosophical subject in narrower sense. They also made remarkable contributions to historiography, social, political, ethical and judicial thoughts. Reid's intellectual life looks much more monotonous than theirs.

His private life was the same kind, too. He was born on 26th April in 1710 in Strachan in the north part of Scotland. Reid was a latecomer to the republic of learning, with his first publication appeared in *Transactions* of Royal Society at the age of 38. He was appointed a university teacher at the age of 41 with no significant contribution to human knowledge. When his first book was printed, he was already 53 years old. Moreover, he never had been to abroad. He visited London, the capital of Britain, only twice in his youth and the rest of his life was spent in Scotland. The only one remarkable thing about his biography

was the fact that he died on 7th October 1796, when he was 86 years old.

But how calm and faint he looked, compared to the gigantic and colourful figures of Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and also to Adam Smith whom he succeeded as the professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow University, Reid certainly was a master of every domain of sciences. The surviving lecture notes tell us that he could treat and teach almost all of the subjects from mathematics to rhetoric. The lecture notes owned by Aberdeen University on “natural philosophy,”³⁾ physics in today’s word, demonstrate the fact that Reid was a good natural scientist with excellent skills in mathematics. Lecture notes on logic in the Special Collection of Edinburgh University⁴⁾ give evidence that Reid was one of the founders of empirical logic in Scottish philosophy. A recent publication of his notes on politics, from Birkwood collection of Aberdeen University, *Practical Ethics*, edited by Knud Haakonsen from Princeton University Press in 1990 has shown that Reid was a genuine political philosopher, interested in, and able to discuss, natural jurisprudence and politics.

I have found a small set of papers in Birkwood collection that apparently the lecture notes on political economy performed just after his succession of Adam Smith’s chair at Glasgow University.⁵⁾ Though his lectures on political economy were earlier ones among those of Scottish professors treating the subject, Reid seems

to have considered the issue much more profoundly and thoroughly than any other professor in Scottish Universities except Smith. Firstly, there are theoretical similarities in his arguments to Smith’s and they do not belong to the peripheral of Smithian economic theory. Natural price and useful labour systematically applied to the subject in Reid’s lectures. Secondly, there are significant distinctions among their views, too. Reid gave a detailed examination of natural price theory which he seems to have had once accepted, and highlighted the malfunction of it.

When we put all these observations together, we will inevitably come to the conclusion that Thomas Reid was not a “philosopher” in today’s sense, but an all mighty intellectual of the 18th century who could argue every theoretical issues of the time. If we were lazy enough to avoid reading manuscripts, we would never know who actually was “Thomas Reid”.

(3) Parallel lines

Nevertheless, it is obvious that these arguments have not answered Wolterstorff’s question “Why not?” I would like to suggest the possible answer to it by presenting an important case in the context of 18th century British mathematics.

It is well known that Thomas Reid was a precursor to Non-Euclidean geometry. But he mentioned this brilliant idea only briefly in the chapter “Of the geometry of

visible” in his first book. It is evident from the following statement that he was perfectly aware the fact that he was proposing a new geometry.

“The mathematical reader, I hope, will enter into these principles with perfect facility, and will as easily perceive that the following propositions with regard to visible figure and space, which we offer only as a specimen, may be mathematically demonstrated from them, and are no less true nor less evident than the propositions of Euclid, with regard to tangible figures”⁶⁾

Then the proposition 6th says,

“If two lines be parallel, -that is, every where equally distant from each other-they cannot both be straight”⁷⁾

The proposition 10th says,

“Of every right-lined triangle, the three angles taken together, are greater than two right angles”⁸⁾

Reading these passages, we cannot keep asking to Reid, why not publish the first full account of non-Euclidean geometry instead of writing complicated philosophical essays? If he had done so, his name could have been recorded in the history of modern mathematics.

I do not have an exact answer to the question. But I can suggest the background

in which Reid’s mathematical endeavours carried out and published. Colin MacLaurin, the prominent mathematician in 18th century Britain after Newton, and a professor of Aberdeen University when Reid was a student, had left evidence in his unpublished letter probably written in 1734 or 1735 that he was the person who found the theoretical scheme to give rational basis to calculus.

“There is a limit in these cases toward which the Ratio is continually approaching as the increments diminish; they never come to it while they have any assignable magnitude, but they approach so as to be nearer to it than by any assignable difference, and this is justly held the last ratio of Quantitiys.”⁹⁾

If we simply translate these words into mathematical symbols, we will get the modern definition of the limit of French mathematician, Augustin Louis Cauchy, in the 19th century.

