

NATURALISM AND COMMON SENSE

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My topic here is meta-philosophy, the question of how philosophy is properly done. For some years now, I've been developing a particularly austere, roughly naturalistic¹ approach to philosophical questions that I call Second Philosophy. It has seemed to me that one effective way to convey the spirit of Second Philosophy is to compare and contrast it with other more familiar methods, like transcendental or therapeutic philosophy.² Here I hope to pursue this sort of engagement with two other venerable schools of thought: Hume's Science of Man and Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense.

Hume presents a fitting starting point for any discussion of naturalism—even more so when Reid is on the agenda—so my first pass at a portrait of the Second Philosopher traces her relations to the Scientist of Man. Of course, Hume's cheerfully industrious inquirer³ eventually lands on the barren rock of skepticism, so we'll also take a second-philosophical look at the kinds of considerations that led poor Hume to his shipwreck.

This sets the stage for Reid.

I. Hume

The Second Philosopher is an entirely workaday inquirer, out to describe and understand the world in which she lives. She begins with ordinary perception and gradually develops more elaborate methods of observation, experimentation, theory formation, and testing; she corrects her prior beliefs and refines her methods as she goes. She's idealized to the extent that she's equally at home in everything from physics, chemistry, and astronomy to psycholinguistics, biology, and botany. Along the way, she comes to appreciate the usefulness of elementary logic and arithmetic, and eventually of more advanced mathematics for formulating and elaborating her account of worldly phenomena. Given that she's always keen to understand how her methods work when they do, and don't work when they don't, she comes to wonder, to take just one example, about logic: Why is logical inference reliable? What is the proper way to pursue the study of logic? What is the nature of its subject matter? How do we come

1. I'm using 'naturalism' here as a general term implying no more than a vague methodological kinship between philosophy and natural science. My goal is to trace how this idea plays out in Hume, Reid, and my own Second Philosophy.
2. See P. Maddy, *Second Philosophy*, (Oxford University Press, 2007); "Naturalism, Transcendentalism and Therapy," to appear in J. Smith and P. Sullivan (eds.), *Transcendental Philosophy and Naturalism* (Oxford University Press, 2011).
3. For example, B. Stroud, *Hume* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 1, sees in Hume 'the unbounded optimism of the enlightenment.'

to believe it? Is there only one correct logic? And so on. In these ways, she comes to ask questions traditionally regarded as philosophical—though she approaches them with the same tried-and-true methods she’s been honing from the start—and the result is an example of Second Philosophy.⁴

Now compare this with Hume’s description of the Scientist of Man,⁵ who proceeds by ‘experience and observation’ (intro., 7).⁶ He never ‘go[es] beyond experience, or establish[es] any principles which are not founded on that authority’ (intro., 10). As Scientists of Man, Hume concludes,

We must . . . glean up our experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life, and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men’s behavior in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures. Where experiments of this kind are judiciously collected and compar’d, we may hope to establish on them a science, which will not be inferior in certainty, and will be much superior in utility to any other of human comprehension. (intro., 10)

Though the Scientist of Man is an 18th-century figure and the Second Philosopher resides squarely in the 21st, though the Scientist of Man focuses on the human portion of the Second Philosopher’s more all-encompassing sphere of interest, there are obvious parallels. Notice in particular the approach Hume takes to describing the inquiry he has in mind. Though he speaks of ‘sciences’ and draws his method from Newton, he doesn’t seem inclined to offer what contemporary philosophers of science would call a ‘demarcation criterion,’ that is, a characterization, once and for all, of the methods that are proper to the Scientist of Man. Instead, Hume describes his inquirer’s starting point—experience, observation, and experimentation—draws our attention by example to the sort of thing he has in mind—the practices of the descendants of Lord Bacon, leading up to Newton—and uses ‘science’ as a rough-and-ready term for that sort of thing. My description of the Second Philosopher follows the same pattern.

Once he’s introduced his Scientist of Man, Hume presumably begins the *Treatise* by adopting the persona and conducting his philosophizing in that mode. This has also been my own practice with the Second Philosopher; I adopt her perspective and attempt to generate some Second Philosophy. This approach invites the question: What stance is required for describing the Scientist of Man or the Second Philosopher in the first place? Was Hume functioning as a Scientist of Man even in the Introduction to the *Treatise*, or was some other perspective needed to get the project off the ground? Examining the text, we find

4. See Maddy (2007), Part III.

5. I allow myself a slight reconstruction of Hume’s opening pages, to bring them into a closer parallel with my presentation of the Second Philosopher, but I don’t think this substantially distorts Hume’s intentions.

6. All references to Hume come from his *A Treatise of Human Nature*, D. and M. Norton (eds.) (Oxford University Press, 2000 [1739]), unless otherwise indicated. I use the common book/part/section/paragraph citations, with ‘intro.’ and paragraph number for the Introduction.

Hume beginning with a series of historical and sociological observations about the factors that have produced a widespread disdain for metaphysics, suggesting it would be ‘vain and presumptuous’ to suppose that the truth should be ‘easy and obvious’ (intro., 3), proposing the loosely characterized empirical method as more promising than the ineffective methods of the past.⁷ None of this goes beyond the range of the Scientist of Man, as we’ve described him so far. My own presentation of the Second Philosopher is, if anything, more circumspect: I simply describe her behavior in rough-and-ready terms, without appeal to a demarcation criterion; I don’t advocate for her approach, leaving that evaluation to the reader’s own judgment; and I don’t spend time ‘decrying all those [systems of philosophy] which have been advanced before [this one]’ (intro., 1).⁸

Given these broad similarities between the Scientist of Man and the Second Philosopher, between Hume’s approach and one fairly strict version of contemporary naturalism, I think we can’t help but feel a jolt of surprise at what turns up on the very next page, the first page of the body of the *Treatise*. Instead of describing ‘men’s behavior in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures’ (intro., 10), Hume begins with a detailed examination of impressions and ideas, apparently by introspection into his own mental experience. Obviously this is at odds with the sort of approach a Second Philosopher might take to a study of human perception: She’d look into everything from the composition of ordinary objects and their tendencies to absorb and reflect light to the structure of the eye, the neural pathways to the brain, and the processing that takes place there. Her assessment of the reliability of our perceptual beliefs would involve an analysis of the conditions under which our perceptual mechanisms tend to function poorly and well, conditions ranging from the state of the perceiving subject to the ambient lighting, the distances in question, and the composition of the scene itself. Somewhere in all this there would be a study of the phenomenology of perceptual experience, including, no doubt, introspective evidence, but this would not be the leading subject of the inquiry.

What accounts for this stark divergence? Part of the answer may lie in Hume’s allegiance to the Theory of Ideas, but if so, this is only implicit at the outset of the *Treatise*. That theory becomes explicit only much later, at the end of Part 2, where Hume announces that

‘Tis universally allowed by philosophers, and is besides pretty obvious in itself, that nothing is ever really present with the mind but its perceptions or

7. He also spends some time eschewing hypotheses in good Newtonian fashion (intro., 8), which was certainly good scientific methodology at the time. In P. Maddy, “How Applied Mathematics Became Pure,” *Review of Symbolic Logic*, 1 (2008), pp. 16–41, and *Defending the Axioms* (Oxford University Press, 2011), chapter 1, I argue that times have changed.
8. Stroud has a somewhat different concern in his “Review of *Second Philosophy*,” *Mind*, 118 (2009), pp. 500–3: not that I, in describing Second Philosophy, use methods unavailable to the Second Philosopher; rather, I respond to and enter into discussions that a true Second Philosopher wouldn’t be motivated to address. For some thoughts on this question, see Maddy (2008).

impressions and ideas, and that external objects become known to us only by those perceptions they occasion. (1.2.6.7)

This passage refers us forward to the argumentation in Part 4, which we'll take up in a moment. Stroud describes Hume's attitude this way:

This is a precursor of what has come to be called the 'sense-datum' theory of perceiving, and it has been held in one form or another by most philosophers since Descartes. . . . The legacy of Descartes, Locke and others made that part of the theory of ideas completely uncontroversial to Hume [and] Hume is not alone in this. There is very little argument for the basic principles of the theory of ideas in Locke, either, but Berkeley's *Dialogues* provide an almost complete catalogue of the familiar considerations in support of some such view.⁹

Hume's largely unexamined belief in the Theory of Ideas must help explain why he is happy to start the *Treatise* on the topic of impressions and ideas.

But what about Hume's inquirer, the Scientist of Man—are we to understand him as implicitly presupposing the Theory of Ideas from the outset, from the very beginning of Part 1?¹⁰ If we understand the *Treatise* as 'an inquiry . . . a structured sequence of discoveries and reflections that Hume is narrating for his reader,'¹¹ indeed as a narrative that serves to track the progress¹² of the Scientist of Man, then there's every reason to suppose that the full force of the Theory of Ideas isn't felt until the actual argumentation of Part 4: It isn't presupposed, it's discovered in the course of the Scientist's investigations.¹³ On the basis of meticulous case studies, Broughton argues that

Hume begins the *Treatise* by studying our general pre-reflective beliefs, ideas and outlooks, *and by using them*, or at least using those among them that are, we agree, the most careful, attentively considered, and broadly speaking, reasonable. His method enjoins him to be an observer of human life, and we observe people's lives by listening to what they say and seeing what they do, both in their (our) relations to one another and in their (our) relations to

9. Stroud (1977), p. 26.

10. If so, Hume's Scientist of Man may suffer from a disorder similar to the one J. Broughton diagnoses in Descartes's meditator in her *Descartes's Method of Doubt* (Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 28–32: Both begin their inquiries in ways that are motivated by conclusions they will reach only much later.

11. See p. 166 of J. Broughton, "What Does the Scientist of Man Observe?" *Hume Studies*, 18 (1992), pp. 155–168.

12. J. Broughton, "Hume's Voyage," in J. Jenkins et al. (eds.), *Persons and Passions* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 174–191, distinguishes a progress, which successfully 'moves us from a less-good position to a better one' (p. 175), from an inquiry, which may not, and argues that the Scientist of Man traces an inquiry but not a progress. I don't intend 'progress' here to involve any more than her 'inquiry.'

13. Cf. Stroud (1977), p. 27: '[T]he fact that Hume . . . thinks [the theory of ideas] is "pretty obvious in itself," should not suggest that he thinks he knows it in some way other than by observation or experience. For him, it is known by the same kind of "cautious observation of human life" that informs him of most of the rest of his philosophical system.'

various things and events . . . the scientist of man [is] perfectly entitled to observe people seeing, hearing (etc.) things.¹⁴

Here we see the Scientist of Man apparently starting out from the same point as the Second Philosopher, and only subsequently being led to the Theory of Ideas.

