

Common Sense Within the Bounds of Philosophy:
Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense Defended

by

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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ABSTRACT

I proffer a defense Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense. I address the initial implausibility that greets most all of us when we stop to consider the prospects for common sense as guide to knowledge and inquiry. I argue that this initial implausibility is based upon a misapprehension of what Reid understands by common sense. I address the justification of common sense. I argue that common sense is justified, even if we cannot give a reason for it. I present an expansion and refinement of Reid's notion of common sense as what we must take for granted.

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Special thanks to Dr. Shannon Dea.

DEDICATION

To my wife.

And to my parents.

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FOREWORD

According to a common sentiment concerning the unfolding history of philosophy, it has been left to the philosophers to rescue us from the benighted reign of common sense over knowledge and inquiry. This sentiment haunts the corridors of philosophy departments and animates heated discussions in first year philosophy courses. Seen in this light, any appeal to common sense within the bounds of philosophy will seem exactly wrong. Moreover, Thomas Reid's (Hume)Philosophy of Common Sense will seem like a contradiction in terms. Yet I have long suspected that Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense has been given short shrift, and that it warrants more careful consideration. And so I now take it as my task to proffer a defense of sorts of Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense. In the first chapter I will address the initial implausibility that greets most all of us when we stop to consider the prospects for common sense as guide to knowledge and inquiry. I will argue that this initial implausibility is based upon a misapprehension of what Reid understands by common sense. In the second chapter I will address the matter of whether common sense is justified. I will argue that common sense is both warranted and justified in the appropriate senses. In the third chapter I will distinguish two subtly different notions of common sense that I find unhelpfully intertwined throughout Reid. I will indentify the

second as ripe for expansion and refinement. From here I will launch into a presentation of this expanded and refined notion of common sense as what we must take for granted.

CHAPTER ONE:

Common Sense Identified

In *Our Natural Constitution: Wolterstorff on Reid and Wittgenstein*, Bob Plant opines that “even the most rudimentary historical and cultural awareness reveals ‘common sense’ to be neither all that common, nor particularly sensible” (Plant 157). As illustrative of this, Plant invites us to consider Wittgenstein’s ruminations on how he would answer a small child who’d been told a man walked on the moon (Wittgenstein 106; Plant 157). Wittgenstein would tell the child “it was only joke, the man hadn’t been on the moon; no one has ever been on the moon; the moon is a long way off and it is impossible to climb up there or fly there” (Wittgenstein 106). Of course Plant is aware this would be a “perfectly commonsensical” response at the time – about nineteen years before Neil Armstrong first stepped onto the moon (Plant 157). But Plant still finds it “difficult to resist a wry smile at his example” (Plant 157). For, if Wittgenstein intended this to be an example of a situation in which we’re justified in believing something on the basis of common sense, he chose remarkably poorly.¹

¹ The ‘if’ here is worth noting. It’s not perfectly clear Wittgenstein did intend this to be an example of the good and proper use of common sense.

What lesson are we to learn from this? Plant suggests it might unveil the general truth that “because what currently passes for common sense is mutable and transient, its epistemological acumen – not to mention its ethical-political implications – seems questionable to say the least” (Plant 157). Geocentrism was once thought to be a matter of common sense; as were sexism, racism and all sorts of moral horrors. In view of this, Thomas Reid’s defiant declaration that he’s content to let his “soul dwell with Common Sense” is strange indeed (IHM I, iii, 18; Plant 157). It’s bombastic, and so not without its charm, but it certainly doesn’t recommend itself as a sound belief policy. In this way, it seems Thomas Reid’s Philosophy of Common Sense simply isn’t a live option for us.

With a view to addressing this initial implausibility, which greets most all of us when we consider the prospects for common sense as a guide to knowledge and inquiry, I will undertake to describe the key features of what Reid understands distinctly by common sense. Next, I will explain Reid’s position on the right relationship between common sense, reason and philosophy. Finally, I will provide a sample list of what Reid takes to be principles of common sense. With all this in view, I will revisit the aforementioned initial implausibility of common sense, finding that it turns on a misapprehension of what Reid understands by common sense.

THOMAS REID’S UNDERSTANDING OF COMMON SENSE

Thomas Reid understands by common sense that good judgment common to all well-ordered persons of adequate maturity which enables them to navigate through the common affairs of life and judge rightly of things self-evident. This good judgment is

ours by natural constitution and is the foundation of all knowledge and inquiry. Those who believe what's manifestly contrary to common sense are lunatics; their beliefs aren't merely mistaken, they're absurd.

Common Sense as Good Judgment. Drawing on what he takes to be the “common language” meaning of the word 'sense', Reid contends that “sense always implies judgment” (EIP VI, ii, 424). In this way, “a man of sense is a man of judgment” and “good sense is good judgment” (EIP VI, ii, 424). Conversely, “nonsense is what is evidently contrary to right judgment” (EIP VI, ii 424). What then is *common* sense? It is “that degree of judgment which is common to men with whom we can converse and transact business” (EIP VI, ii 424). On top of this, “the same degree of understanding which makes a man capable of acting with common prudence in the conduct of life, makes him capable of discovering what is true and what is false in matters that are self-evident, and which he distinctly apprehends” (EIP VI, ii 426). And so Reid understands the person of common sense to also be “a competent judge” of self-evident principles “when he conceives them distinctly” (EIP VI, ii, 426).

Common Sense as Natural. Reid describes the judgments of common sense as “original and natural” (IHM VI, 215). In this way, they're “a part of that furniture which nature hath given to the human understanding” (IHM VI, 215). According to Reid, “the power of judging in self-evident propositions, which are clearly understood, may be compared to the power of swallowing our food” (EIP VI, vi, 452). Each of these powers “is purely natural, and therefore common to the learned, and the unlearned” (EIP VI, vi, 452). Our instinct to swallow naturally springs into action on those occasions when food or

drink is presented in the appropriate manner. In the same way, we believe in the testimony of our senses “by the constitution of our nature, without any effort of our own” (EIP VI, i, 412). When objects are brought within our sensory field, we simply find ourselves with beliefs about them. In a sense, these beliefs are simply not up to us, because “Nature has subjected us to them whether we will or not” (EIP VI, i, 412). We don’t decide to believe these beliefs after careful consideration. Instead, we simply find ourselves so believing, and despite any concerted efforts to the contrary, we find we can’t help but so believe. Our being naturally constituted in this way is “evidently for our preservation” (EIP VI, i, 412). For if we had to learn *how* and *when* to believe these sorts of beliefs, then “the race of men would perish before they learned this lesson” (EIP VI, i, 412). Common sense is “necessary to all men for their being and preservation” and so it is “unconditionally given to all men by the Author of Nature” (EIP VI, i, 412). Common sense is “purely a gift of Heaven” and so “where Heaven has not given it, no education can supply the want” (EIP VI, ii, 433). We would do well to bracket the theology here, and draw our attention instead to the relevant point at hand: when it comes to common sense, we are at the mercy of ‘Heaven’ or evolution or perhaps both.² Common sense isn’t a human artifact.

Common Sense as the Foundation of All Knowledge and Inquiry. Reid observes that “when we examine, in the way of analysis, the evidence of any proposition, either we find it self-evident, or it rests upon one or more propositions that support it” (EIP VI, iv, 455). In

² The role of Providential Naturalism in securing the plausibility of common sense will be addressed in the Chapter 3.

turn, “the same thing may be said of those propositions that support it; and of those that support them, as far back as we can go” (EIP VI, iv, 454). But, because “we cannot go back to antecedent propositions without end, the evidence must at last rest upon propositions, one or more, which have their evidence in themselves, that is, upon first principles” (EIP VI, vii, 522).³ This is “as certain as that every house must have a foundation” (EIP VI, iv, 454). Otherwise reason performs like an engine that “spends its force in the air, and produces no effect” (EIP VI, iv, 454).

The practice of reasoning with one’s fellow inquirers must take place against the backdrop of shared first principles, for “when one denies what to the other appears too evident to need, or to admit of proof, reasoning seems to be at an end” (EIP VI, ii, 426). On the occasion of such a fundamental impasse, then either “an appeal is made to common sense,” or else the other is simply left “to enjoy his own opinion” (EIP VI, ii, 426). Our only hope for a happy resolution to such an impasse is if “the decisions of common sense can be brought into a code, in which all reasonable men shall acquiesce” (EIP VI, ii, 426). Barring this, quietism or coercion are our only options.⁴ For either we can agree on some first principles or not, even if it’s only a tentative agreement. If not, then we must either keep to ourselves (quietism) or else try to convince by other means (coercion). In any case, we can’t argue in the absence of an agreement on some first

³ Since "all knowledge, and all science, must be built upon principles that are self-evident" therefore “there is no reasoning without them” (EIP VI, ii, 426; VI, iv, 454).

⁴ A tacit agreement may be sufficient for the continuance of non-coercive dialog. But if explicit argumentation is to proceed, then agreement on the some first principles will need to be rendered explicit and clear. The process by which this may happen, and some attendant problems, will be addressed in Chapter 3.

principles, even if it's only tentative. It is by common sense that we judge "what is true and what is false in matters that are self-evident" including these self-evident first principles which ground all knowledge and inquiry (EIP VI, ii 426).