MacLaurin is the first author who wrote the first theoretical book on calculus.¹⁰⁾ But it was a very strange book. He tried to build up the system of calculus only using geometrical demonstrations in the first part of the book. In the second part, he described modern calculus with the mathematical symbols and equations, but he insisted in the introduction to the part that all these demonstrations were already done in geometrical ways in the first part.

If we understand the context in which it was written, the reason why he wrote an important achievement of British mathematics in such a way is seemingly clear.

MacLaurin's book was written in order to hit back the criticism against calculus by George Berkeley in his *The Analyst* published in 1734. Berkeley wrote the book because he thought mathematicians ruined the "true religion" and the only way to fight them was to demonstrate their science had no more rational basis than Christian miracles. The anger held by mathematicians including MacLaurin when they attacked by Berkeley is easily seen from the beginning of the same letter.

"As you know me to be a sincere well-wisher to Religion and that at the same time the Mathematicks are my favorite and particular study, you will easily believe that I must consider the Analyst as a performance of a very extraordinary nature. . . it must appear very surprising to see him represent Mathematicians as generally Enemies to Religion and abusing the Authority they may have acquired by their Mathematical knowledge, by misleading unwary persons in matters of the greatest moment. . ." ¹¹⁾

Recent study of 18th century British mathematics has found that there are two ways of writing mathematics, geometrical expression, using words and figures and constructing an argument from the first

proposition to the last by demonstration, and algebraic expression using calculations with symbols. Only geometrical expression was found in published books. This is one of the reasons that the historians of mathematics believed that British mathematics declined after Newton just in the period when algebraic mathematics became prominent in the continent. But the truth is that British mathematicians employed algebraic expression in correspondences within their circles. The reason why British mathematicians used only geometrical expression in published books is rather evident from the letter of MacLaurin.

"In the following treatise [*The Treatise of Fluxions*] my chief care shall be to justify the Method of Fluxions in the first place and its celebrated Author [Newton] in the next upon such principles as I think the Analyst [Berkeley] himself will allow" ¹²⁾

"But I shall not content myself with demonstrations the principles of this Method [the method of geometrical demonstration] in the way that may be most conform to the practice of Mathematicians before it [calculus] was invented" ¹³⁾

MacLaurin thought, although calculation by symbols was heuristically more efficient, geometrical demonstration was more persuasive to general public, therefore the better way of presenting mathematics to

escape criticism from the public.

The examples of Reid and MacLaurin tell us that 18th century British mathematicians were not so stupid as thought to be in the historiography of mathematics. They also point to the following fact. There was not the one and only way of publishing ideas in the century, even in scientific writings. There were the several kinds of ways available. Manuscripts, letters and handwritten papers, served authors as the means to communicate ideas within the circles of specialists. They are public discourses as books were, and socially much safer ways of sending messages to narrowly targeted audience for the authors lived in a society where still no absolute freedom of speech allowed to exist, even though Britain was one of the most secure places for authors and publishers to work in the 18th century world. Continental mathematicians freely expressed their theories in their books with symbols and equations. Thus communicating “private” ideas only with the means of manuscripts apparently prevented the development of British mathematics, for science advances most rapidly when there are continuous and lively exchanges of ideas among many participants of scientific projects. But there were channels in the 18th century community of British mathematicians through which they could interact without being annoyed or even threatened by conservatives, religious fanatics or George Berkeley. It is possible that Reid considered his idea of non-

Euclidean geometry was premature or, for some reasons, not suited to make it known to public in an adequate form. The reason why he still put the hints of new geometry into his published book is that the argument was designed, not to stimulate mathematical researches, but to reply to another philosophically destructive statement on visual perception by George Berkeley.

(4) The “Utopian Paper”

More striking contrast between “published” and “not-published” will emerge when we observe the case of Reid’s paper that has eventually been published in 1990. It was believed that Reid’s political view was conservative. One of the clue to the judgment is his small essay entitled “Danger of Political Innovation,” published on 18th December 1794 in the midst of French Revolution, in a conservative journal *Glasgow Courier*. The essay says that every attempt inspired by new ideas to introduce rapid change in a political system could be harmful for a society and the existing British constitution has been well tested by experience and the best one that could imagine. The essay, however, was only the parts, the introduction and conclusion, of a longer paper read at the meeting of Glasgow Literary Society, an academic meeting of the faculty of the university, on 28th November 1794.