Let's suppose then that Hume begins where he does because he knows where he's going to end up, but that the impressions and ideas described by the Scientist of Man are taken, at the outset, to be ordinary sensory perceptions of the world.¹⁵ What this doesn't explain is what motivates the Scientist of Man to focus so resolutely on his own experience instead of embracing a broader investigation of how perception functions in the world, a study closer to the Second Philosopher's. In the paper just cited, Broughton floats some possible explanations¹⁶: that topics like the physical composition of the objects we perceive, optics, and the physiology of sensation fall to the Natural Philosophers, not to the Scientists of Man, or that 'in general, early modern associationist psychologists neither found much explanatory use for physiology nor succeeded in using psychology to confirm the (largely speculative) physiology they did invoke.'¹⁷ The first of these doesn't strictly help with our concern; if physics, optics, and physiology fall outside the range of the Scientist of Man, our question becomes: How can the Scientist of Man expect to assess the reliability of perception without cooperation from the Natural Philosophers? How can you tell when perception is and isn't properly reporting the properties of what's perceived without consulting your best account of the actual properties of what's perceived? The second may help explain why Hume didn't appeal to physiology, but that leaves the question of physics, optics, and the rest.

It seems to me there's a more principled reason why Hume narrows the Scientist of Man's inquiry as he does, one that traces back to the opening strains of the Introduction. Before he even reaches his proposal that the 'experimental method of reasoning' be applied to 'moral subjects' (subtitle), he declares:

'Tis evident, that all the sciences have a relation, greater or less, to human nature; and that however wide any of them may seem to run from it, they still return back by one passage or another. Even *Mathematics, Natural*

14. Broughton (1991), pp. 160, 166.

15. Siding, more or less, with the vulgar: 'In general all the unthinking and unphilosophical part of mankind (that is, all of us, at one time or other) . . . suppose their perceptions to be their only objects, and never think of double existence internal and external, representing and represented' (1.4.2.36); 'Tis certain, that almost all mankind, and even philosophers themselves, for the greatest part of their lives . . . suppose, that the very being, which is intimately present to the mind, is the real body or material substance' (1.4.2.38).

16. Broughton (1992) also suggests that Hume may have ignored physiology because he took for granted 'All that experience can tell us is what sensations we have, what the physiology of sensation is, and what our states of consciousness are. Experience cannot tell us the further why or how of it' (p. 165)—an appeal to the Newtonian principle of eschewing hypotheses (see footnote 7). This is less directly relevant to the concern I'm addressing in the text.

17. Broughton (1992), p. 168.

Philosophy, and *Natural Religion*, are in some measure dependent on the science of MAN. . . . There is no question of importance, whose decision is not compriz'd in the science of man; and there is none, which can be decided with any certainty, before we become acquainted with that science. In pretending therefore to explain the principles of human nature, we in effect propose a compleat system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security . . . the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences.¹⁸ (intro., 4, 6, 7)

Only after all this does he continue, 'the only solid foundation we can give to [the Science of Man] itself must be laid on experiment and observation' (ibid., 7).

Now if the Science of Man is to provide an epistemic foundation for physics, optics, physiology, and so on, then there's no mystery as to why the Scientist of Man doesn't appeal to these sciences in the course of his analysis of perception: to do so would be to use these sciences in the course of developing their own foundation! Broughton makes this observation in her more recent 'Hume's naturalism about cognitive norms':

Notice that Hume does not describe any reciprocal relation between the science of man and other sciences: he holds out no hope that natural philosophy, for example, might lead to changes and improvements in the science of man. His naturalism, then, does not involve seeking concepts or results from well-established, empirically based disciplines.¹⁹

Let me mention in passing a possible second-philosophical concern that Hume not only cuts the Scientist of Man off from the concepts and results of the other sciences but that he can't even properly pose the question of the reliability of perception without appeal to his best theories of the things purportedly perceived and the physical world they (and we) inhabit.

For that matter, I think this foundationalism—if I may use that word for the position just described—is problematic even from Hume's own point of view. If the Scientist of Man begins from ordinary observations of human beings and their interactions with the people and objects around them, if careful observations of this sort are to be regarded as unproblematic at the outset, then what possible objection could there be to careful observations of falling bodies, the properties of pea plants, or human anatomy? And if the Scientist of Man is warranted from the outset in applying the methods of Bacon and Newton to his

18. Unfortunately, I can't pretend to understand why Hume insists on this. His case for it appears to lie in the continuation of a sentence quoted above: 'Even *Mathematics*, *Natural Philosophy*, and *Natural Religion*, are in some measure dependent on the science of MAN; since they lie under the cognizance of men, and are judg'd of their powers and faculties' (intro., 4). Is the argument that we learn about the world by using our cognitive faculties, so our theory of the world is founded on our theory of our cognitive faculties? No doubt Hume has something better than this to offer, but I don't know what it is.

19. See p. 7 of J. Broughton, "Hume's Naturalism About Cognitive Norms," *Philosophical Topics*, 31 (2003), pp. 1–19.

data, why shouldn't he be warranted in applying those same methods to data of these other sorts? And if all this is correct, how can physics or botany or genetics or physiology be any less well founded than the Science of Man? Once the Science of Man becomes empirical, it's hard to see why it isn't just one empirical science among many, all capable of correcting and improving each other. If a conflict arises between the Science of Man and some other science, it flies in the face of proper scientific method to think one can know ahead of time which side of the equation will need adjustment.

So it's hard to see how the Scientist of Man, as described by Hume in the remainder of the Introduction, could arrive at the foundationalist position that Hume himself embraces there. Returning to the question raised a moment ago, perhaps Hume doesn't behave entirely as a Scientist of Man ought in setting out the proper role and function of the Science of Man; contrary to our earlier tentative assessment, perhaps Hume, in fact, occupies some other perspective as he's describing the character and methods of the Scientist of Man, a perspective from which this strong foundationalism is defensible for some reason or another.²⁰ This would raise a consistency problem for Hume himself—advocating one method while employing another—but it might manage to sustain the Scientist of Man as otherwise advertised, as the fully empirical inquirer we've been comparing with the Second Philosopher. The trouble with this line of thought is that it doesn't answer the question we're asking: Why does the Scientist of Man begin with a narrow focus on his own perceptions? When he gets down to business, Hume's Scientist of Man is apparently hobbled by the very foundationalism Hume enunciates in the Introduction. So I think we must conclude that Hume *is* behaving as a Scientist of Man as he understands that figure, and that, for all his fine qualities, the Scientist of Man is less purely empirical in his practice than advertised, less fully naturalistic an inquirer than the Second Philosopher.²¹

In any case, though Hume begins his inquiry with a flourish of 'experience and observation . . . careful and exact experiments . . . explaining all effects from the simplest and fewest causes . . . [never] going beyond experience' (intro., 7, 8), we all know that he ends up 'on the barren rock' of skepticism (1.4.7.1):

I begun this subject with premising, that we ought to have an implicit faith in our senses, and that this wou'd be the conclusion, I shou'd draw from the whole of my reasoning. But to be ingenuous, I feel myself *at present* of a quite contrary sentiment, and am more inclin'd to repose no faith at all in my senses . . . than to place in [them] such an implicit confidence. (1.4.2.56)

I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another. (1.4.7.8)

20. The obvious candidate is a prior commitment to traditional Empiricism, but I leave this aside here because I'm out to assess the prospects for a more naturalistic reading of Hume.

21. For that matter, the same goes for Quine despite his having coined the phrase 'epistemology naturalized.' See Maddy (2007), I.6.

Despite their disagreements, this outcome should concern the Second Philosopher: If the application of ordinary empirical methods, albeit without the aid of the special sciences, in fact leads to utter skepticism about the external world, she needs to figure out what's gone wrong.²² Notice that her reaction here differs from Hume's: He simply despairs of knowing the external world; her best guess is that we, in fact, have quite a number of reliable beliefs about the world, including many perceptual beliefs, so something must be wrong with the methods that brought Hume to his rock. If these methods are her methods, she figures they stand in urgent need of revision.

So how does Hume's line of thought lead him into skepticism? When he officially introduces and defends the Theory of Ideas, in 1.4.2.45, he alludes briefly to familiar considerations of perceptual relativity—

the seeming encrease and diminution of objects, according to their distance . . . the apparent alterations in their figure . . . the changes in their colour and other qualities from our sickness and distempers . . . (1.4.2.45)

—and the venerable appeal to perceptual illusions—

When we press one eye with a finger, we immediately perceive all the objects to become double, and one half of them to be remov'd from their common and natural position. (1.4.2.45)

He might also have mentioned hallucinations, with some standard case like the phantom pain in the severed limb. He concludes that

The only existences, of which we are certain, are perceptions, which [are] immediately present to us by consciousness. (1.4.2.47)

The argument has two threads: Perceptual relativity shows that at least some of our percepts are 'dependent on our organs, and the disposition of our nerves and animal spirits' (1.4.2.45), which external objects are not²³; in the case of

22. The intended contrast here is with ways of posing the skeptical challenge that explicitly adopt an extra-scientific viewpoint: We want an account of our knowledge of the world that doesn't depend on anything we now think we know about it (see, e.g., B. Stroud, "Epistemological Reflection on Knowledge of the External World," reprinted in his *Understanding Human Knowledge* [Oxford University Press, 2000 [1996]], pp. 122–138). I come back to this point in the concluding remarks below.
23. Another argument from perceptual relativity begins in 1.4.4.3: 'A man in a malady feels a disagreeable taste in meats, which before pleas'd him the most . . . That seems bitter to one, which is sweet to another . . . Colours reflected from the clouds change according to the distance of the clouds, and according to the angle they make with the eye and luminous body. Fire . . . communicates the sensation of pleasure at one distance, and that of pain at another.' Then, in 1.4.4.4, he concludes, 'when different impressions of the same sense arise from any object, every one of these impressions has not a resembling quality existent in the object. For as the same object cannot, at the same time, be endow'd with different qualities of the same sense, and as the same quality cannot resemble impressions entirely different; it evidently follows, that many of our impressions have no external model or archetype.' He then argues via essentially Berkeleyan considerations that primary qualities suffer from the same difficulty. I

double vision, since ‘we do not attribute a continu’d existence to both these perceptions’ (1.4.2.45), at least one must not be an external object. Finally, since all these percepts ‘have the same nature’ (1.4.2.45) and ‘from like effects we presume like causes’ (1.4.4.4), it follows that all of

our sensible perceptions are not possess of any distinct or independent existence. (1.4.2.45)²⁴

So those items we perceive directly, of which we’re directly aware, are fleeting entities, internal to our individual minds, with no external existence. This is the Theory of Ideas.

So, how does our sensory experience manage to deliver information about the world? Here, Hume tells us, philosophers have devised the ‘opinion of the double existence of perceptions and objects,’ according to which

the former are suppos’d to be interrupted, and perishing, and different at every return [and] the latter to be uninterrupted, and to preserve a continu’d existence and identity. (1.4.2.46)

This is what we now call a ‘representative theory of perception’: Our percepts or ideas or sense-data are known immediately; external objects are known mediately, by their means. Hume then offers this objection, which he takes to close the case:

The only conclusion we can draw from the existence of one thing to that of another, is by means of the relation of cause and effect, which shows, that there is a connexion betwixt them, and that the existence of one is dependent on that of the other. The idea of this relation is deriv’d from past experience, by which we find, that two beings are constantly conjoined together, and are always present at once to the mind. But as no beings are ever present to the mind but perceptions; it follows that we may observe a conjunction or relation of cause and effect betwixt perceptions, but can never observe it betwixt perceptions and objects. ‘Tis impossible therefore that from the existence of any of the qualities of the former, we can ever form any conclusion concerning the existence of the latter, or ever satisfy our reason in this particular. (1.4.2.47)

Here we have the radical skeptical conclusion that we can know nothing of the external world.

ignore this argument in the text because it seems to me to raise a number of irrelevant issues, for example, the thorny matter of what counts as ‘resemblance.’ If a percept encodes information about the environment in a way that’s accessible to the subject’s computational processes, is this enough to count as resemblance? If not, what more is required and why?