Strikingly, because perceptual beliefs aren't based upon the evidence of other *propositions*, they're self-evident according to Reid (EIP I, I, 22; II, v, 96). Perceptual beliefs are based on the evidence of *non-propositional* perceptual experiences which are naturally coupled with belief (EIP II, v, 96; Wolterstorff 222). In the natural course of things, if I find myself having a perceptual experience of a tree, I will find myself with "a strong and irresistible conviction and belief of its present existence" (EIP II, v, 96) Of course it might not exist: I might be hallucinating. But the perceptual belief is still self-evident even if it's false.⁵

Common Sense and Lunacy. According to Reid, that which is "manifestly contrary to any of those first principles, is what we call *absurd*" (IHM VI, 215). Moreover, "a remarkable deviation from them, arising from a disorder in the constitution, is what we call *lunacy*" (IHM VI, 215). An example of such lunacy would be a mentally ill person who "believes that he is made of glass" (IHM VI, 215). Since common sense is the foundation of reasoning, it will do no good to try to reason with such a person, at least insofar as they do lack common sense. But it's not only the constitutionally disordered who are burdened by lunacy. Occasionally "a man suffers himself to be reasoned out of the principles of common sense, by metaphysical arguments" (IHM VI, 215). The

⁵ Here we encounter Reid's (in)famous direct perceptual realism. The problem of beliefs being both self-evident yet fallible will be addressed Chapter 2.

inevitable result of this is what Reid calls “*metaphysical lunacy*” (IHM VI, 215).⁶

Metaphysical lunacy differs from the lunacy of disordered constitution in that “it is not continued, but intermittent” (IHM VI, 216). Metaphysical lunacy has power over the patient only “in solitary and speculative moments” (IHM VI, 216). Common sense “recovers her authority” just as soon as the metaphysical lunatic enters back into the common affairs of life in society (IHM VI, 216).

COMMON SENSE, REASON AND PHILOSOPHY

We will gain further clarity on what Reid understands distinctly by ‘common sense’ if we take note of his understanding of the right relationship between common sense, reason and philosophy. According to Reid, properly understood, common sense and reason are never opposed. Nevertheless, common sense and philosophy are often found in opposition. Reid contends that, for the good of philosophy according to its own lights, philosophy must freely and cheerfully subordinate itself to common sense.

Reason and Common Sense Are Not Opposed. According to Reid, “it is absurd to conceive that there can be any opposition between reason and common sense” (EIP VI, ii, 433).

Common sense is “the first-born of reason” (EIP VI, ii, 433). In fact, reason can be rightly said to have “two offices or two degrees” (EIP VI, ii, 433). The first, which is “the sole province” of common sense, is to “judge of things self-evident” (EIP VI, ii, 433). The second is “to draw conclusions that are not self-evident from those that are”

⁶ Emphasis original.

(EIP VI, ii, 433). In this way, common sense “coincides with reason in its whole extent, and is only another name for one branch or one degree of reason” (EIP VI, ii, 433).

According to Reid, “a conclusion drawn from a train of just reasoning from true principles cannot possibly contradict any decision of common sense” (EIP VI, ii, 433).

Of course it might come to pass that, “by setting out from false premises, or by an error in reasoning, a man may be led to a conclusion that contradicts the decisions of common sense” (EIP VI, ii, 434). But Reid believes “a man of common sense may fairly reject the conclusion, without being able to shew the error of the reasoning that led to it” (EIP VI, ii, 434).

Philosophy and Common Sense. Elsewhere, we find Reid adopting what seems to be a different attitude towards the relationship between reason and common sense; or more precisely, between *philosophy* and common sense. Reid observes that “poor untaught mortals believe undoubtedly that there is a sun, moon, and stars; an earth, which we inhabit; country, friends, and relations which we enjoy” (IHM I, ii, 18). He contrasts this with the philosophers who, “pitying the credulity of the vulgar, resolve to have no faith but what is founded upon reason” (IHM I, ii, 18). These philosophers take it as their task to use philosophy to “furnish them with reasons for the belief of those things which all mankind have believed, without being able to give a reason for it” (IHM I, ii, 18). Reid admits “it is no doubt the perfection of a rational being to have no belief but what is grounded on [...] just reasoning” (EIP II, xxi, 238). The problem is that, in their pursuit of this noble goal, the philosophers “have endeavored to extend her [philosophy] beyond its just limits” (IHM I, v, 19). Philosophy’s failure to achieve this

goal prompted Reid to fundamentally rethink the right ordering of common sense and philosophy, effectively turning the tables on philosophy. Whereas these philosophers wanted to ground common sense in philosophy, Reid believed philosophy “has no other root but the principles of Common Sense; it grows out of them, and draws its nourishment from them, severed from this root, its honors wither, its sap is dried up, it dies and rots” (IHM I, iii, 19). In this way, any attempt to “call to her [philosophy's] bar the dictates of Common Sense” is exactly wrong (IHM I, vi, 19). The dictates of common sense “decline this jurisdiction” and “they disdain the trial of reasoning, and disown its authority” (IHM I, vi, 19). The dictates of common sense “neither claim her [philosophy's] aid, nor dread its attacks” (IHM I, vi, 21). According to Reid, the principles of common sense “irresistibly govern the belief and conduct of all mankind in the common concerns of life” and “*the philosopher himself* must yield [to them], after he imagines he hath confuted them” (IHM I, vi, 21).⁷ The principles of common sense “are older, and of more authority, than Philosophy: she rests upon them as her basis, not they upon her” (IHM I, vi, 21). It's simply not within the purview of philosophy to overturn the dictates of common sense:

If she could overturn them, she must be buried in their ruins; but all the engines of philosophical subtilty are too weak for this purpose; and the attempt is not less ridiculous, than if a mechanic should contrive an *axis in peritrochio* to move the earth out of its place; or if a mathematician should pretend to demonstrate, that things equal to the same thing are not equal to another. (IHM I, vi, 21)

⁷ Emphasis added.

According to Reid, “[in any] contest betwixt Common Sense and Philosophy, the latter will always come off both with dishonor and loss” (IHM I, iii, 19). And it will be impossible for philosophy to succeed, even according to its own lights, until “this rivalship is dropt, these encroachments given up, and a cordial friendship restored” (IHM I, iv, 19).

EXAMPLES OF PRINCIPLES OF COMMON SENSE

Reid takes the following to be principles of common sense:

- “the existence of every thing of which I am conscious” (EIP VI, vi, 470).
- that “the thoughts of which I am conscious are the thoughts of a being which I call *myself*” (EIP VI, vi, 472).
- that “those things really did happen which I distinctly remember” (EIP VI, vi, 474).
- “our own personal identity and continued existence, as far back as we remember any thing distinctly” (EIP VI, vi, 476).
- that “those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be” (EIP VI, vi, 476).
- “that we have some degree of power over our actions, and the determinations of our will” (EIP VI, vi, 478).
- that “the natural faculties, by which we distinguish truth from error, are not fallacious” (EIP VI, vi, 480).
- that “there is life and intelligence in our fellow-men with whom we converse” (EIP VI, vi, 482).
- that “certain features of the countenance, sounds of the voice, and gestures of the body, indicate certain thoughts and dispositions of mind” (EIP VI, vi, 484).

- that “there is regard to human testimony in matters of fact, and even to human authority in matters of opinion” (EIP VI, vi, 487).
- that “there are many events depending upon the will of man, on which there is a self-evident probability, greater or less, according to circumstances” (EIP VI, vi, 488).
- that “in the phenomena of nature, what is to be, will probably be like to what has been in similar circumstances” (EIP VI, vi, 489).

It’s worth noting that, on certain readings of some of these principles, they are tautologies. For example, if perception connotes success, and so hallucinations do not count as perceptions, then of course “those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our sense” (EIP VI, vi, 476). We might as well say it’s a principle of common sense that all bachelors are unmarried men. Actually, Reid does include analytic truths and tautologies as among the deliverances of common sense. But Reid understands each of the members of the above list to be contingent truths (EIP VI, vi, 470). We thus need to read the aforementioned principle as saying that “those things do really exist which we *seem to* distinctly perceive by our sense.”

THE IMPLAUSIBILITY OF COMMON SENSE REVISITED

Plant claimed that “even the most rudimentary historical and cultural awareness reveals ‘common sense’ to be neither all that common, nor particularly sensible” (Plant 157). But it’s clear now that what Plant had in mind wasn’t common sense in the Reidian sense.

Not a Matter of Common Sense. The impossibility of travel to the moon isn't self-evident; it wasn't even in Wittgenstein's time. Instead, its evidence comes from various other beliefs: perhaps that we haven't a propulsion system powerful enough to escape gravity, or that the moon is simply too far a way for a human to survive the trip, or that if such a trip had taken place news of it would have been widely published around the globe. But, in any case, it's simply not a matter of common sense. Moreover, given that many of us get on fairly well disbelieving geocentrism, sexism, and racism, it seems that these too aren't matters of common sense. For we remember that, according to Reid, "Nature has subjected us to [the dictates of common sense] whether we will or not" (EIP VI, i, 412). But geocentrism, sexism and racism can very well be disbelieved if we so decide. Of course it might be that, if we polled vast swaths of humankind, at various times and places, that geocentrism, sexism and racism would turn out to be quite popular. But to infer from this that they're dictates of common sense is to confuse common sense with popular opinion.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I began this chapter by acknowledging the initial implausibility that greets most all of us when we stop to consider the prospects for common sense as guide to knowledge and inquiry. With a view to addressing this initial implausibility, I undertook to describe the key features of what Reid understands distinctly by common sense. Next, I explained Reid's position on the right relationship between common sense, reason and philosophy. Finally, I provided a sample list of what Reid takes to be principles of

common sense. With all this in view, I revisited the aforementioned initial implausibility of common sense, finding that it turns on a misapprehension of what Reid understands by common sense.

In the next chapter I will address the matter of whether common sense is justified. I will argue that common sense is both warranted and justified in the appropriate senses.