Knud Haakonsen published the whole of the paper held by Aberdeen University

Library, entitled "Some Thoughts on the Utopian system," and made it clear that the original intention of the paper was not to stand against the Revolution with people like Edmund Burke, but, on the contrary, to demonstrate the possibility of an ideal system of a society functioning without private property. After having discussed the danger of rapid change in existing political system, Reid explains the original intention of the paper, that is, to describe the best form of a society to promote human happiness and dignity.¹⁴⁾ The system he considered to be the ideal one is the society that abolished private ownership completely.

"In the Utopian System the People are fed, cloathed, have their Wants supplied by the Publick, the Labour of the People must therefore be directed by the Publick, in such manner that the produce of it may be sufficient in Kind & Quantity for this purpose. The Labourers in every Profession must be trained, directed and overseen, and the produce of their Labour received and stored by proper Officers."¹⁵⁾

The reason why he had such an extreme political view was that he had deep discontent with, and anger against, the existing market order of commercial society in which he lived. This made him write in the paper the following prophetic contempt of the system of private property ;

"Private Property has always been, & must

necessarily be very unequally divided. Time, & the Progress of Society, naturally tend to increase this inequality, till at last the greater part of a Nation, by their Poverty are depressed & dependent upon the few that are rich ; They must Labour, like Beasts of Burthen, to feed the Pride & Luxury of the Rich, & to earn a small Pittance for their own necessary Subsistance. By this Means both are equally corrupted"¹⁶⁾

However, while these words sound very similar to those of the radical prophetic preachers of the reformation period, the paper is still the product of the Enlightenment. To interpret the paper only in the contexts of Aristotelian-Christian political philosophy and Utopian literatures cannot be justified for the following three reasons. Firstly, as I said, Reid had his own economic theory. It was based upon both the notion of labour as the source of the wealth of nations and the self-regulating mechanism of the market. In the centre of his "socialist" designs of an utopia, there is the theoretical question very similar to the one expressed in Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*, that is, how to allocate labour most efficiently and without pains. As we know from his lecture notes on political economy at Glasgow University, Reid was well aware that a market economy worked well in producing national wealth but it was not the most efficient and ideal system of resource allocation.

Secondly, the utopian system described in the paper was equipped with the incentives for individuals to act properly. They are carefully planned to give strong drives to the members of a nation to act for public good from their own passion to compete and being praised by others. Eventually his system became, different from the one explained by Thomas More in his *Utopia*, a system of meritcrachy.

“It is a capital Defect in the System of private Property that the different Professions and Employments are not honoured & esteemed in proportion to their real Utility, & the Talents required for the discharge of them. The most usefull and necessary Employments are held in no Esteem. Nor indeed do they deserve it; because they are undertaken onely for the sake of private Interest. Their Utility to the publick is accidental, & not in the view of those who practise them.”¹⁷⁾

“In such a Society [Utopian society], there must be a Scale of Honour in which all the different Professions and Employments have a Rank assigned them, proportioned to their Utility and the Talents necessary for discharging them.”¹⁸⁾

This is the evidence that Reid understood well the strength and persuasive power of the arguments of Bernard Mandeville on the functions of private interest in a commercial society, just as David

Hume and Adam Smith did, and, at the same time, wanted to demonstrate that “the system of private property” was not the only way to mobilise individuals’ abilities and energies properly.

Thirdly, his arguments in the paper can be seen as a very extreme solution to the major issue of the Scottish Enlightenment, that is, “the wealth and virtue”. The social and political philosophers of the 18th century Scotland speculated to find the way to bring both the market system and the existence of a state as the ethical institution into harmony. It was one of the favorite themes of the discussion in the Select Society of Edinburgh, which was, as David Hume wrote, “the parliament” of the man of letters in the 18th century Scotland. For example, there are such “questions”, the themes of discussions at the meeting of the society, in *The Minutes* of the society owned by the National Library of Scotland:

1. Does the increase of trade and manufacture naturally promote the happiness of a nation?
2. Whether is a nation on a state of barbarity, or a nation of luxury and refined manners the happiest?
3. Whether doth landed or a commercial interest contribute most to the tranquility and stability of a state?
4. Whether luxury be advantageous to any state?
5. Whether a nation once sink in luxury

and pleasure can be retrieved and brought back to any degree of worth and excellencies?

6. Whether in the ancient times of every nation the people were not stronger, of body healthier, and longer lived than in late times?¹⁹⁾

These questions repeatedly asked and discussed many times in the meetings of other smaller societies in the 18th century Scotland and, as the result, created many books and hand-written papers. It might be said that this is one of the subjects that intellectuals in the country were obsessed and felt being obliged to answer theoretically in the period.