24. The shape of this argument is clearer in the 1.4.4.4 passage: ‘Many of the impressions of colour, sound, &c. are confest to be nothing but internal existences, and to arise from causes, which no way resemble them. These impressions are in appearance nothing different from the other impressions of colour, sound, & c. We conclude therefore that they are, all of them, deriv’d from a like origin.’

For the concerned Second Philosopher, two questions arise: Do the arguments from perceptual relativity, illusion, and hallucination actually establish the Theory of Ideas? and does the Theory of Ideas truly imply the skeptical conclusion? The first question will be a major theme in our discussion of Reid, so let me focus for now on the second question. The notion that the Theory of Ideas is the culprit in Hume's descent into skepticism is commonplace, so I'd hardly be bringing this up if I didn't intend to raise doubts. Let me try to sneak up on these.

To begin with, notice that Hume makes his case by arguing that causation—an association between ideas—can't connect an external object with an idea. Here it may appear that his controversial theory of causation is doing some essential work in undermining a representative theory of perception, but I think this can't be right. Granted, Hume has previously (in Part 3) traced causation to constant conjunction, but in these terms, there remain real causal relations in the world—the impact of a moving billiard ball on a stationary one causes the second to move—and he goes to some lengths to provide us with reliable principles of causal inference (1.3.15), including the rule 'same effect . . . same cause' that figured in the argument for the Theory of Ideas.²⁵ We're assuming it established, for the sake of argument, that we're immediately aware only of ideas of billiard balls and their constant conjunction, but to assume we aren't thereby mediately aware of the billiard balls themselves and *their* constant conjunction would be to beg the question currently at issue.

So we need to ask: Why couldn't the Scientist of Man, on the basis of his ideas, take note of the placement of external objects; observe people's introspective reports of their experiences and their perceptions; put these together with what he knows of eyes, nerves, and brains; and devise a causal explanation of why perceptual beliefs are generally reliable, and even of when they tend to go astray? Assuming, as we are, that the Theory of Ideas is true, why couldn't he discover in this way that objects under certain conditions of position and lighting cause changes in the retinas of people suitably equipped and attentive, that these changes cause further changes in the nerves and brains of these individuals, that these changes cause those individuals to become aware of certain subjective percepts, to do some conscious computational processing—call it inferring if you like²⁶—and then to report certain perceptual beliefs, and finally, that this process is generally reliable? I'm not supposing that this is what we *do* discover when we investigate human perception—this is an imaginary empirical theory—but the question before us now is whether or not a theory of double existence necessarily leads to skepticism, and the suggestion is that if the Theory of Ideas and a representative theory of perception were correct, there'd be no apparent obstacle to our finding this out empirically and assessing the reliability of our perceptual beliefs in the same way.

25. See J. Broughton, "Hume's Skepticism About Causal Inferences," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 64 (1983), pp. 3–18.

26. Imagine, for example, that we were consciously aware of the calculations performed by the visual system to extract distance information by stereopsis from the slightly different stimulations of our two retinas.

Now we know why Hume would reject this line of thought: because the Science of Man has to be in place before we can develop our theories of eye, nerves, brain, and so on, so we can't appeal to these in the course of our investigation of the Science of Man. Fair enough. But even without going into these various details drawn from the other sciences, why couldn't the Scientist of Man simply observe the conditions under which people tend to make perceptual reports and straightforwardly evaluate their overall reliability? Why couldn't he, in essence, regard the entire process described a moment ago as a black box and assess its performance in a rough and ready way by observing its track record? Perhaps Hume thinks he has already cast doubt on this kind of reasoning in the previous section of the *Treatise* (1.4.1), relying on arguments even sympathetic commentators find especially unconvincing.²⁷ But it seems to me that the problem is more fundamental than this, that it goes beyond disallowing appeal to the sciences or to probabilistic inferences and extends even to individual perceptual beliefs of the most straightforward kind.

To see this, suppose the Scientist of Man forms the simple perceptual belief that 'there's a rose in my garden' upon seeing one there under optimal conditions. Hume tells us that he intends his inquirer 'to have an implicit faith in [his] senses' (1.4.2.56), so the Scientist takes this particular belief to be well justified, based on that implicit faith. Now suppose he's confronted with Hume's argument for the Theory of Ideas, which, once again, we're taking to be sound; what should we expect his reaction to be? If he is, in fact, taking ordinary perception as a given, then it seems to me he would say, 'how surprising! I only directly perceive my subjective ideas; this is all that's accessible to my introspective gaze. So my perception of the rose in my garden must involve some added element, an indirect sort of perception that's somehow mediated by my idea of the rose. I wonder how that works?' In other words, he comes to a representative theory of perception. Finally, suppose he's then confronted with Hume's claim that a representative theory leads to radical skepticism. I submit that we might expect him to weigh his well-justified perception against the conclusion that we know nothing of external objects and to critically assess the steps leading up to the apparent conflict, just as the Second Philosopher would recommend. But as Hume's line of thought actually plays out, his simple perceptual beliefs have enough *psychological* force to keep him from joining Berkeley in some form of phenomenalism, but not enough *epistemic* force to prompt him to re-examine his argumentation and the assumptions on which it rests.²⁸ Instead, he simply draws his skeptical conclusion.

This suggests a more nuanced portrait of Hume's inquirer. The Scientist of Man doesn't in fact begin with implicit faith in his senses, or with the Theory of Ideas, either. Rather, he begins with the stipulation that all his studies must be founded on the Science of Man and that the Science of Man itself not only begins from introspection of his experiences, but begins from such

27. See, for example, R. Fogelin, *Hume's Skeptical Crisis* (Oxford University Press, 2009), chapter 3.

28. As J. Broughton observes in "The Inquiry in Hume's *Treatise*," *Philosophical Review*, 113 (2004), pp. 537–56: 'A different philosopher might have questioned the authority of [his cognitive] norms rather than accept such a negative outcome' (p. 547).

introspection alone, unaided by any other knowledge of the world, particular or general. He takes for granted, at the beginning, that what he introspects are straightforward perceptions of that world, so that ordinary perceptual beliefs are available to him and the restriction isn't much felt. But when the Theory of Ideas is finally established in Part 4, the connection between introspection and simple perceptual belief is severed: Perception only tells us directly about ideas, not about roses, so our beliefs about roses now stand in need of defense. Since simple perceptual beliefs have no independent standing, since there is in fact no 'implicit faith,' that defense must proceed purely from introspection, and thus we're effectively caught behind the Veil of Perception. If this is right, once again, it isn't the Theory of Ideas that leads Hume to his skepticism; it's his underlying foundationalism²⁹—and that foundationalism is far more traditional and pervasive than it first appears.³⁰

No doubt this reading of Hume is debatable, at least as much as they all are and probably considerably more so, but by now I think it should at least be clear that Hume's inquirer is a far cry from the Second Philosopher and that she needn't worry that her own methods will lead her inevitably down Hume's road to a skeptical conclusion. Even if there were second-philosophically persuasive evidence for the Theory of Ideas, an assumption we haven't questioned for now, Hume's route from there to radical skepticism depends on auxiliary premises she has no reason to accept, all stemming from Hume's insistence on the foundational role of the Science of Man and its introspective starting point. Let's now turn to Reid, Hume's admirer and critic, the self-proclaimed Philosopher of Common Sense.

II. Reid

Reid begins his *Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense*, sounding very much like Hume in the opening pages of the *Treatise*:

29. Perhaps Hume's account of how our idea of external existence is derived from impressions also plays a role in motivating his skepticism. (See, e.g., p. 83 of R. Fogelin, "Hume's Skepticism," in D. Norton [ed.], *Cambridge Companion to Hume* [Cambridge University Press, 1993], pp. 90–116: 'A system of beliefs can be discredited by revealing its disreputable provenance . . . when *empirical investigation* lays bear the actual mechanisms that lead us to embrace [our belief in the external world], we are immediately struck by their inadequacy.' Broughton (2003), p. 19, takes the opposite position: 'Note that Hume is not troubled by the confusions involved in the *production* of the vulgar idea of body; what troubles him is the failure of the vulgar and philosophical beliefs to meet our norms of consistency and causal reasoning.') As we read through the torturous twists and turns Hume pursues in his quest for the source of our idea of external existence, it's not hard to imagine Kant and Reid drawing a decidedly un-Humean conclusion from the proceedings—if it's not in the pure sensory data, and it obviously is there in our perceptual beliefs, then there must be some other element involved—and to feel some considerable sympathy for their position!
30. Even if something like this correctly diagnoses the sources of Hume's descent into skepticism, it doesn't explain why so many contemporary philosophers, including those who disagree with Hume on many points, still find his transition from the Theory of Ideas to radical skepticism so easy to accept. This is a question for another occasion.

Wise men now agree, or ought to agree in this, that there is but one way to the knowledge of nature's works; the way of observation and experiment. By our constitution, we have a strong propensity to trace particular facts and observations to general rules, and to apply such general rules to account for other effects. . . . This procedure of understanding is familiar to every human creature in the common affairs of life, and it is the only one by which any real discovery in philosophy can be made.³¹

He makes the familiar appeal to Newton³²:

The man who discovered that cold freezes water, and that heat turns it into vapour, proceeded on the same general principles, and in the same method, by which Newton discovered the law of gravitation and the properties of light . . . he who philosophizes by other rules . . . mistakes his aim.³³

In the end

All that we know of the body, is owing to anatomical dissection and observation, and it must be by an anatomy of the mind that we can discover its powers and principles. (op. cit.)

In all this, Reid's *Philosopher of Common Sense* sounds like a close cousin of the *Scientist of Man*.³⁴

There's considerably more methodological reflection in the first chapter of Reid's *Inquiry* (1764) and the first essay of his later *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), but what must strike us most forcefully after our experience with Hume is this: When we turn the page to the second essay, 'On the powers we have by means of our external senses,' we find not introspective reports but a detailed discussion of 'the organs of sense,' of

The effluvia of bodies drawn into the nostrils with the breath . . . the medium of smell; the undulations of the air . . . medium of hearing; and the rays of light passing from visible bodies to the eye . . . the medium of sight.³⁵

We hear of 'the impressions made on the organs of sense' being 'communicated to the nerves, and by them to the brain'³⁶; we receive summaries of all

31. See I.1, pp. 11–12, of T. Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense*, D. Brookes (ed.) (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997 [1764]).

32. As with Hume (see footnote 7), the Newtonian disdain for hypotheses is present here, too (see Reid [1764], I.1, p. 12). Reid cites Descartes's vortices, a particularly telling example (see Maddy [2008], pp. 21, 27, or [2011], chapter 1).