CHAPTER TWO:

Common Sense Justified

Kant famously quipped that he was interrupted from his dogmatic slumber by Hume. Interestingly enough, this line occurs in *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* immediately after a denouncement of Reid's common sense response to Hume (Kant 4). Kant claimed Hume inspired him to "penetrate very deeply into the nature of reason, so far as it is concerned with pure thinking" (Kant 4). He believed Reid, on the other hand, opted for "a more convenient method of being defiant without any insight, viz. the appeal to common sense" (Kant 4). Kant described it as "positively painful to see how utterly [Hume's] opponents, Reid, Oswald, Beattie, and lastly Priestley, missed the point of the problem" (Kant 4). Not that Kant disparaged common sense, full stop. He piously acknowledged common sense to be "a great gift of God" (Kant 4). Instead, Kant's point was that if common sense is to be brought within the bounds of philosophy, then "this common sense must be shown practically, by well-considered and reasonable thoughts and words, not by appealing to it as an oracle, when no rational justification can be advanced" (Kant 4). Kant insisted that if we admit common sense under any lesser conditions, then "the most superficial ranter [could] safely enter

the lists with the most thorough thinker, and hold his own” (Kant 4). He also believed submitting philosophy to the bar of common sense would be a matter of seeking the approval of the herd, “of whose applause the philosopher is ashamed” (Kant 4). Moreover, Kant observed that, as a matter of fact, “as long as a particle of insight remains, no one would think of having recourse to this subterfuge [of common sense]” (Kant 4). In view of all this, Kant expressed his preference for Hume over his common sense critics, since

Hume might fairly have laid as much claim to common sense as Beattie, and in addition to a critical reason (such as the latter did not possess), which keeps common sense in check and prevents it from speculating, or, if speculations are under discussion restrains the desire to decide because it cannot satisfy itself concerning its own arguments. By this means alone can common sense remain sound. (Kant 4)

In view of these considerations against the admission of common sense within the bounds of philosophy, and in the hopes of uncovering what truly distinguishes Reid’s Philosophy of Common Sense, I will undertake a comparison of Hume and Reid on the matter of common sense. I will argue that their differences lie not on the *quaestio facti* concerning common sense, but the *quaestio juris*. That is, they differ on whether common sense is justified. From here I will launch an investigation into whether common sense is justified, providing an outline of the basic features of a distinctively Reidian account of justification. Finally, I will address the question of whether we need to verify our cognitive faculties before we can be justified in relying on them. I will argue that the demand we verify our cognitive faculties can be ignored and that any

critique of Reid with respect to the *quaestio juris* concerning common sense is fundamentally flawed insofar as it takes for granted an account of justification which Reid means to call into question.

HUME AND REID

Hume famously claimed that “reason is incapable of dispelling [the] clouds [of skepticism]” (THN I, iv, 7). But he also expressed his thanks that, in the face of reason’s failures, “nature herself suffices for that purpose and cures [us] of this philosophical gloom and frenzy” (THN I, iv, 7). For, according to Hume, nature cures us “by reducing the intensity of these thoughts” or “by some pastime that makes lively impressions on [our] senses” (THN I, iv, 7). And so Hume extolled the curative powers of a good game of backgammon:

I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse cheerfully with my friends; and when after three or four hours’ amusement I turn back to these speculations, they appear so cold, strained, and ridiculous that I can’t find in my heart to enter into them any further. (THN I, iv, 7)

Reid heaped scorn on Hume for availing himself of these sorts of ‘cures’, eager to point out that “it was only in solitude and retirement that [Hume] could yield any assent to his own philosophy” and noting that “society, like day-light, dispelled the darkness and fogs of skepticism, and made him yield to the dominion of Common Sense” (IHN I, v, 20). The problem with this line of criticism is that Hume openly admitted as much. Indeed, Hume freely confessed he was “*absolutely* and *necessarily* made to live and talk

and act like other people in the common affairs of life” (THN I, iv, 7).⁸ Reading between the lines, we sense Reid thought he’d put his finger on some hypocrisy in Hume. But it’s hard to see how Hume’s inability to put his doubts into practice in the common affairs of life could count as hypocrisy. After all, Hume confessed and did not deny that he was guided by common sense in the common affairs of life. And though we might accuse an outspoken teetotaler of hypocrisy if we found them to be a chronic imbiber, we’d never accuse someone who freely confessed to partake in happy hour every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Can it be that Reid fundamentally misunderstood Hume?

THE QUAESTIO FACTI AND THE QUAESTIO JURIS

We may distinguish the *quaestio facti* concerning common sense from the *quaestio juris* concerning common sense. Indeed, careful consideration of this distinction is indispensable for sorting out what separates Hume and Reid. With this distinction in view, we can see that while Hume and Reid did agree on the *quaestio facti* concerning common sense, they disagreed on the *quaestio juris* concerning common sense.

The Quaestio Facti. Hume agreed with Reid on the *quaestio facti* concerning common sense. That is, Hume agreed that, as a matter of fact, all persons of sound mind are “absolutely and necessarily” guided by common sense in the common affairs of life (THN I, iv, 7). Hume admitted that the plausibility of his skepticism, together with its

⁸ Emphasis added.

attendant sorrows, dissolved from view when he entered into the common affairs of life (THN I, iv, 7). Hume acknowledged that he couldn't put his skepticism into practice in the common affairs of life (THN I, iv, 7). But if Reid and Hume agreed on all this, was their infamous antagonism towards each other predicated on misunderstanding?

The Quaestio Juris. In *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, Kant claimed that Reid and his followers

missed the point of the problem; for while they were ever taking for granted that which [Hume] doubted, and demonstrating with zeal and often with impudence that which [Hume] never thought of doubting, they so misconstrued his valuable suggestion that everything remained in its old condition, as if nothing had happened. (Kant 4)

Here we notice Kant concurred with our finding that Hume and Reid agree on the *quaestio facti* concerning common sense. But, according to Kant, they disagreed on something which Reid “was ever taking for granted” but “which [Hume] doubted” (Kant 4). We remember Kant's stricture that “common sense must be shown practically, by well-considered and reasonable thoughts and words, not by appealing to it as an oracle, when no rational justification can be advanced” (Kant 4). According to Kant, the problem with Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense is that it took for granted precisely what Hume doubted: the *justification* of common sense. In this way, Hume and Reid disagreed on the *quaestio juris* concerning common sense.

COMMON SENSE AND JUSTIFICATION

As we have seen, Reid thought the philosophers took it as their task to uncover “reasons for the belief of those things which all mankind have believed, without being able to give any reason for it” (IHM I, iv, 18). And both Reid and Hume agreed that the philosophers failed in this task. Hume claimed “reason is incapable of dispelling [the] clouds [of skepticism]” (THN I, iv, 7), and Reid described common sense as something philosophy cannot “give any reason for” (IHM I iii, 18). But, *pace* Hume and Kant, this doesn’t entail that common sense is unjustified. Hume and Kant err by taking for granted precisely what Reid means to call into question: a failed account of justification. In this way, it was Hume and Kant who, with respect to justification, left everything “in its old condition, as if nothing had happened” (Kant 4).

Lundestad on Common Sense as Unjustified. In his article *The Skeptic and the Madman: The Proto-Pragmatism of Thomas Reid*, Erik Lundestad claims that the essence of the skeptical challenge is that we should “justify each and every one of our beliefs” and that “any belief which is not justified, such as our belief in external objects, is therefore to be dismissed” (Lundestad 129). He understands the acceptance of this challenge to be what separates philosophy from the common affairs of life, “where we clearly depend on a whole range of beliefs, many of which may not be justifiable” (Lundestad 129).

Lundestad thinks Reid fails to answer the skeptical challenge, surmising that his response is merely that “there are beliefs, such as our belief in an external reality, which we are not in a position to doubt, and which must therefore take for granted, *even if we*

are not in a position to justify them” (Lundestad 129).⁹ In this way, Lundestad thinks Reid’s common sense response “is not an attempt to justify our belief [in common sense]” (Lundestad 130). Rather than attempting to produce a justification of common sense, he thinks Reid is “doing nothing more (and or course, nothing less) than to point out that since we are unable to put the belief aside, *the skeptic’s demand can’t be met*” (Lundestad 130).¹⁰

But the skeptical challenge looms large, and it seems it can’t be set aside so easily. Accordingly, Lundestad contends that “to argue that we do not need to justify our beliefs would clearly be absurd” and he wonders how we can “possibly not *attempt* to honor the demand” (Lundestad 129). It will do no good for Reid to argue “commonsensical beliefs may be taken as true because they inhere to our nature” because the skeptical challenge is “not to accept anything as true that we do not have reason to believe” (Lundestad 132). That we are naturally constituted to believe these beliefs and are indelibly guided by them in the common affairs of life is admitted by all. But the matter at hand is the *justification* of these beliefs. And so Lundestad echoes Kant, in arguing that “Reid has missed the point, namely that our belief in [common sense] isn’t justified” (Lundestad 132).

It seems we’ve encountered a dilemma. On the one hand, if we accept the skeptical challenge, then many of our common beliefs will be uncovered to be unjustified. On the other hand, if we refuse the skeptical challenge, then we’ll be no

⁹ Emphasis added.

¹⁰ Emphasis added.

better off, since these common beliefs will still lack a justification. And so “the philosophy of common sense, therefore, leaves us in a stalemate” (Lundestad, 132).