Thomas Reid differed, however, significantly from his colleagues of the Enlightenment in finding a “solution” to the question. In the writings of Scottish moral philosophers of the 18th century, private property had been the cornerstone of a commercial society, either from the modern understanding of the market society, in the case of Hume and Smith, or from Harringtonian republican ground as Adam Ferguson did, and opposed to Jean Jack Rousseau in *the Origin of Human Inequality*. Reid, who was a believer of Christian values and had keen interest in social problems like urban poverty and the conditions of jails, seems not being satisfied with the modern state based on private property, because it could corrupt the morality of a nation. It is possible that he had been seeking a system

that could replace a market economy and French revolution gave him both inspirations to develop his ideas and an opportunity to make the ideas “public” in a sense.

Who is, then, responsible for making his radical utopian ideas in the paper the esoteric doctrine of the Scottish Enlightenment? Paul Wood thinks that people belonged to the inner-circle of Reid was afraid that Reid’s favorable attitude toward French Revolution could ruined the social approval of Scottish moral philosophy in the midst of counter-revolutionary sentiments. Some passages in the paper could be critical. They decided to present Reid as a modest philosopher and published politically safer part of the paper. One of his students and his good friends, Dugald Stewart, wrote his biography that described Reid as a calm and respectable philosopher, although Stewart was not a conservative and spoke very radically in his lecture notes. In this case, discourses printed and handwritten were conveying contradictory messages and functioning completely differently.

On considering philosophical discourses of the 18th century, we cannot take American ideas of “publish or perish” for granted, for opportunities including the access to knowledge are hierarchically classified and differently given to people according to the ranks and classes with which they were identified in an 18th century society. There was no one and united public sphere in the

century. Therefore discourses spoken and written had different functions according to the types of spheres within which they circulated.

The books were oriented to the widest range of receivers, although many academic books were still circulated by book-list. Lectures at universities should be regarded as one of the ways to “publish” teachers’ views. They were often written down by the hands of students and beautifully bound, circulated and preserved in individuals’ libraries. It was a privilege to listen or read lectures, because very small number of young people had access to higher education in the century. Hand-written papers like “The Utopian Paper” were another instrument to make authors’ thoughts and opinions known to the far more limited number of receivers. Scientists were still used to communicate with each other by “academic correspondences,” for formal scientific communities were yet to be institutionalized in the next century. It was also a secure way of writing socially controversial themes and even mathematicians had such a kind of subjects. They were all “public” discourses, in the way that, although they were created to be circulated within privileged few, the communities within which they were spoken, written and transmitted were not “intimate spheres”, the circles of relatives and friends, but the associations and networks in which the members of them considered themselves engaged in something impor-

tant, something useful to a society, such as literary activities, scientific researches and policy making, in other words, engaged in something “public”, and they were supposed not to be private persons, but to be public persons when they were in the associations and networks.

However, public sphere has been always segmented, even in contemporary societies where, formally, information is considered to be open to everyone. There are legal and institutional frameworks in today’s society, the constitutional freedom of speech, academic societies, mass media, the nationwide and the world wide distribution of books or the system of public library, to guarantee every member of a society to be at least a receiver of information circulating in it. Furthermore, Internet supplies even the opportunity to be a sender, too. But substantially the most of population is still alienated by the lack of skills needed to get access to certain and valuable knowledge. In particular, both specialization and professional interest block the entry of ordinary people into the circulation network of scientific and political knowledge.

The segmentation in the 18th century is only different in kind. Jurgen Habermas’ original concept of public sphere has been criticized that his examples were bourgeois communities, small in scale and only wealthy and privileged people could join them. The circuit of information flow in the century was not only substantially, as

in the case of high illiteracy ratio, but also formally and institutionally divided due to the lack of institutional support to open up information to general public, such as the limited distribution of books and the existence of censorship and, generally, the class structure of societies. The largest and widespread institutions that assumed information flow were churches but naturally they only dealt with certain kind in very biased ways. Other institutions, universities and societies were only for selected people. It is very likely that senders in such a society sometimes consciously took advantage of the stratification of information flow, just like today's politicians of the asymmetry of information.

(5) The structure of "public sphere" and the variety of discourse in 18th century Scotland

Now the time to go back to Wolterstorff's question "Why not?" My answer is that Reid actually "published" his interesting and challenging ideas in a way or another. Or to use more precise expression, he created some forms of discourses based on his ideas that he himself thought worth sending, at least, to friendly, intelligent and careful receivers who were able to interpret the texts correctly as the sender intended. At the same time, he did not write books or printed papers about some subjects on which he had originality. In the case of "The Utopian Paper," receivers got

completely different information about the same issue according to the kinds of discourse to which they had access.