33. Reid (1764), I.1, p. 12.

34. This may just be a stylistic variation, but given how differently they end up, I can't help noting that where Hume says we should never go 'beyond experience' (intro., 8), Reid (1764), I.1, p. 12, says we should never go beyond 'just induction from facts.'

35. See II.2, p. 74, of T. Reid (1785), *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, D. Brookes (ed.) (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002). See also Reid (1764), §VI.21.

36. Reid (1785), II.2, p. 75.

that's currently known about these processes, and of the wayward hypotheses philosophers have added and their ill effects. Unlike most philosophical treatments, the chapters of the *Inquiry* take up smell, taste, hearing, touch, and sight in that order, patiently sorting out the differences and interrelations. The discussion of perception in the second *Essay* makes confident appeal to the geometry and optics of vision, to the structure of the eye, to experiments in human perception, and even to comparisons with animals or 'brutes.' There are even passages leaning toward something very like developmental psychology.³⁷

When it comes to investigating the operations of the mind itself,³⁸ Reid carefully reviews the available methods. Given the state of knowledge in the late 18th century, it's again unsurprising that he doesn't include the hope of information from physiology, let alone neuroscience. For the experiential side of the mind, 'the chief and proper source . . . of knowledge is accurate reflection upon the operations of our own minds.'³⁹ Reid emphasizes that this

37. See, for example, Reid (1785), II.22, pp. 248–9. In the poignant Reid (1764), I.2, p. 15, this is more a dream than a reality: 'Could we obtain a distinct and full history of all that hath passed in the mind of a child, from the beginning of life and sensation, till it grows up to the use of reason; how its infant faculties began to work, and how they brought forth and ripened all the various notions, opinions, and sentiments, which we find in ourselves when we come to be capable of reflection; this would be a treasure of natural history, which would probably give more light into the human faculties, than all the systems of philosophers about them since the beginning of the world.' Alas, Reid despairs: 'It is in vain to wish for what nature has not put within the reach of our power. Reflection, the only instrument by which we can discern the powers of the mind, comes too late to observe the progress of nature, in raising them from their infancy to perfection' (op. cit.). Of course, this is just the sort of thing contemporary cognitive scientists have been able to chart (see Maddy [2007], §§ III.5 and IV.2.ii, for summaries and references to some of this work).

38. Reid is a confirmed dualist—see, for example, Reid (1785), II.4, pp. 87–88: '[S]ome Philosophers . . . imagined that man is nothing but a piece of matter so curiously organized, that the impressions of external objects produce in it sensation, perception, remembrance, and all the other operations we are conscious of. . . . This [is a] foolish opinion . . . If one should tell of a telescope so exactly made as to have the power of seeing . . . it is the same absurdity to think that the impressions of external objects upon the machine of our bodies, can be the real efficient cause of thought and perception'—but this doesn't keep him from regarding his study as an empirical one. In his study of 18th-century psychology, G. Hatfield, "Remaking the Science of Mind: Psychology as Natural Science," in C. Fox, R. Porter, and R. Wokler (eds.), *Inventing Human Science* (University of California Press, 1995), pp. 184–231, notes that 'Many considered it to be a natural science based on experience, including those who considered themselves to be studying an immaterial substance . . . if one believes that immaterial entities exist and that some of them inhabit human bodies, it makes good sense to seek to determine the powers and capacities of such substances empirically, by studying the manifestation of the mind in the behavior of others, and in one's own experience of mental phenomena' (pp. 187–8).

R. Nichols points out in *Thomas Reid's Theory of Perception* (Oxford University Press, 2007), chapter 1, that Reid's focus on the operations of the mind often allows him to sidestep questions of substance (e.g., pp. 20–21), but worries that Reid will ultimately be forced 'to place the mind outside the realm of science' (p. 37). In his unpublished replies to Priestley's materialism, Reid deploys the Newtonian admonition against hypotheses, without notable success (see A. Tapper, "Reid and Priestley on Method and the Mind," in J. Haldane and S. Read, *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid*, [Blackwell, 2003], pp. 98–119).

39. Reid (1785), I.5, p. 56.

introspection is far from infallible; his discussion comes with repeated cautions on the various difficulties and pitfalls, and admonitions to care and practice in cultivating and improving one's powers of observation.⁴⁰ But unlike Hume, Reid doesn't limit our range of evidence even here to introspection; he describes two other sources as well.

The first comes as a surprise to those of us who imagine that ordinary language philosophy was invented in Oxford in the mid-20th century:

The language of mankind is expressive of their thoughts, and of the various operations of their minds. The various operations of the understanding, will, and passions, which are common to mankind, have various forms of speech corresponding to them in all languages, which are signs of them, and by which they are expressed: And a due attention to the signs may, in many cases, give considerable light to the things signified by them.⁴¹

Of course not all features of the mind are on display in language:

We can only expect, in the structure of languages, those distinctions which all mankind in the common business of life have occasion to make. (op. cit.)

This might easily be mistaken for a more recent declaration from Austin:

Our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing, and the connexions they have found worth marking, in the lifetimes of many generations: these surely are likely to be more numerous, more sound, since they have stood up to the long test of the survival of the fittest, and more subtle, at least in all ordinary and reasonably practical matters, than any that you or I are likely to think up in our arm-chairs of an afternoon—the most favored alternative method.⁴²

Even the dig at a priori philosophizing might resonate with Reid. In his scholarly commentary, Lehrer remarks, 'I have no evidence of J. L. Austin

40. Reid (1785), pp. 59–64. Reid distinguishes our 'consciousness' of the mind's operations—all men are conscious of the operations of their own minds, at all times, while they are awake' (Reid [1785], I.6, p. 58)—from 'reflection,' which involves active attention to those operations (see Reid [1785], VI.1, pp. 421–2). J.-C. Smith, "Reid and the Contemporary View of Consciousness," in J.-C. Smith (ed.), *Historical Foundations of Cognitive Science* (Kluwer, 1990), pp. 139–59, argues that consciousness is the interior counterpart to sensation, and reflection the counterpart to perception. In any case, it's reflection that plays a central role in Reid's investigation of the mind, and accurate reflection requires both skill and extensive practice (see Reid [1785], I.6, p. 59). (This point comes up below, in connection with Reid's first objection to the Theory of Ideas.) I use the term 'introspection' more or less for Reid's 'reflection' on the acts of one's mind.

41. Reid (1785), I.5, p. 56.

42. See p. 182 of J.L. Austin, "A Plea for Excuses," reprinted in his *Philosophical Papers*, third edition, J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock (eds.) (Oxford University Press, 1979 [1956]), pp. 175–204.

having read Reid. I conjecture that Moore was the conduit of Reidian philosophy to twentieth-century Cambridge.⁴³

The similarities here run deep. Both Reid and Austin begin from a keen appreciation for the many ways misuse of ordinary words and failure to define technical terms can distort our understanding⁴⁴: for examples, see Reid, on 'idea' and 'impression,'⁴⁵ or Austin, on 'real' and 'direct.'⁴⁶ Both bemoan the ill effects of false dichotomies⁴⁷; both regard the use of mockery as often the most appropriate response to views that fly in the face of common sense.⁴⁸ Both quite reasonably allow that ordinary language is sometimes shaped by ignorance and prejudice, but both are optimistic that we have the tools necessary to uncover these lapses.⁴⁹ Both also look unabashedly to

43. See p. 93 of K. Lehrer, *Thomas Reid* (Routledge, 1989). In this passage, Lehrer is discussing speech act theory, which also has its precursor in Reid, not the more general recommendation that philosophers attend to ordinary language, but the resemblance is clear in both cases. Lehrer traces the direct influence of Reid on Moore in his "Reid's Influence on Contemporary American and British Philosophy," in S. Barker and T. Beauchamp (eds.), *Thomas Reid: Critical Interpretations* (Philosophical Monographs, 1976), pp. 1–7.
44. For example, Reid (1785), I.1, p. 38: 'When we use common words, we ought to use them in the sense in which they are most commonly used by the best and purest writers in the language; and, when we have occasion to enlarge or restrict the meaning of a common word, or give it more precision than it has in common language, the reader ought to have warning of this, otherwise we shall impose upon ourselves and upon him.' For example, J.L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, G.J. Warnock (ed.) (Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 19: 'Thus, it is quite plain that the philosophers' use of "directly perceive," whatever it may be, is not the ordinary, or any familiar use. . . . But we are given no explanation or definition of this new use—on the contrary, it is glibly trotted out as if we were all quite familiar with it already.'
45. For a start, see the relevant passages of 'Explication of words' (Reid [1785], I.1, pp. 27–36), but discussions of these words run throughout Reid's writings.
46. For example, see Austin (1962), pp. 14–19, 62–77.
47. For example, Reid (1785), I.7, p. 67: 'There is not a more fruitful source of error in this branch of philosophy, than the division of things which are taken to be complete when they are not really so.' For example, Austin (1962), p. 4: 'The question, do we perceive material things or sense-data, no doubt looks very simple—*too* simple. . . . There is no *one* kind of thing that we "perceive" but many *different* kinds, the number being reducible if at all by scientific investigation and not by philosophy.'
48. With Reid, this is an official doctrine: 'It is in vain to reason with a man who denies [common sense]. . . . To discountenance absurdity, Nature hath given us a particular emotion, to wit, that of ridicule. . . . the novelty of an opinion to those who are too fond of novelties; the gravity and solemnity with which it is introduced; the opinion we have entertained of the author; its apparent connection with principles already embraced, or subserviency to interests which we have at heart; and, above all, its being fixed in our minds at a time of life when we receive implicitly what we are taught; may cover its absurdity, and fascinate the understanding for a time. But if ever we are able to view it naked, and stripped of those adventitious circumstances from which it borrowed its importance and authority, the natural emotion of ridicule will exert its force' (Reid [1785], VI.4, pp. 460, 462, 463). With Austin, the method is simply used: For example, 'if we are going to talk about "real," we must not dismiss as beneath contempt such humble but familiar expressions as "not real cream"; this may save us from saying, for example, or seeming to say that what is not real cream must be a fleeting product of our cerebral processes' (Austin [1962], pp. 63–64).
49. For example, Reid (1785), I.1, pp. 26–27: 'A Philosopher is, no doubt, entitled to examine even those distinctions that are to be found in the structure of all languages; and, if he is able to shew that there is no foundation for them in the nature of the things distinguished; if he can point to some prejudice common to mankind which has led them to distinguish things that are not really different; in that case, such a distinction may be imputed to a vulgar error, which

science.⁵⁰ The main difference, it seems to me, is that Reid is interested in the broad picture of the human mind—of how it perceives the world—so he attends mostly to what we nowadays call ‘linguistic universals’:

There may be peculiarities in a particular language, of the causes of which we are ignorant, and from which, therefore, we can draw no conclusion. But whatever we find common to all languages, must have a common cause; must be owing to some common notion or sentiment of the human mind.⁵¹

In contrast, Austin focuses on narrower issues, often in moral philosophy, which leads him to a more fine-grained examination, for example, of the notion of excuses, conducted almost exclusively in English.⁵² But this appears to be a difference of focus, not of method, and the method itself seems perfectly amenable to the Second Philosopher.⁵³

Reid’s final source of information about the operations of the mind—after introspection and attention to ordinary language—is careful observation of our fellow humans. First their behavior:

The actions of men are effects: Their sentiments, their passions, and their affections, are the causes of those effects; and we may, in many cases, form a judgment of the cause from the effect.⁵⁴

For example,

It is obvious, from the conduct of men in all ages, that man is by his nature a social animal; that he delights to associate with his species; to converse, and to exchange good offices with them. (op. cit.)

ought to be corrected in philosophy.’ (Reid points out such a vulgar error, a false analogy, in our tendency to treat the mind as ‘some subtle matter, like breath or wind . . . in almost all languages’ (Reid [1785], II.17, p. 205. For another example, see I.1, pp. 25–26.) For example, Austin (1956), p. 185: ‘[I]t must be added too, that superstition and error and fantasy of all kinds do become incorporated in ordinary language and even sometimes stand up to the survival test (only, when they do, why should we not detect it?).’