A REIDIAN ACCOUNT OF JUSTIFICATION

The problem here is an ambiguity between (i) being justified in believing something and (ii) having good and sufficient reasons for believing it. Admittedly, on many accounts of justification, to be justified in believing *P* just is to have good and sufficient reasons for *P*, or something of the like. If this type of account of justification is correct, then common sense is manifestly unjustified, since “reason is incapable of dispelling the clouds [of skepticism]” (THN I, iv, 7), and common sense is something philosophy cannot “give any reason for” (IHM I iii, 18). But Hume, Kant, and Lundestad are wrong to take for granted this type of account of justification, for it’s precisely this type of account that Reid’s Philosophy of Common Sense calls into question.¹¹

Epistemology Naturalized. In the first place, we don’t believe the dictates of common sense on the basis of reasons or by reasoning. This is especially clear in the case of perception. Consider Reid’s description of the phenomenology of perception:

If... we attend to that act of our mind which we call the perception of an external object of sense, we shall find in it these three things. *First*, some conception or notion of the object perceived. *Secondly*, a strong and irresistible conviction and belief of its present existence. And, *thirdly*, that this conviction and belief are immediate, and not the effect of reasoning. (EIP II, v, 96)

¹¹ We know they take this kind of account of justification for granted because we know they think common sense isn’t justified unless we can *give a reason for it*.

Reid's description of the phenomenology of memory and introspection are appropriately similar:

Memory is always accompanied with the belief of that which we remember, as perception is accompanied with the belief of that which we perceive, and consciousness with the belief of that whereof we are conscious" (EIP III, i, 255).

In view of this, the demand that we give a reason for these sorts of beliefs ought to strike us as strange. What we're really interested in, when it comes to the vindication of putative perceptions, memories and intuitions, is whether a set of facts obtains concerning our cognitive faculties and our epistemic environs.

Plantinga's Reidian Account of Justification. Alvin Plantinga sets forth an essentially Reidian epistemology in his two volumes, *Warrant: the Current Debate* and *Warrant and Proper Function*. He describes this epistemology as "similar" and "in the spirit" of Reid's, and he admits "the debt" he owes to Reid (WPF viii). Wolterstorff agrees that "[Plantinga's] theory of warrant is a good example of such a 'Reidian' theory" (Wolterstorff 2). Still, Plantinga's immediate purpose isn't "to provide a good or satisfactory interpretation or account of Reid's thought" (WPF viii). And Wolterstorff is careful to point out that "Plantinga's theory is a 'Reidian' theory, but not Reid's theory" since he "cannot (and does not) claim that his theory was constructed by simply exegeting and elaborating Reid" (Wolterstorff 2). In any case, for our present purposes it is enough that Plantinga's account exemplifies a distinctly Reidian account of justification; one that differs from Hume, Kant and Lundestad is just the right ways.

Plantinga uses ‘warrant’ in place of the usual ‘justification’ to refer to whatever it is which “added to true belief, yields knowledge” or “epistemizes true belief” (WCD xi). He prefers ‘warrant’ over ‘justification’ because he’s eager to shed the deontological baggage he takes ‘justification’ to carry. In his estimation, ‘justification’ is hopelessly entangled with familiar deontological notions like permissibility and duty. It is helpful to think of Reid as an early proponent of epistemology naturalized.¹² For, as we have seen, Reid thinks of our cognitive faculties as natural systems, like our legs, throat or stomach (EIP VI, vi, 452). Surveying the landscape, Plantinga observes that “perhaps the mildest form of naturalism [in epistemology] would be one in which it is denied that warrant is to be understood in terms of deontology” (WPF 45). A more extreme form of epistemological naturalism, however, “eschews normativity altogether, seeking to replace traditional epistemology (with its concern with justification, rationality, reasonability, and their normative colleagues) by descriptive psychology” (WPF 45). Reid’s critics, insofar as they believe Reid confuses the *quaestio facti* with the *quaestio juris*, imagine his epistemology of common sense is naturalized in this extreme sense. But Plantinga understands his own Reidian epistemology to be naturalized in only the mildest sense: not all normativity has been banished, even if all *deontological* normativity has (WPF 45). He describes the latent non-deontological normativity in this way:

This the use in which we say, of a damaged knee, or a diseased pancreas, or a worn brake shoe, that it no longer functions as it ought to. This is the use in which we say that human heart ought to beat between forty and two-hundred

¹² Even if this is anachronistic.

times per minute, and that your car's choke ought to open (and the engine ought to throttle back to 750 RPM) when it warms up. (WPF 45)

To wonder if your stomach properly digests food, is to wonder whether your stomach is functioning properly, insofar as it is aimed at the digestion of food. Whether this 'aiming' of the stomach is thanks to God or evolution or both is irrelevant. That your stomach can be rightly said to fail to function properly when it fails to digest healthy food, is perfectly innocuous. If this were to happen, then of course you'd tell your doctor there's something *wrong* with your stomach; that your stomach is not functioning properly; that it's not 'doing what it's supposed to.'

In the same way, to wonder if a particular common sense belief is warranted, is to wonder if the cognitive faculties which gave rise to it are functioning properly insofar as they are aimed at the production of truth belief.¹³ In this way, instead of asking for reasons to be given for such a belief, we ought to ask whether it:

- (a) "has been produced in me by cognitive faculties that are working properly (functioning as they ought to, subject to no cognitive dysfunction)," and
- (b) "in a cognitive environment that is appropriate for my kind of cognitive faculties," and
- (c) "the segment of the design plan governing the production of that belief is aimed at the production of true beliefs," and
- (d) "there is a high statistical probability that belief produced under those conditions will be true." (WPF 46)

¹³ Or, more precisely, mostly true beliefs to a degree of precision appropriate for our survival or something of the like.

Provided that these sorts of questions receive an affirmative answer – in other words, that certain external matters of fact obtain – the common sense belief will be warranted. And if the belief is also true, it will constitute knowledge. Whether these specific conditions are precisely the correct conditions is irrelevant for our present purposes. What matters is that, on any suitably Reidian epistemology, what epistemizes a common sense belief is the satisfaction of these kinds of conditions, not our ability to give a reason for it.

VERIFYING OUR COGNITIVE FACULTIES

A troubling question remains: don't we need to personally verify that our cognitive faculties are reliable, and that the conditions of warrant have been satisfied, before we can be justified in believing a common sense belief? In this way, it seems we have a duty to “run a credit check on perception and memory [et al.] as producers of belief” (Wolterstorff 198). If so, then Reid might yet be guilty of sidestepping the *quaestio juris*, for he seems to think running such a ‘credit check’ is impossible for us.

Verification And First Principles. Commenting on the philosophical framework of his opponents, Reid notes that “the new system admits only one of the principles of common sense as a first principle” (IHM VII, 211). By “new system” Reid seems to mean post-Cartesian philosophy generally. In any case, what distinguishes the new system from what preceded it is that only the existence of “our thoughts, our sensations, and every thing of which are conscious” is admitted as a first principle (IHM VII, 211). From here, the new system “pretends, by strict argumentations, to deduce all the rest

from it” (IHM VII, 211). Proponents of the new system insist that “reason must rear the whole fabric of knowledge upon this single principle of consciousness” (IHM VII, 211).

On the other hand,

the old system admitted all the principles of common sense as first principles, without requiring any proof of them; and therefore, though its reasoning was commonly vague, analogical, and dark, yet it was built upon a broad foundation, and had no tendency to skepticism. (IHM VII, 211)

Thanks to the old system’s broader foundation, “we do not find that any Peripatetic thought it incumbent upon him to prove the existence of a material world” (IHM VII, 211). Yet, strikingly, “every writer upon the Cartesian system attempted this” (IHM VII, 211).

First Principles and Simplicity. Reid admits we’re naturally disposed “to reduce things to as few principles as possible” and he confesses that “this, without a doubt, adds to the beauty of a system, *if the principles are able to support what rests upon them*” (IHM VII, 211).¹⁴ Unfortunately, “this love of simplicity, and of reducing things to few principles, hath produced many a false system” (IHM VII, 211). And in Reid’s estimation, “there never was any system in which it appears so remarkably as that of Des Cartes” (IHM VII, 211). The specific problems Reid finds in Descartes’ system are irrelevant for our present purposes. What matters for us is Reid’s broader point that simplicity isn’t our only *desideratum*. If a certain degree of simplicity in a philosophical system’s first principles leads to serious problems, viz. skepticism, we have good grounds for calling

¹⁴ Emphasis added.

into question the demand for this degree of simplicity. Of course there will be a cost to any such loss of simplicity. But if the cost is less than that of skepticism, then a loss in simplicity is to be preferred. Deciding precisely what level of simplicity is appropriate will be a matter of personal judgment, in view of our various epistemic goals and values. Descartes, of course, had his own peculiar goals and values. Presumably, in view of the collapse of the medieval synthesis and the wars of religion (et al.), he highly valued the eradication of all risk and uncertainty from the realm of knowledge and inquiry. But, if the cost of attempting to secure this otherwise noble goal is too great, then there's no reason to think we're shirking our epistemic duty or 'betraying reason' by conceding it.¹⁵ We must act wisely, in view of the whole constellation of our epistemic goals and values. We might prefer that the first principles of our philosophical system be simple in the extreme and utterly risk free, but if the result is skepticism, such a preference is very unwise. The new system's failure to answer the skeptical challenge suggests we need to again open ourselves up to a larger pool of first principles, and to learn to live wisely in the face of the inherent risks of such a system.