The study of 18th century manuscripts as the forms of discourses, as we have discussed here, shed light, not only on the nature and contents of the materials, but also on the very nature of the printed books of the same authors, for all these arguments inevitably bring us to the following question: What is a "book", or the meaning and intention of writing a "book", in the variety of discourses of 18th century writings we have observed? We could redefine the questions further like these; what are the "meanings" of the major works of the Scottish Enlightenment, such as *The Wealth of Nations*, *The History of Civil Society* and *An Inquiry into the Human Nature*? Are they really meant to be sincere confessions of the beliefs and the representations in the form of printed books of the conclusions of scientific investigations done by the authors as contemporary scientific papers are and, of course, pretend to be? Or are they rather the means of strategic actions of the authors who consciously employed their great rhetorical skills to manipulate readers' minds in order to create intended effects upon public sphere, just as contemporary political discourses are?

In other words, we are still not sure whether we are right in reading their "books" in the way that we read contemporary academic papers. However, one thing

is certain. The language of a book in the century was targeted to remote readers compared to other kinds of discourses available to authors. Books thus consist of the kind of discourses that were most distant from the intimate sphere to which the authors belonged; therefore it could be representing “formal” and “public” selves of the persons, rather than the individual and private existences of the authors.

Of course, contemporary scholars still can insist that the matters worth studying to them are the things that authors wanted to say to the wider public than their intimate circles consisted of their friends and colleagues. I have an objection to them; if we interpret the major texts of the Enlightenment in the way, we are in danger of naively taking the literal expressions of the books for granted, in other words, being “cheated” by 18th century writers.

Literary theory warns us that the “meaning” of a text is not self-evident. Seeking what an author really meant in a text is like peeling skins of an onion in order to find the core of it. Even diaries were written, not as the sincere confessions of authors, but to present authors’ self-images. I do not try to ignore the textuality of texts. It is true that texts exist relatively by themselves. They formed a world of “texts”, reflecting and relating with each other, creating cobwebs of references between words. But it is also self-evidently true that texts would never have existed, if there had been no authors who

had written them consciously, with intentions and purposes. Texts create their own histories, sometimes regardless of their creators’ expectations and strategies. But they are the products of speech acts and the every action to write something must have been activated by somebody’s desire at the first moment. In other words, there must be a human being behind the bulky volumes of papers called “classics”. The viewpoint of looking at 18th century texts under the light of discourse would reminds us of this very simple fact that, along with the textuality of a text, contextuality cannot be ignored, too.

Notes

- 1) Peter Kivy (ed), (1973) *Thomas Reid’s, Lectures on Fine Arts*, Martinus Nijhoff.
- 2) Nicholas Wolterstorff, (2001) *Thomas Reid and the Story of Epistemology*, Cambridge U. P.
- 3) Thomas Reid, *Lectures of Thomas Reid on Natural Philosophy* (1757-8), Aberdeen University Library, K. 106.
- 4) *John Campbell, 1775, The system of Logic, taught at Aberdeen 1763, by dr. Thomas Reid, now professor of moral philosophy of Glasgow*, Edinburgh University Library, DK 3.2.
- 5) Thomas Reid, Aberdeen University Library, MS2131/4/III/1-15.
- 6) Thomas Reid, (1994) *The Works of Thomas Reid*, vol. 1, Thoemmes Press, p. 148.
- 7) *Ibid.*, p. 148.
- 8) Colin MacLaurin, Stella Mills (ed.), (1982) *The Collected Letters of Colin MacLaurin*, Shiva Publishing Ltd., p. 148.
- 9) *Ibid.*, p. 431.

- 10) Colin MacLaurin, A. M., (1742) *A Treatise of Fluxions in Two Books*, Edinburgh.
- 11) *Ibid.*, p. 425.
- 12) *Ibid.*, p. 434.
- 13) *Ibid.*, p. 434.
- 14) "Having said so much with regard to changes in Governments which actually exist, whether violent or peaceable I proceed to what I consider abstractly chiefly intended in this Discourse; To that Form of political Society which seems to be best adapted to the Improvement and Happiness of Man." (Thomas Reid, (1990) *Practical Ethics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, p. 280.)
- 15) *Ibid.*, p. 284.
- 16) *Ibid.*, p. 286.
- 17) *Ibid.*, p. 290.
- 18) *Ibid.*, p. 290.
- 19) *Minutes of the Procedure of the Select Society*, National Library of Scotland, MS 23.1.1. (Graduate School of Economics, Nagoya University)