50. Of course, Reid appeals to science throughout. For Austin, for example, see his (1956), p. 189: ‘[T]he third source-book is psychology, with which I include such studies as anthropology and animal behavior . . . some varieties of behavior, some ways of acting or explanations of doing actions, are here noticed and classified which have not been observed or named by ordinary men and hallowed by ordinary language.’

51. Reid (1785), I.5, p. 56.

52. For example, see the priceless Austin (1956), p. 185: ‘You have a donkey, so have I, and they graze in the same field. The day comes when I conceive a dislike for mine. I go to shoot it, draw a bead on it, fire: the brute falls in its tracks. I inspect the victim, and find to my horror that it is *your* donkey. I appear on your doorstep with the remains and say—what? “I say, old sport, I’m awfully sorry, etc., I’ve shot your donkey *by accident?*” or “*by mistake?*” Then again, I go to shoot my donkey as before, draw a bead on it, fire—but as I do so, the beasts move, and to my horror yours falls. Again the scene on the doorstep—what do I say? “By mistake?” Or “by accident?”’ To be fair, Reid is capable of some subtle distinctions of his own (see, e.g., Reid [1785], I.1, pp. 34–35).

53. For a more complete second-philosophical discussion of Austin’s method, see Maddy (2011).

54. Reid (1785), I.5, p. 57.

Here we find the behavioral study of men in the marketplace that was so unexpectedly missing in Hume. But evidence from their conduct isn't all Reid gathers from observation of his fellows; their opinions can also be illuminating:

The opinions of men may be considered as the effects of their intellectual powers. . . . Even the prejudices and errors of mankind, when they are general, must have some cause no less general; the discovery of which will throw some light upon the frame of human understanding. (op. cit.)

Indeed, Reid suggests, this is one of the main benefits of studying the history of philosophy.

After our recent encounter with Hume, I think we can all agree that here, with Reid, we find ourselves in a completely different world, undertaking a completely different type of inquiry—and one dramatically more congenial to the Second Philosopher's sensibilities. Given that Hume and Reid begin with such similar-sounding rhetoric, we want to know how Reid manages to navigate so different a course. Part of the answer, of course, lies in his well-known critique of the Theory of Ideas. Reid relates with gusto how Descartes embraced this theory, how Locke and Berkeley followed in his footsteps, and how Hume drew the ultimate conclusion of radical skepticism: Descartes 'did what he could to shut it out,' Berkeley gave up the material world to preserve 'the world of spirits,' but Hume 'wantonly sapped the foundation of this partition, and drowned all in a universal deluge.'⁵⁵ How should we respond to this calamity? Reid answers:

A traveler of good judgment may mistake his way, and be unawares led into a wrong track; and while the road is fair before him, he may go on without suspicion, and be followed by others; but when it ends in a coal-pit, it requires no great judgment to know that he hath gone wrong, nor perhaps to find out what misled him.⁵⁶

With the Second Philosopher, Reid suggests that the skeptical conclusion should inspire us to re-examine the methods that landed us there, and Reid further proposes that the culprit is the Theory of Ideas.

Now we've raised some doubts about the notion that the Theory of Ideas by itself is enough to generate skepticism, but let me set this aside for the moment to focus on how Reid builds his case against what he sometimes calls 'the ideal system.'⁵⁷ This will eventually return us to the question left hanging in our exploration of Hume: Do the arguments from perceptual relativity, illusion,

55. Reid (1764), I.7, p. 23. Kant wasn't the only one awakened from a dogmatic slumber by Hume. In a letter to Hume (reproduced in Reid [1764], p. 264), Reid writes, 'Your system appears to me not only coherent in all its parts, but likewise justly deduced from principles commonly received among Philosophers: Principles, which I never thought of calling in Question, untill the conclusions you draw from them in the treatise of humane Nature made me suspect them.'

56. Reid (1764), I.8, p. 23.

57. For example, Reid (1764), I.7, p. 23.

and hallucination actually establish the Theory of Ideas? So, to begin, what are Reid's objections to the Theory of Ideas?

Reid describes the theory this way:

By the impressions made on the brain, images are formed of the object perceived . . . the mind, being seated in the brain . . . immediately perceives those images only, and has no perception of the external object but by them. This notion of our perceiving external objects, not immediately, but in certain images or species of them conveyed by the senses, seems to be the most ancient philosophical hypothesis we have on the subject of perception, and to have with small variations retained its authority to this day.⁵⁸

We should note that when Reid speaks of 'impressions made on the brain,' he's using the term in his own way:

There is therefore sufficient reason to conclude, that, in perception, the object produces some change in the organ [of sense]; that the organ produces some change upon the nerve; and that the nerve produces some change in the brain. And we give the name of an *impression* to those changes. . . . Whatever may be the nature of those impressions upon the organs, nerves and brain, we perceive nothing without them. Experience informs that it is so. . . . In the constitution of man, perception, by fixed laws of nature, is connected with those impressions.⁵⁹

By contrast, 'perception,' for Reid, is a mental act⁶⁰:

In speaking of the impressions made on our organs in perception, we build upon facts borrowed from anatomy and physiology, for which we have the testimony of our senses. But being now to speak of perception itself, which is solely an act of the mind, we must appeal to some other authority.⁶¹

He alludes here to introspection, but as we've seen, he also countenances other avenues for investigation of the mind. In any case, the Theorist of Ideas posits that perception of an external object is indirect, that is, it proceeds by means of a mental image or representation of the object that is itself directly perceived.

58. Reid (1785), II.4, p. 90. See also Reid (1785), I.1, p. 31: 'When . . . in common language, we speak of having an idea of any thing, we mean no more by that expression, but thinking of it. The vulgar allow, that this expression implies a mind that thinks; an act of that mind which we call thinking, and an object about which we think. But, besides these three, the Philosopher conceives that there is a fourth, to wit, the *idea*, which is the immediate object. The idea is in the mind itself and can have no existence but in the mind that thinks; but the remote or mediate object may be something external, as the sun or moon; it may be something past or future; it may be something which never existed.'

59. Reid (1785), II.2, pp. 75–76.

60. Cf. footnote 38.

61. Reid (1785), II.5, p. 96.

Reid raises three main objections to this theory, apart from the claim that it leads to skepticism, perhaps the strongest counterargument of all. The first objection is that the theory conflicts with common sense:

It is directly contrary to the universal sense of men who have not been instructed in philosophy. When we see the sun or the moon, we have no doubt that the very objects which we immediately see, are very far distant from us, and from one another. We have not the least doubt that this is the sun and moon which God created some thousands of years ago, and which have continued to perform their revolutions in the heavens ever since. But how are we astonished when the Philosopher informs us, that we are mistaken in all this; that the sun and moon which we see are not, as we imagine, many miles distant from us, and from each other, but that they are in our own mind; that they have no existence before we saw them, and will have none when we cease to perceive and to think of them; because the objects we perceive are only ideas in our own minds, which can have no existence a moment longer than we think of them.⁶²

Here Austin might interject that the plain man has no opinion whatever about what we do or don't see 'immediately' or 'mediately,' that these ordinary words are being used in a special philosophical sense that hasn't been clearly specified.⁶³ In any case, I see no obstacle to the Theorist of Ideas employing the more circumspect terminology of our imaginary empirical representation theorist, saying that we perceive the moon by a process of inference that begins from our awareness of an inner representation. This needn't conflict with the common-sensical notion that we see the moon.

But it might conflict with common sense in another way, or perhaps we should say, with ordinary introspective evidence: We don't seem to be aware of any such representation. In his own introspective analysis, Reid observes:

When I smell a rose . . . the agreeable odor I feel, considered by itself, without relation to any external object, is . . . a sensation. . . . This sensation can be nothing else than it is felt to be. Its very essence consists in its being felt; and when it is not felt, it is not. There is no difference between the sensation and the feeling of it; they are one and the same thing . . . in sensation, there is no object distinct from that act of the mind by which it is felt; and this holds true with regard to all sensations.⁶⁴

62. Reid (1785), II.14, p. 172.

63. For example, Austin (1962), pp. 14–15: 'Philosophers, it is said, "are not, for the most part, prepared to admit that such objects as pens or cigarettes are ever directly perceived.'" Now of course what brings us up short here is the word "directly"—a great favorite among philosophers, but actually one of the less conspicuous snakes in the linguistic grass. We have here, in fact, a typical case of a word, which already has a very special use, being gradually stretched, without caution or definition or any limit, until it becomes, first perhaps obscurely metaphorical, but ultimately meaningless. One can't abuse ordinary language without paying for it.' He elaborates on pp. 15–19.

64. Reid (1785), II.16, p. 194.

Here Reid insists that the sensation is identical with the act of mind of feeling it,⁶⁵ but whether it's an object or an act, the important point is that it doesn't function as an Idea is supposed to do. First, we're most often entirely unaware of our sensations:

The operations of the mind, from their nature, lead the mind to give its attention to some other object. Our sensations . . . turn our attention to the things . . . so much, that most [sensations], and those most frequent and familiar, have no name in any language. In perception . . . there is an object distinct from the operation itself; and, while we are led by a strong impulse to attend to the object, the operation escapes our notice.^{66,67}

Second, sensations are nonrepresentational, nonconceptual:

Sensation, taken by itself, implies neither the conception nor belief of any external object. It supposes a sentient being, and a certain manner in which that being is affected, but it supposes no more.⁶⁸

Finally, though these content-less sensations figure in a causal process that ends in perception, our perceptual beliefs are immediate, not inferred from anything:

The clear and distinct testimony of our senses carries irresistible conviction along with it, to every man in his right judgment . . . this conviction is not only irresistible, but it is immediate; that is, it is not by a train of reasoning and argumentation that we come to be convinced of the existence of what

65. See also Reid (1764), VI.20, pp. 167–8.

66. Reid (1785), I.5, pp. 60–61. For sensations of touch in particular, see Reid (1764), V.5, pp. 63–64, or (1785), II.16, pp. 195–6; for visual sensations, see Reid (1764), VI.3, pp. 82–83 (also VI.8, p. 102): 'I cannot . . . entertain the hope of being intelligible to those readers who have not, by pains and practice, acquired the habit of distinguishing the appearance of objects to the eye, from the judgment which we form by sight of their colour, distance, magnitude and figure. The only profession in life wherein it is necessary to make this distinction is that of painting. The painter hath occasion for an abstraction, with regard to visible objects, somewhat similar to what we require; and this indeed is the most difficult part of his art. For it is evident, that if he could fix in his imagination the visible appearance of objects, without confounding it with the things signified by that appearance, it would be as easy for him to paint from life, and to give every figure its proper shading and relief, and its perspective proportions, as it is to paint from a copy.'