The Privileging of Reason and Introspection Over Perception and Memory. Reid observes that

upon the whole, it seems to have been a common error of Philosophers to account the senses fallacious. And to this error they have added another, that one use of reason is to detect the fallacies of sense. (EIP II, xxii, 251)

Wolterstorff takes special interest in this privileging of reason and introspection over perception and memory by Reid's opponents (Wolterstorff 198). Why do the

philosophers of the new system “[allow] the philosopher to use the deliverances of consciousness and of reason without requiring of him that he first run a credit check on those” (Wolterstorff 197)? Why trust reason and introspection over perception and memory, if “they all come from the same shop, and were made by the same artist” (IHM VI, xx)? And as Wolterstorff points out, “perceptual beliefs and memorial beliefs are indeed sometimes false; but so too are rational beliefs and introspective beliefs” (Wolterstorff 199). Of course if we’re rash, then we might make silly mistakes. But the skeptic seems to think that even when we’re careful, “there’s a reason to run a credit check on perception and memory that doesn’t hold for reason and introspection” (Wolterstorff 199). Here the skeptic fails to appreciate the inherent riskiness of reason and consciousness themselves. For even reason and consciousness are risky. As Reid notes,

there is no more reason to account our senses fallacious, than our reason, than 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. (EIP II, xxii, 251).

Reason and Introspection May Err. In order to bring into view the riskiness of reason and introspection, it will be helpful to begin by carefully considering the riskiness of perception. Wolterstorff identifies two main ways in which perceptual beliefs may be deceptive.

First, we might be deceived because of “something deceptive about the intuitional content” of the perceptual belief (Wolterstorff 199). This first kind of

deception occurs in two ways: “the way of appearance and the way of hallucination” (Wolterstorff 200). When an object “looks as a green thing would look” even though “in reality it’s blue” we’ve been deceived in the way of *appearance* (Wolterstorff 200). When we seem to perceive something but don’t, as in the familiar case of a mirage in the desert, we’re deceived in the way of *hallucination*.

Second, we might be deceived because of a “breakdown in the move from awareness of that [intuitional] content to the belief” (Wolterstorff 199). Suppose someone hands you what seems to be, and actually is, a glass of whisky. Naturally enough, you believe it to be whisky. But suppose someone you trust falsely convinces you that it’s a glass of iced tea that only looks and smells exactly like whisky. In a situation like this, if you really are convinced it’s iced tea, you’ll look down at the glass and think to yourself “This iced tea looks and smells exactly like whisky!” This is an error in the move from intuitional content to belief.

With these sorts of perceptual deceptions in view, we may return to the matter of reason and consciousness. With respect to reason, Wolterstorff would have us notice that “it may be that a proposition not only is, but appears to me to be, a necessary truth” (Wolterstorff 200). But it also might be that an “intimidating brilliant logician friend” comes along and convinces us, perhaps with a proof so elaborate that it can’t be grasped, that this cannot be (Wolterstorff 200). It is tempting to dismiss this illustration as an uninteresting example of a breakdown in the move from intuitional content to belief. But how it is that such a logician friend is able to trick us in this way? The logician friend takes advantage of the fact that “*the intuitive content* can also be deceiving”

(Wolterstorff 200).¹⁶ All too often “some proposition appears to a person as a proposition that is necessarily true would appear, when it’s not” (Wolterstorff 200). In the same way, sometimes “an argument appears to a person as an argument that is valid would appear, when it’s not” (Wolterstorff 200). But the most troubling cases are when “the members of a set of propositions all retain the ‘glow’ of necessary truth even when we rightly come to realize that they can’t all be true, let alone necessarily true” (Wolterstorff 200). A notorious example of this is Russell’s Paradox (Wolterstorff 200). So, just as we’re prone to perceptual errors, we’re also prone to errors of reason. And these errors sometimes occur in the most troubling way of all: deceptive intuitional content.

But what of the privileging of introspection over memory and perception?¹⁷ Suppose, for example, you stop to consider your emotions with respect to a recent traumatic event. Are you angry? Disappointed? Sad? Whatever belief you do have concerning your emotional state will be based on introspection, and it will be prone to error and confusion. The problem with these sorts of introspective beliefs is that emotions aren’t “fully present and unmistakable in their presented qualities” (Wolterstorff 205). In view of this, introspective beliefs based on intuitional content that is both “fully present and unmistakable” are highly valuable. There might well be “a certain class of mental items so luminous that, if one has a belief about them at all, that belief is correct” (Wolterstorff 205). If so, then certainly *this* subset of introspective

¹⁶ Emphasis added.

¹⁷ It’s probably worth noting, with Wolterstorff, that “it was the conviction of most Western thinkers that the heart is even more deceitful than the world is deceptive” (Wolterstorff 201).

beliefs won't require verification. But problems will arise just as soon as we try to put this special subset of introspective beliefs to work in our project of verification. For, just as soon as we undertook to "develop and appraise evidence, gathered from such deliverances of introspection" we'd need to put reason to work in order to "appraise the logical force of arguments" (Wolterstorff 205). But, as we have seen, reason is susceptible to the same risks as perception, including deceptive intuitional content.

Testing As Trying Out. The skeptic might attempt to legitimize the privileging of reason and introspection over perception and memory by appealing to how well reliance upon reason and introspection has gone for us. For, as Wolterstorff observes,

if one placed before one's mind's eye a representative and ample sample of judgments of reason, took note of which of those were true and which not, and then calculated the relative frequency of true judgments within the totality it's obvious the proportion would be high. (Wolterstorff 208)

In this way, it seems that reason is basically reliable, even if it's fallible. Wolterstorff thinks this sort of "track record" argument for the reliability of reason can be formulated in roughly this way:

Belief in **a** was formed in me by reason, and I now discern (by the use of reason and perhaps other faculties) that **a** is true; belief **b** as formed in me by reason, and I now discern (by the use of reason and perhaps other faculties) that **b** is true, and so forth. (Wolterstorff 208)

Notice, that this argument takes for granted the basic reliability of reason, even if it's not an explicit premise. The skeptic who avails themselves of this track record argument does well. But since the argument takes for granted the reliability of reason, it doesn't

provide an independent verification of reason. Nevertheless, it seems we can verify reason by taking it for granted. The problem for the skeptic is that we can also verify perception and memory by taking them for granted. We know the bend we *seem* to see in a submerged canoe paddle is deceptive because when we pull it out of the water, we can see it's not bent. In this way, we verify our perceptual faculties by relying on them; we test them by trying them out. Testing them by trying them out has taught us how to rightly use them and when to be weary of deceptive intuitional content. We know our perceptual faculties are basically reliable because we rely on them to sort out deceptive intuitional content. To test reason by producing a reasoned argument in reason's favor, is to test it out by trying it out. But given that perception and memory can be tested by trying them out just as well as reason, this track record style argument will prove to be the skeptic's undoing. It seems that only superstition or dogmatism are left to support the privileging of reason and introspection over perception and memory.¹⁸

COMMON SENSE, SELF-EVIDENCE AND PHENOMENAL CONSERVATISM

We remember Reid's observation that "when we examine, in the way of analysis, the evidence of any proposition, either we find it self-evident, or it rests upon one or more propositions that support it" (EIP VI, iv, 455). And we remember that, for Reid, perceptual beliefs are self-evident, since they aren't based upon the evidence of other *propositions* (EIP I, I, 22; II, v, 96). Instead, perceptual beliefs are based on the evidence of *non-propositional* perceptual experiences which are naturally coupled with belief (EIP

¹⁸ For there is no *reason* to privilege reason over perception.

II, v, 96; Wolterstorff 222). Now, as we have seen, the intuitional content of perceptual experiences, which is the “evidence” upon which perceptual beliefs are based, can be deceptive. In this way, perceptual beliefs turn out to be both self-evident and fallible. But the very idea that a belief could be both self-evident and fallible is strange. In order to make better sense of how self-evidence interrelates with fallibility, I will Huemer’s principle of Phenomenal Conservatism (Huemer, *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception* 99; *Ethical Intuitionism* 100-101).

Phenomenal Conservatism Defined. The principle of Phenomenal Conservatism is a principle of justification in the internalist sense. It’s internalist in that the believer has privileged access to the conditions that obtain justification for their beliefs. The principle of Phenomenal Conservatism states that, “If it seems to *S* as if *P*, then *S* thereby has at least prima facie justification for believing that *P*” (Huemer, *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception* 99). We may contrast this with Plantinga’s Reidian theory of warrant, which is decidedly externalist. It’s externalist in that the conditions which obtain warrant for a belief are external matters of fact which might well be opaque to the believer. It might be that my perceptual belief that there’s a tree in my backyard is warranted, even if I presently can’t tell whether the belief is warranted. For example, I might not be able to tell whether I’m presently a brain in a vat. If I’m a brain in a vat, my perceptual belief in the tree won’t be warranted, since the cognitive faculties which gave rise to my belief won’t have been tampered with. But it’s impossible for a belief to be justified (in the relevant sense) without the believer being aware that the conditions which obtain this

justification have been satisfied. For beliefs are justified (in the relevant sense) by ‘seeming-as-if’ experiences which we are obviously aware of, if they do exist.

Huemer offers up the principle of Phenomenal Conservatism as “a principle of foundational justification” (Huemer, *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception* 99). Put in Reid’s terminology, it’s a principle of *self-evident* justification. Huemer does not understand a foundational belief to be *unfounded*, as if it were dependent on nothing (Huemer, *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception* 99). Instead, foundational beliefs “do not depend on any other beliefs for their justification” (Huemer, *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception* 99). Echoing Reid, Huemer thinks “perceptual beliefs certainly do depend on something else for their justification: namely, perceptual experiences” (Huemer, *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception* 99). There are a variety of ways in which it might seem to *S* as if *P*. *S* might have a perceptual experience of *P*. *S* might also have an apparent memory of *P*. *S* might have an intellectual ‘seeming-as-if’ experience, i.e. an intuition, of *P*. Each of these sorts of beliefs would count as self-evident or foundational. According to Phenomenal Conservatism, *S* is at least *prima facie* justified in believing things to be as they appear to be by means of these kinds of ‘seems-as-if’ experiences.