67. One might argue that on occasions when we *are* aware of our sensations, they do function as Ideas do in the Theory of Ideas, that is, as the inferential basis for our knowledge of external objects. Given the capriciousness of our attending or not, it seems more likely that sensations are performing the same function in all perceptions, whether they're noticed or not. Indeed, Reid distinguishes two roles for the senses: 'to make us feel, and to make us perceive' (Reid [1785], II.17, p. 210). While perception gives us information about the world, 'the painful sensations . . . are admonitions to avoid what would hurt us; and the agreeable sensations . . . invite us to those actions that are necessary to the preservation of the individual, or of the kind' (Reid [1785], II.16, p. 198). Nichols (2007), chapter 5, develops this 'teleological' interpretation of Reid on sensations.

68. Reid 1785, II.16, p. 199.

we perceive; we ask no argument for the existence of an object, but that we perceive it; perception commands our belief upon its own authority, and disdains to rest its authority upon any reasoning whatsoever.⁶⁹

Thus, Reid takes the nonexistence of Ideas in the relevant sense to be evident on careful introspection into the operations of our minds.

Of course, as we've noted, Reid departs from many of his predecessors and successors in that he denies introspection is perfectly reliable.⁷⁰ In fact, he describes it as a difficult thing to do properly:

the number and quick succession of the operations of the mind make it difficult to give due attention to them . . .⁷¹

when [an operation of the mind] is exerted, we are conscious of it; but then we do not attend to the operation, but to its object. When the mind is drawn off from the object to attend to its own operation, that operation ceases, and escapes our notice.⁷²

The same precision in the use of words; the same cool attention to the minute differences of things; the same talent for abstraction and analyzing, which fits a man for the study of mathematics, is no less necessary in this. But there is this great difference between the two sciences, that the objects of mathematics being things external to the mind, it is much more easy to attend to them, and fix them steadily in the imagination.⁷³

Nevertheless, introspection is one important type of evidence, and here, Reid claims, it counts against the Theory of Ideas.⁷⁴

Reid's second objection against the Theory is that it doesn't account for the phenomenon it sets out to explain:

We are at a loss to know how we perceive distant objects. . . . Ideas in the mind seem to account for [this] . . . by the means of ideas, [perception is] reduced to . . . a kind of feeling or immediate perception of things present,

69. Reid (1785), II.5, p. 99.

70. See R. Hurlburt and E. Schwitzgebel, *Describing Inner Experience* (MIT Press, 2007) for a recent discussion. Another of Reid's examples involves the case of double vision, to be considered below ([1764], VI.13, pp. 134–5): When we attend to a nearby object, those in the background appear double; nevertheless, 'you may find a man that can say with a good conscience, that he never saw things double all his life . . . in order to see things double, at least in order to have any reflection or remembrance that he did so, it is necessary that he should look at one object, and at the same time attend to the faint appearance of other objects which are within the field of vision. This is a practice which perhaps he never used, nor attempted; and therefore he does not recollect that ever he saw an object double.'

71. Reid (1785), I.6, p. 60.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

74. Including, of course, my imaginary empirical version. My interest isn't in the truth of the imaginary theory, but in the claim that it doesn't, by itself, lead inevitably to skepticism.

and in contact with the percipient; and feeling is an operation so familiar, that we think it needs no explication.

But this feeling or immediate perception, is as difficult to be comprehended, as the things which we pretend to explain by it. Two things may be in contact without any feeling or perception; there must therefore be in the percipient a power to feel or to perceive. How this power is produced, and how it operates, is quite beyond the reach of our knowledge.⁷⁵

This point also seems well taken: We don't understand how we perceive the moon; how does it help to say instead that we perceive an idea of the moon? But notice that our imaginary empirical Theory of Ideas needn't leave the matter in this unsatisfactory state. It would include a chapter on what constitutes 'awareness' of the internal representation—perhaps an account growing out of the study of phenomenon like blindsight,⁷⁶ an account that isolates the neural underpinning that makes some brain activity conscious and some not—and since we're imagining here, let's add an explanation of the evolutionary advantage to our being aware of some mental activities and unaware of others.⁷⁷ Its explanation of the reliability of perception would involve a range of external considerations: for example, the accuracy of our calculations of distance from the disparity between our two retinal images would depend on optics, geometry, and so on.⁷⁸ All this, if it came to pass, Reid would presumably applaud and embrace, but the Theory of Ideas he was presented with enjoyed no such virtues. And, as we've seen, if Hume had his way, it never would, because the sort of scientific investigation involved would be out of order in his Science of Man.

Finally, Reid's third objection to the Theory of Ideas is that the arguments offered for it are ineffective.⁷⁹ Here he gives pride of place to an argument from perceptual relativity found in Hume's *Enquiry*:

75. Reid (1785), II.14, p. 185.

76. See, for example, L. Weiskrantz, *Consciousness Lost and Found* (Oxford University Press, 1997).

77. This last makes the imaginary empirical theory even more unlikely because we're probably better off not being aware of the bulk of the computational processes that underlie perception.

78. Incidentally, Reid followed Berkeley on perception of distance; see, for example, Reid (1785), II.19, pp. 235–6: 'By sight . . . we perceive visible figures to have extension in two dimensions. . . . By touch . . . we perceive originally [bodies's] three dimensions . . . by experience, we learn to perceive [three dimensions] by sight.' R. Crowe, in his historical overview "The History of Stereoscopy," *Documenta Ophthalmologica*, 81, (1992), pp. 1–16, argues that the rise of empiricism delayed the discovery of distance perception by stereopsis (i.e., from the disparity between the two retinal images) until Wheatstone in 1838. Reid's willingness to posit elements of perception not present in sensation (see the next footnote) made him a likely candidate to have figured this out, but he didn't. (Ironically this very Berkeleyan error led him to develop a sort of non-Euclidean geometry in his (1764), VI.9. See J. van Cleve, "Thomas Reid's Geometry of Visibles," *Philosophical Review*, 111 (2002), pp. 373–416, for a recent discussion.)

79. I'm considering here the discussion in Reid (1785), pp. II.14, 174–84. In his (1764), V.7, pp. 69–70, Reid treats only one *experimentum crucis*—are there ideas that aren't derived from sensation?—and he argues that our conceptions of hardness, extension, figure, and so on are not. Earlier work from which the *Inquiry* largely derives apparently includes a fuller array of arguments; commentators consider the possibility that Hume's reactions to the book manuscript moved Reid to delete this material (see D. Brookes, "Introduction," in Thomas Reid,

The table, which we see, seems to diminish, as we remove farther from it: But the real table, which exists independent of us, suffers no alteration: It was, therefore, nothing but its image, which was present to the mind.⁸⁰

Reid responds by distinguishing the real magnitude of the table from its apparent magnitude, which 'is measured by the angle which an object subtends at the eye.'⁸¹ He then reconsiders Hume's case:

The table we see seems to diminish as we remove farther from it; that is, its apparent magnitude is diminished; but the real table suffers no alteration, to wit, in its real magnitude; therefore it is not the real table we see: I admit both the premises in this syllogism, but I deny the conclusion. The syllogism has what the Logicians call two middle terms: Apparent magnitude is the middle term in the first premise; real magnitude in the second. Therefore, according to the rules of logic, the conclusion is not justly drawn from the premises.⁸²

Indeed Reid takes these phenomena as evidence for his own conclusion:

The real table may be placed successively at a thousand different distances . . . and it can be determined demonstratively, by the rules of geometry and perspective, what must be its apparent magnitude . . . in each of those distances. . . . Let the table be placed successively in as many of those different distances . . . as you will . . . open your eyes and you shall see a table precisely of that apparent magnitude . . . which the real table must have in that distance Is not this a strong argument that it is the real table that you see?⁸³

In other words, it's not that what I really see is a percept of the table; it's that the thing I really see, the real table, subtends a different angle on the retina and consequently looks different at different distances, and in entirely predictable ways. My perception of the apparent magnitude is accurately registering an entirely objective feature of the relation between the object and the eye.⁸⁴

An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense, D. Brookes, ed., [Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997], pp. xii–xxv.) In any case, the argument of the *Inquiry* speaks more directly to the empiricist assumption that all ideas originate in impressions (in Hume's terms) or sensations (in Reid's terms) than to the more familiar arguments for what we now call sense-data. Reid gets quite caught up in his analysis of what is or isn't present in sensation, partly as a result of his Berkeleian holdover touched on in the previous footnote. Nowadays, it seems less clear than it must have in the 18th century that there is such a thing as a pure sensation, unaffected by belief, etc.

80. D. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, T. Beauchamp (ed.) (Oxford University Press, 1999 [1748]), 12.1.9.

81. Reid (1785), p. 181.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

84. See Nichols (2007), chapter 4, for a subtle discussion of the complexities of Reid's 'visible figure.' Here, incidentally, is another point of contact with Austin, who also insists that many so-called illusions aren't illusory at all: 'What is even faintly surprising . . . in the idea of a stick's

Reid tells us this is ‘all I have found in Mr Hume’s writings upon this point,’⁸⁵ so he must have missed or forgotten the argument from illusion based on double vision noted a moment ago from the *Treatise*, as well as various arguments from hallucination.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, he discusses both double vision and the phantom pain for their independent interest. On the subject ‘of seeing objects single with two eyes,’⁸⁷ he reports a series of experiments he’s performed and concludes among other things that we see an object double only when the two impressions don’t fall on the corresponding areas of the two retinas. Thus, when we ‘press one eye with a finger,’⁸⁸ as Hume proposes, one of the retinal impressions is displaced, so we should expect to see objects double. His results, Reid assures us, hold

Invariably in all perfect human eyes, as far as I am able to collect from innumerable trials of various kinds made upon my own eyes, and many made by others at my desire. . . . This general phenomenon appears therefore to be founded upon a very full induction.⁸⁹

Thus, seeing an object double is also a perfectly predictable phenomenon, but it needn’t follow that it isn’t the object that we see.

As for phantom pain, Reid notes that disagreeable and agreeable sensations are unlike many others in that we do tend to notice them. Unfortunately, we also tend to conflate the sensation with its cause:

When we consider the sensation of pain by itself, without any respect to its cause, we cannot say with propriety, that the toe is either the place, or the subject of it. But it ought to be remembered, that when we speak of a pain in the toe, the sensation is combined in our thought, with the cause of it, which really is in the toe. The cause and effect are combined in one complex notion, and the same name serves for both. It is the business of the Philosopher to analyse this complex notion, and to give different names to its

being straight but looking bent sometimes? Does anyone suppose that if something is straight, then it jolly well has to *look* straight in all circumstances?’ (Austin [1962], p. 29). P. de Bary, *Thomas Reid and Scepticism* (Routledge, 2002) (pp. 54–56) expands on this parallel between Austin and Reid.