The Difference Between It Seeming To You That P And You Believing That P. Of course *S* is not *prima facie* justified in believing that *P* simply because *S* believes that *P*. Such a principle of justification would be far too liberal, justifying any and every belief *S* could manage to believe. But it is one thing for *S* to believe that *P* and quite another for it to seem to *S* that *P*. Consider, for example, the following optical illusion (see fig. 1).

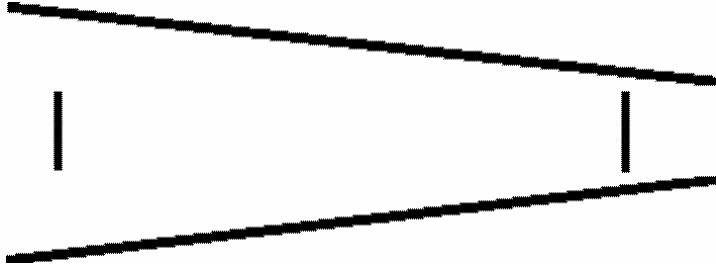


Figure 1. A Common Optical Illusion.

If you're like me, then the right line will seem longer to you than the left line. But, if you take the time to carefully measure them, you'll find they're the same length. The key thing to notice here is that the right line still seems longer—in some sense—even though you don't believe it is.

Consider your lunch from two days ago. Suppose you have an apparent memory of eating vegetable soup. Suppose, however, you're presented with evidence that decisively proves you ate only a blueberry muffin. If you're like me, then your memory of the soup *might* not immediately dissolve. It might still seem to you that you had the soup—in some sense—even though you don't believe you had the soup.

Finally, consider the following proposition: for every condition there is the set of just those things that satisfy that condition. As before, if you are like me, then even several years after learning about Russell's Paradox, it will still seem to you that this proposition is true—in some sense—even if you don't believe it's true. It still seems true—in some sense—even if you're quite sure it's false.

The phrase, 'it seems to S ' denotes something common to putative perceptual experiences, apparent memories, and even seeming intuitions. You believe you're reading this paper, not because you believe you're reading it, but because it seems to

you that you're reading it. (You're having a perceptual experience of reading it.) You don't believe you ate lasagna for dinner because you believe you ate lasagna for dinner, but because it seems to you that you ate it. (You have an apparent memory of it.) If you believed in the proposition about conditions, you'd believe it not because you believe it, but because it seems true to you. (You have an intuition of its truth.)

Appearance Does Not Entail Reality. The fact that it seems to *S* that *P* does not entail that *P*. Obviously things aren't always as they seem. But, according to Phenomenal Conservatism, *S* is prima facie justified in believing things to be as they seem to *S*. This justification is prima facie, and so it is defeasible. In a manner of speaking, appearances are "innocent until proven guilty" (Huemer, *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception* 102). And so even if the vast majority of *S*'s appearances were, in the final analysis, defeated and overturned, this would not count against Phenomenal Conservatism. Again, even if the vast majority of *S*'s appearances were, in the final analysis, deceptive, this would not count against Phenomenal Conservatism. The distinctive insight of Phenomenal Conservatism is that, in the absence of defeaters, you are justified in taking appearances at face value.

A defeater can defeat an appearance only if the defeater itself appears to be true. You believe the vertical lines from the optical illusion (see fig. 1) are the same length because measurement makes them seem to be the same length. In this way, one kind of appearance (measurement) defeats another (just 'eyeballing it'). And so the work of debunking appearances itself presupposes Phenomenal Conservatism. Arguments can also be defeaters. But an argument can only rationally persuade if the premises seem

true and the argument seems to be free of errors in logical form. In this way, arguments aren't alternatives to appearances, they're an interesting subset of appearances. An argument persuades *S* by changing the way things seem to *S* – by making it seem to *S* that the proposition up for debate follows from a set of premises which seem true to *S* (Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism* 100-101).

Logical Alternatives to Phenomenal Conservatism. If the reader is skeptical of Phenomenal Conservatism, perhaps it will help to consider the logical alternatives.

Should *S* believe what seems false? It might be that *S* should believe something that seems false in one sense (by 'just eyeballing it'), but true in another (by measurement), as in the case of the optical illusion (see fig. 1). But, in the final analysis, *S* believes the lines are the same length because it seems true. And so, even if from time to time *S* is justified in believing what seems false in some sense, *S* is never justified in believing what seems false in the final analysis. Furthermore, if this alternative to Phenomenal Conservatism itself seems false to *S*, then according to this alternative's own lights *S* is justified in believing Phenomenal Conservatism to be true. In this way, this alternative is absurd.

Should *S* believe only true propositions? In a sense, yes, *S* should believe only true propositions. But if I were to ask *S* which propositions are true, *S* would list off all the propositions that, in the final analysis, seemed true to *S*. Suppose *S* is in a room full of red, green, and yellow balls. Suppose *S* is instructed to gather all the green balls. Next, suppose *S* is instructed to gather all the balls that, in the final analysis, seem green. The only way *S* can perform the first task is by performing the second (Huemer,

Skepticism and the Veil of Perception 105). The only way to gather the green balls is by gathering all the balls that, in the final analysis, seem green. And so, while this alternative seems promising at first, in the end it reduces down to Phenomenal Conservatism itself, and so it does not constitute a true alternative.

Should *S* believe only false propositions? Again, the only way to pick out the false propositions is by picking out the ones that, in the final analysis, seem false. And so this third alternative reduces to the first: believing what seems false. And so it can be rejected for the same reasons as before.

We have rejected believing only true propositions, believing only false propositions, and believing what seems false. Should *S* then believe nothing at all? Are all of *S*'s beliefs unjustified, in the relevant sense? At this point I could rehearse some of the standard arguments against global skepticism, but I trust it will be enough to point out that, as it stands, the only alternative to Phenomenal Conservatism is global skepticism. Which is to say there is no plausible alternative to Phenomenal Conservatism.

Self-Evidence and Fallibility. In the light of all this, we can see how a belief can be both self-evident and yet fallible; even false. Self-evidence, on the Reidian picture, is simply a matter of a belief's being based, not the evidence of other beliefs, but on certain non-propositional appearance experiences. Given the truth of Phenomenal Conservatism, if we have a perceptual appearance experience of a tree in our backyard, we are thereby prima facie justified in believing there's a tree in our backyard. The presence of the tree in our backyard will be self-evident. We might not be able to independently verify that

the cognitive faculties which gave rise to this belief satisfy the conditions of warrant, and so are reliable, but we can see that the belief is justified in the internalist sense.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I began this chapter by introducing some considerations against the admission of common sense within the bounds of philosophy, as raised by Kant. With these problems in view, and in the hopes of pinpointing what it is that truly separates a philosophy of common sense from others, I undertook a quick comparison of Reid and Hume on the matter of common sense. I argued that their differences lie not on the *quaestio facti* concerning common sense, but the *quaestio juris*. That is, they differ on whether common sense is justified. From here I launched an investigation into whether common sense is justified, providing an outline of the basic features of a distinctively Reidian account of justification. Finally, I addressed the question of whether we need to verify our cognitive faculties in order to be justified in relying on them. I argued that the demand that we verify our cognitive faculties can be ignored and that any critique of Reid with respect to the *quaestio juris* concerning common sense is fundamentally flawed so long as it takes for granted an account of justification which Reid means to call into question.

In the final chapter I will distinguish two subtly different notions of common sense that I find unhelpfully intertwined throughout Reid. I will identify the second as ripe for expansion and refinement. From here I will launch into a presentation of this expanded and refined notion of common sense as what we must take for granted.

CHAPTER THREE:

Common Sense As What Must Be Taken For Granted

In the first chapter we considered a sample list of what Reid takes to be principles of common sense. However, it's doubtful many non-philosophers have any explicit beliefs on these matters whatsoever. For example, if we asked a typical non-philosopher if "there is life and intelligence in our fellow-men with whom we converse" they would, in all likelihood, find the question exceedingly strange (EIP VI, vi, 482). Not because the question is a hard one, but because it's a not a matter they've ever stopped to consider. But if common sense is that good judgment which enables people, learned or not, to judge rightly on these matters, then it seems very few people have common sense. For, as Wolterstorff suggests, "most people haven't even so much as entertained [these principles] let alone believed them" (Wolterstorff 225).

Moreover, Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense seems to fit best against the backdrop of Providential Naturalism – something which nearly all intellectuals in good standing now take to be outdated. In his introduction to the critical edition of Reid's *An Inquiry into the Human Mind*, editor Derek R. Brookes describes Providential Naturalism as a "world view" consisting of four basic tenets:

First, Newton's *regulae philosophandi* were taken to provide the criteria for theoretical or explanatory success in both the natural sciences and the philosophy of mind; *second*, the laws of nature could be given no further explanation than the providential purposes of God; *third*, determining the laws of nature would serve to establish a naturalistic means of discovering the end or purpose for which a thing was created; and *fourth*, the end or purpose of our cognitive processes was, among other things, to furnish us with true beliefs. (IHM, xv)¹⁹

It's easy to see how Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense fits against the backdrop of this worldview: God furnished us with cognitive faculties aimed at the production of mostly true beliefs in view of our general wellbeing; and God, being wholly good, can be trusted to have provided us with basically reliable faculties. Lundestad notes that "though nearly forgotten today, providential naturalism was widely accepted in Reid's own time" (Lundestad 126). The problem, of course, is that this worldview no longer reigns the day. In any case, anyone who dared to lay claim to it in open philosophical debate would be forced to accept a tremendous burden of proof.