85. Reid (1785), II.14, p. 179.

86. I should mention that Reid ([1785], II.14, pp. 175–7) also considers arguments of the form: How could an external object act where it is not (i.e., in the mind)? Strangely, Reid replies by doubting that ‘when we perceive objects, either they act upon us, or we act upon them’ (p. 176). As James Van Cleve points out on p. 102 of “Reid’s Theory of Perception,” in T. Cuneo and R. Woudenberg (eds.) ([Cambridge 2004], pp. 101–133), Reid could have replied that the external object needn’t act directly, that a chain leads from the object to the perceiver, like the lighting of the fuse here to the explosion of the bomb over there. This response coheres far better with Reid’s understanding of perception, as is obvious even from the few passages quoted in the text (though Reid would prefer to say that one link in the chain ‘produces’ or ‘occasions’ rather than ‘causes’ the next, for reasons unrelated to the point at issue here), so I assume Reid would have viewed it as a friendly amendment.

87. Reid (1764), VI.13.

88. Hume (1739), 1.4.2.45.

89. Reid (1764), VI.13, p. 137. Such passages in Reid make Hume’s reference to ‘experiments’ at (1739), 1.4.2.45, sound a bit flat.

different ingredients. He gives the name of *pain* to the sensation only, and the name of *disorder* to the unknown cause of it. Then it is evident that the disorder only is in the toe, and that it would be an error to think that the pain is in it.⁹⁰

So what happens when ‘a man who has had his leg cut off, many years after feels a pain in a toe of that leg?’⁹¹

Nature has connected our perception . . . with certain sensations. If the sensation is produced, the corresponding perception follows even when there is no object, and in that case it is apt to deceive us. In like manner, Nature has connected our sensations with certain impressions that are made upon the nerves and the brain: And, when the impression is made, from whatever cause, the corresponding sensation and perception immediately follows. Thus, in the man who feels pain in his toe after the leg is cut off, the nerve that went to the toe, part of which was cut off with the leg, had the same impression made upon the remaining part, which, in the natural state of his body, was caused by a hurt in the toe: And immediately this impression is followed by the sensation and perception which Nature connected with it.⁹²

Here, Reid is happy to agree that the perception (though not the sensation) in such cases is ‘fallacious’ (op. cit.). But this hardly shows that the false perception, or any perception, is inferred from a sensation.

In all this, we find Reid offering the beginnings of an empirical account of how and why the world appears to us as it does—including those experiences normally cited in the standard arguments—that doesn’t appear to involve anything playing the role of an idea or sense-datum. (And, as noted, my understanding is that a contemporary Second Philosopher of vision would agree on this last point.) So clearly one way in which Reid’s world differs dramatically from Hume’s is that it does without ‘the ideal theory.’ But I think it would be a mistake to identify this as the most important difference, as you might expect from my attempt to downplay the role of the Theory in generating Hume’s conclusions. Furthermore, I think that Reid himself sometimes sees it this way, despite his much more prevalent and conspicuous denunciations of the Theory of Ideas. To help highlight what I take to be Reid’s fundamental contribution, let me return for a moment to Stroud’s discussion of Hume.

Stroud sees Hume’s naturalism as his greatest achievement:

He was interested in human nature, and his interest took the form of seeking extremely general truths about how and why human beings think, feel and act in the ways they do. . . . These questions were to be answered in the only way possible—by observation and inference from what is observed. Hume

90. Reid (1785), II.18, p. 213.

91. Ibid., p. 214.

92. Reid (1785), II.19, p. 214.

saw them as empirical questions about natural objects within the sphere of human experience, so they could be answered only by an admittedly general, but none the less naturalistic, investigation. . . . Of all the ingredients of lasting significance in Hume's philosophy I think this naturalistic attitude is of greatest importance and interest.⁹³

In this, Stroud describes Hume as rejecting the traditional philosophical approach to the study of human nature:

Hume's theory sees every aspect of human life as naturalistically explicable. It places man squarely within the scientifically intelligible world of nature, and thus conflicts with the traditional conception of a detached rational subject.⁹⁴

Of course, something goes badly wrong in this sunny picture. Stroud sums up the state of play after the barren rock like this:

If we remain within the traditional philosophical theory we will inevitably regard ourselves as worse off in ordinary life than we would have originally supposed. But if the real discovery comes not with the philosophical conviction itself, but in an appreciation of the source of the instability and transience of that philosophical conviction [—here Stroud alludes to the fact that Hume can't maintain his skepticism over the backgammon table—], then we might no longer regard ourselves as so badly off. If we see that we simply do not, and cannot, operate according to the traditional philosophical conception of reasonable belief and action, it is just possible that our dissatisfactions will then be directed onto that conception itself, and not onto our ordinary life which is seen not to live up to it. Of course, as long as the Cartesian philosophical model [of a detached rational subject] is thought to embody the conception of reasonableness we actually try to fulfill in everyday life and science, that result will not be forthcoming.⁹⁵ What is needed, then, and would be completely in the spirit of Hume's 'experimental' examinations of human nature, is an alternative description of how we actually proceed in everyday life, and what we regard as essential to the most reasonable beliefs and actions we find there.⁹⁶ Hume does not suggest even the beginnings of such a quest, probably because the theory of ideas makes it unthinkable to him, but once we escape the theory of ideas there is nothing in Hume's general picture of the proper study of man that would rule out an alternative to the traditional philosophical picture.⁹⁷

93. Stroud (1977), p. 222.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

95. 'We will lament our ordinary "failures" to live up to the picture, rather than the artificiality and irrelevance of the only picture we have.'

96. 'The Cartesian picture is certainly more than a mere *a priori* prejudice; there are powerful considerations in its favor. But it remains to be seen that there is no alternative that will accommodate those considerations while providing a more naturalistic and hence more palatable conception of how and why we think and act as we do.'

97. Stroud (1977), p. 117.

What I've suggested here is that Hume fails to realize his naturalistic goals not because he embraces the Theory of Ideas but because he presupposes a kind of foundationalism that surely qualifies as a 'traditional philosophical picture' and as 'Cartesian': All our reasonings in the Science of Man must begin from introspection of our current experience.

Toward the end of the *Essay*, Reid himself tells a similar story, again beginning with Descartes:

There is, no doubt, a beauty in raising a large fabric of knowledge upon a few first principles. The stately fabric of mathematical knowledge, raised upon the foundation of a few axioms and definitions, charms every beholder. DES CARTES, who was well acquainted with this beauty in the mathematical sciences, seems to have been ambitious to give the same beautiful simplicity to his system of philosophy; and therefore sought only one first principle as the foundation of all our knowledge, at least of contingent truths.

And so far has his authority prevailed, that those who came after him have almost universally followed him in this track. This, therefore, may be considered as the spirit of modern philosophy, to allow of no first principles of contingent truths but this one, that the thoughts and operations of our own minds, of which we are conscious, are self-evidently real and true; but that everything else that is contingent is to be proved by argument.⁹⁸

This method of philosophizing is common to DES CARTES, MAL-EBRANCHE, ARNAULD, LOCKE, NORRIS, COLLIER, BERKELEY and HUME; and as it was introduced by DES CARTES, I call it the Cartesian system.⁹⁹

The result of this Cartesian system, Reid continues, is Hume's shipwreck:

From this single principle of the existence of our own thoughts, very little, if anything, can be deduced by just reasoning, especially if we suppose that all our other faculties may be fallacious. . . . Mr HUME seem[s] to me to have reasoned more consequentially from DES CARTES principle than he did himself; and indeed I can't help thinking, that all who have followed DES CARTES method . . . have escaped the abyss of scepticism by the help of weak reasoning and strong faith more than by any other means.¹⁰⁰

98. Reid (1785), VI.7, p. 516.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 525.

100. *Ibid.*, p. 518. Cf. Reid (1785), VI.7, p. 526, which follows directly on the previous quotation in the text: '[S]ome of these have gone to the utmost length in skepticism, leaving no existence in Nature but that of ideas and impressions. Some have endeavoured to throw off the belief of a material world only, and to leave us ideas and spirits. All of them have fallen into very gross paradoxes, which can never sit easy upon the human understanding, and which, though adopted in the closet, men find themselves under a necessity of throwing off and disclaiming when they enter into society. . . . Indeed, in my judgment, those who have reasoned most acutely and consequentially upon this system, are they that have gone deepest into skepticism.'

Here, unlike the similar passage quoted a while ago, the culprit isn't the Theory of Ideas itself.¹⁰¹ Even if we held instead that we aren't aware of any intermediary, that our perceptual beliefs are immediate, this wouldn't remove the concern that all such beliefs could be false: If all we have to appeal to is the evidence of introspection, if our senses aren't to be trusted until they're proved reliable on that basis, then—to put it colorfully—an Evil Demon could presumably manipulate those immediate beliefs as easily as he does our sense-data; the Veil of Belief is just as devastating as the Veil of Ideas. What does the work here, what rules out any empirical case for the reliability of our perceptual beliefs on either model, is the underlying foundational principle, the restriction of trustworthy evidence to introspection alone—just as we found in our examination of Hume's foundationalism.

So, if this Cartesian model is the true culprit, and Hume was unable to offer a viable alternative, what does Reid offer in its place? He begins, as Stroud would have him, from the observation that we don't, in fact, live up to the Cartesian model:

It is, no doubt, the perfection of a rational being to have no belief but what is grounded on intuitive evidence, or on just reasoning: But man, I apprehend, is not such a being; nor is it the intention of Nature that he should be such a being.¹⁰²

And, again as Stroud would have him, he sees this as the fault of that model:

We come into the world without the exercise of reason; we are merely animal before we are rational creatures; and it is necessary for our preservation, that we should believe many things before we can reason. How then is our belief to be regulated before we have reason to regulate it? has Nature left it to be regulated by chance? By no means. It is regulated by certain principles which are parts of our constitution; whether they ought to be called animal principles, or instinctive principles, or what name we give to them, is of small moment; but they are certainly different from the faculty of reason: They do the office of reason while it is in its infancy, and must as it were be carried in a nurse's arms, and they are leading strings to it in its gradual progress.¹⁰³

Of course, as we've seen, Reid freely admits that the senses are fallible:

101. The suggestion that Reid is more fundamentally opposed to 'foundationalism' than to 'representationalism' is not uncommon in the literature—see, for example, p. 86 of L. Loeb, "The Naturalisms of Hume and Reid," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, 81 (2007), pp. 65–92, and his references to N. Wolterstorff, "Hume and Reid," *Monist*, 70 (1987), pp. 398–417, and de Bary (2002)—but I think the specifics of what these terms are taken to entail will vary from one commentator to the next.

102. Reid (1785), II.21, p. 238.

103. *Ibid.*, pp. 238, 239.