Finally, it seems that Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense will inevitably engender philosophical dogmatism. For we remember that, according to Reid, common sense can only be consistently doubted by constitutionally disordered lunatics. And those who dare to even temporarily doubt the principles of common sense are dubbed 'metaphysical lunatics' by Reid. He also contends that, when confronted by this kind of absurd metaphysical lunacy in a skeptical opponent, the right response is

¹⁹ Emphasis added.

ridicule rather than reasoned arguments (IHM II, vi, 32; V, vii, 68; Wolterstorff 249). For, in situations like this, Reid thinks that ridicule “cuts with as keen an edge as argument” (EIP VI, iv, 462). This poses a huge problem for Reid’s Philosophy of Common Sense. For, if common sense is a definite set of beliefs which are not open to criticism, and dissension is greeted with ridicule rather than argument, then it seems Reid’s Philosophy of Common Sense is frightfully dogmatic.

With a view to addressing these three serious problems which still stand in the way of Reid’s Philosophy of Common Sense, I will distinguish two subtly different notions of common sense that I find unhelpfully intertwined throughout Reid. I will identify the second as ripe for expansion and refinement. From here I will launch into a presentation of this expanded and refined notion of common sense as what we must take for granted. In the end, I will find that each of the aforementioned problems is satisfactorily answered with the help of this expanded and refined conception of common sense.

TWO CONCEPTIONS OF COMMON SENSE

We have seen that Reid understands by ‘common sense’ “that degree of judgment which is common to men with whom we can converse and transact business” (EIP VI, ii 424). On top of this, “the same degree of understanding which makes a man capable of acting with common prudence in the conduct of life, makes him capable of discovering what is true and what is false in matters that are self-evident, and which he distinctly apprehends” (EIP VI, ii 426). And so the person of common sense is “a competent

judge” of self-evident principles when “he conceives them distinctly” (EIP VI, ii, 426). But, as Wolterstorff observes, it’s not clear, from passages like this, precisely what Reid understands by ‘judgment’ (Wolterstorff 219). He could mean either “the faculty of judging” or “the judgments rendered” (Wolterstorff 219). Common sense could be one of (or a part of) our cognitive faculties aimed at the production of true belief, or it could be a set of beliefs and judgments so produced. And if we proceed on the assumption that common sense is a set of beliefs and judgments so produced, even more ambiguity remains. Sometimes common sense is spoken of by Reid as a set of shared first principles we judge to be true when we ‘conceive them distinctly’ (EIP VI, ii, 426; Wolterstorff 220). Other times common sense is spoken of by Reid as a kind of tacit guide unconsciously relied upon during performance of mundane tasks in the common affairs of life (EIP VI, ii 424; Wolterstorff 220). If common sense is the former, then it is a set of shared principles *explicitly* believed (EIP VI, ii, 426; Wolterstorff 220). But if common sense is the latter, then it is a set of principles *taken for granted* even if we have no explicit beliefs concerning them (EIP VI, ii 424; Wolterstorff 220).

Taking For Granted Vs. Believing. Explicitly believing something is quite different from taking it for granted. Consider, for example, the reliability of a favorite chair. The last time you sat on it you took its reliability for granted, though you almost certainly didn’t entertain any explicit beliefs or make any explicit judgments about the chair’s reliability. In this way, we can see that “one doesn’t have to believe something to take it for granted” (Wolterstorff 225). Of course some of the principles of common sense we do explicitly judge to be true are also “taken for granted by all of us in the living of our

lives in the every days; elementary propositions of logic and mathematics would be examples” (Wolterstorff 220). Notice, however, that “the converse is definitely not true” (Wolterstorff 220). We all take for granted, at least in the common affairs of life, that “there is life and intelligence in our fellow-men with whom we converse” (EIP VI, vi, 482). But very few people have explicitly judged this proposition to be true or formed any explicit beliefs about it. And the same seems true of all these principles of common sense taken from our sample list, including:

- “the existence of every thing of which I am conscious” (EIP VI, vi, 470).
- that “the thoughts of which I am conscious are the thoughts of a being which I call *myself*” (EIP VI, vi, 472).
- that “those things really did happen which I distinctly remember” (EIP VI, vi, 474).
- “our own personal identity and continued existence, as far back as we remember any thing distinctly” (EIP VI, vi, 476).
- that “those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be” (EIP VI, vi, 476).
- that “in the phenomena of nature, what is to be, will probably be like to what has been in similar circumstances” (EIP VI, vi, 489)

Regarding common sense, Reid notes that “in most men it produces its effect without ever being attended to, or made an object of thought” (EIP VI, v, 482). In other words, for most people, common sense doesn’t do its job by producing in us explicit beliefs. For, “no man ever thinks of [a given principle of common sense], unless when he considers the ground of skepticism; yet invariably it governs his opinion” (EIP VI, v, 482). For example, “when a man in the common course of life gives credit to the

testimony of his senses, his memory, or his reason, he does not put the question to himself, whether these faculties may deceive him” (EIP VI, v, 482). Still, “the trust he reposes in them supposes an inward conviction, that, in that instance at least, they do not deceive him” (EIP VI, v, 482). And so, even if we don’t explicitly entertain the belief that they are reliable, our practice of confidently relying on them shows that we do take them for granted. Reid observes that the principles of common sense “force assent in particular instances, more powerful than when they are turned into a general proposition” (EIP VI, v, 482). For we can only put general principles into practice in particular instances. It is by reflecting on these particular instances that we uncover what it is that we take for granted. The way to answer the question of whether we believe in the basic reliability of our perceptual faculties, is by reflecting on particular instances wherein they are put to use, e.g. crossing a road. Our practices reveal to us what we really and truly take for granted. If it turns out that, as a matter of fact, we do take the basic reliability of our perceptual faculties for granted, we *may* then explicitly believe in their basic reliability.

Unfortunately, this process of reflecting on our intelligible practices and taking note of what we seem to take for granted in performing them can go wrong. It’s possible that “what is only vulgar prejudice may be mistaken for a first principle” or perhaps “what is really a first principle may, by the enchantment of words, have such a mist thrown about it, as to hide its evidence, and to make a man of candour doubt it” (EIP I, ii, 41). Determining “what the precise limits are which divide common judgment from what is beyond it on the one hand, and from what falls short of it on the other” won’t

always be easy (EIP VI, ii, 427). Because of this, “men may agree in the meaning of the word [i.e. common sense] who have different opinions about those limits, or who even never thought of fixing them” (EIP VI, ii, 427). But to acknowledge this is not to suggest that common sense is completely amorphous and meaningless. This ambiguity concerning the boundaries of common sense “is as intelligible as, that all Englishmen should mean the same thing by the county of York, though perhaps not a hundredth of them can point out its precise limits” (EIP VI, ii, 427).

WITTGENSTEIN AND COMMON SENSE AS TAKING FOR GRANTED.

Wolterstorff contends that Wittgenstein’s ruminations on similar issues in *On Certainty* “will prove illuminating – illuminating of Reid’s account” (Wolterstorff 232). This is because “Wittgenstein develops more fully than Reid ever does the theme of *taking for granted*” (Wolterstorff 232). Moreover, “the sad history of misinterpretation of Reid’s doctrine of Common Sense” actually tempts Wolterstorff to wonder whether “it was impossible to understand what Reid was trying to say until *On Certainty* was published” (Wolterstorff 232).

Doubt in the Context of Taking For Granted. Wittgenstein claims that “one cannot make experiments if there are not some things that one does not doubt” (Wittgenstein 345, 43). For example, “if I make an experiment I do not doubt the existence of the apparatus before my eyes. I have plenty of doubts, but not that” (Wittgenstein 345, 43). But notice that this “does not mean that one takes certain propositions on trust” (Wittgenstein 345, 43). We don’t *explicitly* believe that the postal service will deliver a

package we've dropped off for delivery. Instead, we simply "take it for granted that it will arrive" (Wittgenstein 345, 43). We don't explicitly believe in the existence of the laboratory apparatus while conducting experiments, we simply take it for granted.

Of course, as Wolterstorff notes, this "seems pretty obvious – once it's pointed out" (Wolterstorff 233). But what we're really interested in is "whether our taking such and such for granted is always a purely local phenomenon" (Wolterstorff 233). If Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense is correct, then there are certain things which we must always take for granted, on pain of metaphysical lunacy and absurdity. And so we'll be happy to find that Wittgenstein thinks "all testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system" (Wittgenstein 105, 16). According to Wittgenstein, this system "belongs to the essence of what we call an argument" and it is "not so much the point of departure, as the element in which arguments have their life" (Wittgenstein 105, 16). In this way, it's "*not* a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments" (Wittgenstein 105, 16).

The Tacit Character of What's Taken For Granted. Wittgenstein echoes Reid, claiming "I do not *explicitly* learn the propositions that stand fast for me" (Wittgenstein 152, 22).²⁰ Instead we "discover them subsequently like the axis around which a body rotates" (Wittgenstein 152, 22). Wittgenstein notes that "no one ever taught me that my hands don't disappear when I am not paying attention to them" (Wittgenstein 153, 22). But, again, we can't be said "to presuppose the truth of this proposition in my assertions etc.,

²⁰ Emphasis added.

(as if they rested on it)” (Wittgenstein 153, 22). The giving of grounds must “come to an end sometime” (Wittgenstein 110, 17; Wolterstorff 234). But the ultimate grounding “is not an ungrounded presupposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting” (Wittgenstein 110, 17). Once again, “giving grounds[...] comes to an end;— but this end is not certain propositions’ striking us immediately as true[...] it is our acting, which lies at the bottom of the language game” (Wittgenstein 204, 28). To clarify, “*experience* is not ground for our game of judging. Nor is its *outstanding success*” (Wittgenstein 131, 19).²¹ It might be that we “derive it from experience” but it’s important we take note that “experience does not direct us to derive anything from experience” (Wittgenstein 130, 19). This ultimate ground “is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there—like our life” (Wittgenstein 559, 73).