Deceptions of sense . . . proceed from some disorder or preternatural state, either of the external organ, or of the nerves and the brain, which are internal organs of perception.¹⁰⁴

But the Cartesian's focus on the shortcomings of sense perception ignores the equally obvious fact that our other faculties are also fallible. I quoted earlier from Reid's catalog of the obstacles to reliable introspection, but he also notes that

in a delirium, or in madness, perception, memory, imagination and our reasoning powers, are strangely disordered and confounded. (op. cit.)

He concludes that

We must acknowledge it to be the lot of human nature, that all the human faculties are liable, by accidental causes, to be hurt and unfitted for their natural functions, either wholly or in part: But as this imperfection is common to them all, it gives no just ground for accounting any of them fallacious. . . . It appears, I think, from what has been said, that there is no more reason to account our senses fallacious, than our reason, our memory, or any other faculty of judging which Nature hath given us. They are all limited and imperfect; but wisely suited to the present condition of man. We are liable to error and wrong judgment in the use of them all; but as little in the informations of sense as in the deductions of reason.¹⁰⁵

Thus, the preference in the Cartesian model for introspection and reason over the senses is groundless.

Where does this leave us? One option would be to do the Cartesian one better:

If a Sceptic should build his skepticism upon this foundation, that all our reasoning and judging powers are fallacious in their nature . . . he must be left to enjoy his scepticism.¹⁰⁶ To such a sceptic I have nothing to say.¹⁰⁷

But in response to the Cartesian himself, the 'semi-skeptic,' Reid presents his alternative picture:

Why, Sir, should I believe the faculty of reason more than that of perception; they came both out of the same shop, and were made by the same artist; and if he puts one piece of false ware into my hands, what should hinder him from putting another?¹⁰⁸

104. Reid (1785), II.22, p. 251.

105. Ibid., pp. 251, 252.

106. Reid (1785), VI.5, p. 480.

107. Reid (1764), V.7, p. 71.

108. Reid (1764), VI.20, p. 169.

The faculties of consciousness,¹⁰⁹ of memory, of external sense, and of reason, are all equally gifts of Nature.¹¹⁰

In place of the restricted Cartesian perspective, Reid proposes to begin by trusting to the general reliability of all his faculties—‘that furniture which nature hath given to the human understanding . . . a part of our constitution . . . *the common sense of mankind*.’¹¹¹ His disagreement with Hume over the Theory of Ideas is a mere footnote to this fundamental shift; indeed, I’ve been suggesting that the Theory of Ideas, in the form of that imagined empirical theory, could arise in this setting with no skeptical consequences (though as far as we know, it would probably be false).

From this perspective, the debates over the Argument from Illusion, the Theory of Ideas, and the route from there to skepticism are all red herrings; what’s doing the real work is the underlying preference for introspection alone. Starting from this Cartesian point of departure, none of Reid’s discussions of the standard cases—perceptual relativity, illusion, and hallucination—are admissible, depending as they do on our ordinary empirical ways of finding out about the world. On the other hand, from the Cartesian perspective, the route to skepticism doesn’t actually require the details of the standard arguments: If all we have to rely on is introspective evidence, then the bare possibility of any perceptual error is enough, because we have no grounds on which to determine that one perceptual belief rather than another is likely to be veridical. Reid’s revolution undercuts the Cartesian presupposition by dragging it into the daylight and challenging its credentials. Once inner reflection, as Reid calls it, is accurately described and seen to be one fallible but still valuable faculty among several, his *Philosophy of Common Sense* stands as the logical alternative to the Cartesian model.¹¹²

109. Here it seems ‘reflection’ would be more appropriate (see footnote 40 above). In any case, I assume that Reid’s ‘reflection’ on the operations of the mind (what I’ve been calling ‘introspection’) also belongs to this list.

110. Reid (1785), VI.4, p. 463.

111. Reid (1764), VII, p. 215.

112. To be fair, there are less naturalistic-sounding aspects of Reid’s position, most prominently his apparent claim that the reliability of our faculties is a self-evident First Principle, not subject to or in need of proof. When Reid sounds these foundationalist, rationalistic themes, he’s motivated sometimes by a familiar regress of justifications (e.g., Reid [1785], IV.4, p. 455) and sometimes by the desire to cut off the skeptic’s argument that perception can’t be effectively defended (e.g., Reid [1785], I.2, p. 41). The latter at least seems misguided: Once the Cartesian starting point has been rejected, perception can be explored and evaluated in the ordinary ways that Reid and the Second Philosopher recommend. Indeed, Reid’s declared foundationalism is at odds with his actual practice of investigating the mechanisms and shortcomings of vision (e.g., in his treatment of double vision, his account of how visual figure registers objective relational information, his observations about the ‘blind spot’ created by the optic nerve, and two long chapters of the *Inquiry* on ‘squinting’ [where the two eyes are improperly aligned]). I’m tempted to think that Reid’s position here is more a function of his discouragement over the limitations of then-current studies of perception, but this is a story for another day. For now, let me just say that I don’t believe this side of Reid substantially undermines the second-philosophy-friendly portrait sketched here.

There's much more to be said on these topics, but let me stop here and try to draw a pair of morals from this line of thought. The first concerns the nature of the radical skeptical challenge to our knowledge of the external world. One way of posing this challenge is to begin with an appeal to some hypothesis like the Evil Demon or extraordinarily life-like dreaming. From a second-philosophical perspective, such hypotheses are colorful ways of highlighting a particular methodological desideratum: I'm to defend my perceptual belief in that rose in my garden without appeal to any of my usual ways of defending my beliefs, that is, without appeal to any facts about the world. This 'from scratch' challenge is perfectly coherent—the Second Philosopher would welcome a satisfying response—but she herself has no idea how to go about producing one. Still, she doesn't see that her inability to produce evidence of this extraordinary kind in any way undercuts the force of the ordinary evidence she is able to provide.¹¹³

As we've noted, the skeptical argumentation of the naturalistic Hume at first appears to take a different form: Beginning from our ordinary ways of finding out about the world, we're inexorably led to skepticism; our best empirical methods eventually undermine themselves. What we've now seen is that this isn't so: Our ordinary empirical methods don't lead to the Theory of Ideas because (as Reid shows) we can explain perceptual relativity, illusions, and hallucinations without appeal to sense-data; and even if we do embrace a representative theory of perception, we aren't thereby condemned to skepticism. What actually does the work in Hume's argument is the Cartesian starting point that rules out all but introspective evidence. Even from this starting point, it isn't clear that the Theory of Ideas follows, but in any case, it isn't needed: The simple fact of any perceptual error is enough to jeopardize my belief in the rose—whether that belief is immediate or inferred—unless I can show that I'm seeing it in conditions that don't predispose my senses to err, and I can't show that without appealing to various features of the perceptual situation and to my previous experiences in similar situations. In the end, it's the Cartesian restriction that's doing the work, and the work it's doing is essentially the same as expedients like the Evil Demon hypothesis: It's blocking access to my tried-and-true ways of finding out about the world. In this way, the apparent distinctiveness of Hume's argument evaporates.

Incidentally, notice that Reid's response to the skeptic is quite close to the Second Philosopher's. Both recognize that the skeptic is challenging me to defend my perceptual belief in the rose without appealing to my usual methods and well-confirmed beliefs about the world, and both admit that this challenge is one they can't meet.¹¹⁴ However, both also reject the notion that our inability to meet this challenge undercuts our ordinary evidence, that my belief in the

113. See Maddy (2011), §I.2, (200?).

114. It could be that Reid regards this as impossible in principle, while the Second Philosopher simply admits that she sees no way of doing it.

rose is unjustified until the skeptic's challenge has been removed. Instead, both hold that our ordinary evidence retains its force despite our lack of extraordinary evidence.¹¹⁵

This comparison leads to the second moral: If you want to pinpoint the historical juncture when the Cartesian starting point was rejected, when the study of man took its proper place as a part of a larger study of the natural order, when something like contemporary naturalism took root, you'd do better to bypass Hume's *Science of Man* and focus on Reid's *Philosophy of Common Sense*. If the contours of my own second-philosophical version of naturalism have been clarified along the way, so much the better!¹¹⁶

T. Cuneo and R. van Woudenberg (eds.), *Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

J. Haldane, "Introduction," in Haldane and Read [2003] (2003), pp. 1–13.

J. Haldane and S. Read (eds.), *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid* (Blackwell, 2003).

115. Of course Reid adds an argument to the effect that the skeptic's challenge is silly—the 'same shop' argument.

116. Thanks to the members of my 09-10 seminar on philosophies of common sense, and to Sean Greenberg, Jim Weatherall, and helpful audiences at UCLA, University of Toronto, University of Colorado at Boulder, University of Pennsylvania, Simon Fraser, the Naturalism conference at University of Cincinnati, and the Analytic Philosophy conference at University of Texas at Austin.

“Naturalism” is a term that is applied to many doctrines and positions in philosophy, and in fact, just how it is to be defined is itself a matter of philosophical debate. Still, the overall landscape of naturalism can be surveyed, and that is what we will do here. This discussion will not present a defense or critique of one or another specific version of naturalism. Its aim is to characterize the broad range of views typically identified as naturalistic and to say something about what motivates them. There may be ways in which the scientific conception dramatically departs from common sense, but it is rooted in experience and the questions that arise at the level of common sense. Similarly, according to many defenders of naturalism, philosophy is not discontinuous with science. Philosophical naturalism asserts that the natural world, as perceived by the five senses of mankind, is all there is (see also: Atheism and naturalism). It is also called metaphysical naturalism and ontological naturalism. It is a logical result (but not a necessary result) of methodological naturalism, the doctrine which assumes a priori (“from the first” or “from the beginning”) that there is no way to contact, detect, or otherwise empirically observe the supernatural. While most philosophers of Naturalism and common sense. March 2011. Philosophical Books 52(1):2-34. Widely acknowledged as the principal architect of Scottish common sense philosophy, Thomas Reid is increasingly recognized today as one of the finest philosophers of the eighteenth century. Combining a sophisticated response to the skeptical and idealist views of his day, Reid’s thought represents an important alternative to Humean skepticism, Kantian idealism and Cartesian rationalism. Vice versa, common-sense realism sees the unobservable entities postulated by scientific theories as nothing more than fictions—useful for producing explanations and predictions, but having no ontological legitimacy. The scientific realist, on the contrary, assumes as real only the entities admitted by the natural sciences, while all other alleged entities either are reducible to those or are mere fictions. What attracts hermeneutics to the issue of common sense is its antirationalistic and anti-scientific orientation aimed at developing a notion of the concrete universal. (Ciancio 2004, 153; see also Bunge 2006, ch. Unsurprisingly, then, the main problem that strict naturalism has to face is the so-called “location problem” (Jackson 1998, 1–5) or “placement problem” (Price 2004). Naturalism is simply the understanding that there exists a single, natural, physical world or universe in which we are completely included. There are not two different worlds, the supernatural and natural. Since we are completely included in the natural world, there’s nothing supernatural about us. For instance, we don’t have immaterial souls that survive after death. What’s special about this naturalistic view ourselves, that’s quite different from the supernatural or common sense view, is that we don’t have free will, defined as the power to do something without yourself being fully caused to do it. (Please note and remember this definition!)