Belief Systems and Our World Picture. Wolterstorff invites us to “consider the totality of a person’s beliefs at a given time” (Wolterstorff 235). Notice that “such a totality is not just a collection. It’s structured, organized; it’s a system” (Wolterstorff 235). And “a given person’s beliefs differ from each other with respect to their depth of ingression, or entrenchment, in the totality of that person’s beliefs” (Wolterstorff 235).²² In this way, the consequences of giving up some beliefs are greater than others, depending on how deeply entrenched they are. For example, if one were to find out that their belief that peanut butter is on sale is false, this would result in only a very few shallow changes in

²¹ Emphasis added.

²² Different beliefs within one’s belief structure will be held with different degrees of firmness, but this is distinct from a belief’s degree of entrenchment, even if they’re correlated (cf. Wolterstorff 235).

their belief system. If, however, one were to find out that their belief in the non-existence of the tooth-fairy is false, this would result in a thorough restructuring of their belief system. Wolterstorff notices that “almost all of Wittgenstein’s examples of deeply ingressed beliefs fall into one or the other of two sorts” (Wolterstorff 236). On the one hand, some are “deeply ingressed in the belief systems of all of us” and are “framework beliefs shared by all of us” (Wolterstorff 236). Taken together, these are what Wittgenstein calls “our world picture” (Wolterstorff 236). On the other hand, there are deeply ingressed personal beliefs. Consider the following example, offered by Wittgenstein, of a situation in which our world picture seems to be threatened:

After putting a book in a drawer, I assume it is there, unless. . . “Everything always proves me right. There is no well attested case of a book’s (simply) disappearing.” It has often happened that a book has never turned up again, although we knew for certain where it was.—But experience does really teach that a book, say, does not vanish away. (E.g. gradually evaporate.) But is it this experience with books etc. that leads us to assume that such a book has not vanished away? Well, suppose we were to find that under particular novel circumstances books did vanish away.—Shouldn’t we alter our assumption? Can one give the lie to the effect of experience on our system of assumption?
(Wittgenstein 134, 19)

Someone might say that the principle of the uniformity of nature rules out the possibility of such a disappearing. But “what does it mean to follow this principle? Do we really introduce it into our reasoning?” (Wittgenstein 135, 20). Wittgenstein contends that such a principle “is not an item in our consideration” (Wittgenstein 135, 20). Instead, it may be “merely the *natural law* which our inferring apparently follows”

(Wittgenstein 135, 20). It isn't a principle that grounds our reason, it is an expression of our how our practice of reasoning works.

Doubt and Certainty. According to Wittgenstein, “if you tried to doubt everything you would not get as far as doubting anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty” (Wittgenstein 115, 18). Wolterstorff clarifies that “what’s relevant here is not [subjective certainty] but the sort of certainty that a belief enjoys when it’s indubitable — that is to say, when one could not doubt it” (Wolterstorff 238). It is precisely “our maximally ingressed beliefs” that are indubitable in this way. (Wolterstorff 238) They’re indubitable in the sense that if we doubted them, we’d “have to doubt masses of other beliefs as well. And that’s just too difficult” (Wolterstorff 238). There are certain judgments which we “cannot depart from” except on pain of “toppling all other judgments” (Wittgenstein 419, 54). As with lab experiments and hypotheses, “the *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt” (Wittgenstein 341, 44). Broader still, “*all enquiry on our part* is set so as to exempt certain propositions from doubt, if they are ever formulated. They lie apart from the route travelled by enquiry” (Wittgenstein 88, 13). In this way, “judging, doubting, and giving reasons” are intelligible practices which themselves take certain things for granted (Wolterstorff 240). And so we need to take responsibility for what the practice of doubting takes for granted.

Suppose we want to know whether our world picture is true. This is an improper question, because “above all [our world picture] is the substratum of my enquiring and asserting” (Wittgenstein 162, 23). Moreover, “I did not get my picture of the world by

satisfying myself of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguished between true and false” (Wittgenstein 94, 15).

What Philosophy Itself Takes For Granted. Reid understands by ‘common sense’ “that degree of judgment which is common to men with whom we can converse and transact business” and “which makes a man capable of acting with common prudence in the conduct of life” (EIP VI, ii 424; VI, ii 426). Reid’s opponents in all likelihood imagine that philosophy constitutes a higher calling and so is to be held to a higher standard. But, if Wittgenstein is right, then the dictates of common sense include also certain beliefs “we all take for granted, as we offer reasons, ask questions, search for evidence, and so forth” (Wolterstorff 241). Such beliefs would be “so deeply ingressed in our belief systems that they are certain for us. Doubt cannot get at them there” (Wolterstorff 241). In this way, philosophers, even in grips of metaphysical lunacy, take for granted certain propositions, just as long as they continue to ask questions, search for evidence, and give reasons.

Reverse-Hypocrisy. If hypocrisy is the failure to live up to what we confess to believe, then reverse-hypocrisy is the failure to confess to believe what we actually do take for granted in the performance of an intelligible practice. Reid criticized Hume because he thought “it was only in solitude and retirement that [Hume] could yield any assent to his own philosophy” and that “society, like day-light, dispelled the darkness and fogs of skepticism, and made him yield to the dominion of Common Sense” (IHN I, v, 20). But if Wittgenstein is right, even in his solitude Hume still took for granted the dictates of common sense. He might have explicitly doubted them, from time to time. But, as we

have seen, it's one thing to believe something and another to take it for granted. The principles of common sense are uncovered by reflection upon our intelligible practices, in search of what we take for granted in performing them. And so, even during his temporary bouts of metaphysical lunacy, Hume was a walking revelation of the principles of common sense. Perhaps Reid was right, then, to detect some hypocrisy in Hume. Hume may not be a hypocrite but, insofar as he refuses to confess to believe that which even his doubting takes for granted, he's a reverse-hypocrite.

REVISITING THE THREE SERIOUS PROBLEMS

With our refined notion of common sense as what we must take for granted in view, we can to answer each of the aforementioned three problems which still lie in the way of Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense.

Which are the Actual Dictates of Common Sense and Who Believes in Them? Only philosophers will be able to draw up lists of principles of common sense. For only philosophers will take it as their task to reflect on our intelligible practices in search of what we take for granted in performing them. Each of the resultant principles will constitute a contentious position in a series of philosophical controversies. But the fact that "most people haven't even so much as entertained them as believed them" will be irrelevant (Wolterstorff 225). For the principles of common sense are those principles we all must take for granted, whether or not we've explicitly considered them or believed them. So whatever a common person believes (or fails to believe) concerning the principle that "there is life and intelligence in our fellow-men with whom we converse," what matters

is whether or not they do take it for granted and how deeply ingressed it is in their belief system. On the face of it, it seems obvious that we do take this principle for granted and it is a very deeply ingressed belief in our world picture.

Dependent Upon Providential Naturalism? It may well be that Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense fits very well against the backdrop of Providential Naturalism. But, in any case, the principles of common sense are those principles we *must* take for granted, whether or not our world view is Providential Naturalism or not. That the death of Providential Naturalism robs Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense of some of its initial plausibility is interesting, but ultimately irrelevant.

Dogmatism? Even under our refined and expanded conception of common sense as what we must take for granted, it remains the case that common sense can only be consistently doubted by constitutionally disordered lunatics. And those who attempt to temporarily doubt the principles of common sense will still be dubbed 'metaphysical lunatics'. But none of this is to say that particular lists of putative principles of common sense aren't open to criticism. For determining precisely which principles we do in fact take for granted won't be easy. All the Philosopher of Common Sense will insist on is that critics refrain from reverse-hypocrisy. Ridicule may be effective in unveiling reverse-hypocrisy, but not in all cases. In any case, the point is not to bully, but to bring people face to face with what they really do take for granted.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I began this chapter by acknowledging three serious problems with Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense as it stands. I then distinguished two subtly different notions of common sense that I found unhelpfully intertwined throughout Reid. I identified the second as ripe for expansion and refinement. From here I launched into a presentation of this expanded and refined notion of common sense. With all this in view, I found that each of the aforementioned problems is satisfactorily answered with the help of this expanded and refined notion of common sense.

AFTERWORD

I have endeavored to disrupt what I take to be a well-worn path towards facile rejection of Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense. I fear that too many dismiss his Philosophy of Common Sense as little more than a hackneyed attempt to return to a simpler pre-critical era, to turn the clock back to Locke and pretend Hume never happened. Seen in this light, Reid will seem like a 'philosophical conservative' of sorts. This is a serious misjudgment of Reid. If Hume's philosophy was a great triumph in the application of thoroughgoing criticism to the traditional loci of philosophy, then Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense constitutes an attempt to progress beyond the critical era and into a distinctly post-critical era. A post-critical philosophy won't be un-critical. Instead, Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense represents a sophisticated turning of the skeptical gaze towards skepticism itself. The result won't be the abdication of skepticism, but its maturation. In view of this, I leave the reader with the following apologia, offered by Reid in defense of his own foes:

But instead of despising the dawn of light, we ought rather to hope for its increase: instead of blaming the philosophers I have mentioned, for the defects and blemishes of their system, we ought rather to honour their memories, as the first discoverers of a region in philosophy formerly unknown; and however lame and imperfect the system may be, they have opened the way to future discoveries, and are justly intitled to a great share in the merit of them. They have removed an infinite deal of dust and rubbish, collected in the ages of

scholastic sophistry, which had obstructed the way. They have put us in the right road, that of experience and accurate reflection.

(IHM I, iv, 18)

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