Thomas Reid on the first principles of speculative, moral and political knowledge

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THOMAS REID SUR LES PREMIERS PRINCIPES DE LA CONNAISSANCE SPÉCULATIVE, MORALE ET POLITIQUE

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RÉSUMÉ

Cette dissertation rend compte de la théorie des premiers principes de la connaissance de Thomas Reid (1710-1796), plus particulièrement, de la théorie des premiers principes de la philosophie de l'esprit, de la morale et de la politique. Dans le premier chapitre, je discute des engagements fondationnalistes de Reid dans la philosophie de l'esprit, de la morale et de la politique. Je soutiens qu'il est clairement un fondationnaliste en ce qui concerne la connaissance spéculative et morale, mais qu'il n'est pas clair qu'il conserve les engagements fondationnalistes en matière de savoir politique - les premiers principes de la politique ne sont pas des croyances évidentes en soi: ils ne sont pas justifiés depuis le début de la recherche. Par conséquent, ils n'ont pas ce qu'il faut pour être une croyance fondamentale dans une vision fondationnaliste de la structure de la connaissance. Dans le deuxième chapitre, je discute la compréhension de Reid des sources de la connaissance, à savoir, le sens commun et la connaissance de l'humanité. Je soutiens que si la philosophie de l'esprit et de la morale repose sur les premiers principes du sens commun (croyances immédiates et irrésistibles dues à la constitution originelle de l'esprit), la politique repose sur les premiers principes de la connaissance de l'humanité (croyances dues à un mélange de la sagacité et de l'expérience du philosophe politique qui vit parmi les êtres humains dans une société politique). Dans le troisième chapitre, j'essaie d'expliquer la compréhension de Reid des premiers principes de la philosophie de l'esprit, de la morale et de la politique. Je m'efforce de répondre à ces questions : Qu'est-ce qu'un principe premier de la connaissance? Comment expliquer la distinction entre les principes des vérités contingentes et les principes des vérités nécessaires ? Quelles sont les moyens que nous avons pour identifier les premiers principes de la connaissance ? Le quatrième et dernier chapitre est entièrement consacré à la discussion du sens commun. Plus particulièrement, je discute la manière dont Reid défend les premiers principes du sens commun contre l'attaque sceptique.

Les mots clés : premiers principes, sens commun, connaissance de l'humanité, philosophie de l'esprit, morale, politique

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to discuss Thomas Reid's (1710-1796) theory of the first principles of knowledge, more particularly, the first principles of philosophy of mind, morals and politics. In the first chapter, I discuss Reid's foundationalist commitments in philosophy of mind, morals and politics. I argue that he is clearly a foundationalist about speculative and moral knowledge, but it is not clear if he keeps foundationalist commitments with regard to political knowledge – the first principles of politics are not self-evident beliefs: they are not justified from the start and, therefore, they do not have what is needed for being basic beliefs in a foundationalist view of the structure of knowledge. In the second chapter, I discuss Reid's understanding of the sources of speculative, moral and political knowledge, namely, common sense and knowledge of mankind. I argue that while philosophy of mind and morals are based upon the first principles of common sense – immediate and irresistible beliefs due to the original constitution of mind, politics is based upon first principles of the knowledge of mankind – beliefs that are due to a mixture of the sagacity and the experience of the political scientist who lives among other human beings in a political society. In the third chapter, I try to explain Reid's comprehension on the first principles of philosophy of mind, morals and politics. I try to explain what a first principle of knowledge is, how to understand the distinction between the principles of contingent and necessary truths and what the means we have to identify the first principles of knowledge are. The fourth and last chapter is entirely dedicated to common sense. More particularly, I discuss how Reid defends the first principles of common sense from the skeptical attack.

Keywords: first principles, common sense, knowledge of mankind, philosophy of mind, morals, politics

SUMMARY

ABBREVIATIONS

(*EAP*) *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*. All the references follow the model (*EAP*, essay, chapter, page) and they are all from the critical edition of the work indicated in the bibliographical references.

(*EIP*) *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*. All the references follow the model (*EIP*, essay, chapter, page) and they are all from the critical edition of the work indicated in the bibliographical references.

(*IHM*) *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense*. All the references follow the model (*IHM*, chapter, section, page) and they are all from the critical edition of the work indicated in the bibliographical references.

(*Lectures on Politics*) *Thomas Reid on Society and Politics*. All the references follow the model (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, page) and they are all from the edition indicated in the bibliographical references.

INTRODUCTION

I would like to propose the following separation of Thomas Reid's (1710-1796) philosophy in order to delineate the aims of this thesis. For didactic purposes, I separate Reid's thought in a *negative / deconstructive* and *positive / constructive* aspect. I think that the first aspect comprehends, for instance, his intention of criticizing the thoughts of authors like Descartes, Malebranche, Locke, Berkeley and Hume, mainly due to their acceptance of the *common theory of ideas*[1], and the skeptical consequences of their systems[2]. Reid attempts to show all the problems this common theory of ideas has brought to philosophy[3] and how pernicious it could be to philosophical investigation. The second aspect of Reid's philosophy comprehends his many positive / constructive efforts to present his own view on human knowledge, for instance, by presenting an

[1] In the *Inquiry*, Reid explains the basic principle of this theory, the *ideal hypothesis*, as follows: "[…] that nothing is perceived but what is in the mind which perceives it: That we do not really perceive things that are external, but only certain images and pictures of them imprinted upon the mind, which are called *impressions* and *ideas*" (*IHM*, *Dedication*, p. 04). In the *Intellectual Powers*, in turn: "for they all [philosophers] suppose that we perceive not external objects immediately, and that the immediate objects of perception are only certain shadows of the external objects. Those shadows or images, which we immediately perceive, were by the ancients called *species*, *forms*, *phantasms*. Since the time of Descartes, they have commonly been called *ideas*, and by Mr. Hume *impressions*. But all Philosophers, from Plato to Mr. Hume, agree on this, that we do not perceive external objects immediately, and that the immediate object of perception must be some image present to the mind" (*EIP*, II, VII, p. 105).

[2] Reid observes about the consequences of this theory in the *Inquiry*: "ideas seem to have something in their nature unfriendly to other existences. They were first introduced into philosophy, in the humble character of images or representatives of things; and in this character they seemed not only to be inoffensive, but to serve admirably well for explaining the operations of the understanding. But since men began to reason clearly and distinctly about them, they have by degrees supplanted their constituents, and undermined the existence of every thing but themselves" (*IHM*, II, VI. p. 33-4). The common theory of ideas leads philosophers to doubt the existence of everything else: "first, they [Descartes and Locke] discard all secondary qualities of bodies; and it was found out by their means, that fire is not hot, nor snow cold, nor honey sweet; and, in a word, that heat and cold, sound, colour, taste, and smell, are nothing but ideas or impressions. Bishop Berkeley advanced them a step higher, and found out, by just reasoning, from the same principles, that extension, solidity, space, figure, and body, are ideas, and that there is nothing in nature but ideas and spirits. But the triumph of ideas was completed by the *Treatise of human nature*, which discards spirits also, and leaves ideas and impressions as the sole existence in the universe"(*IHM*, II, VI. p. 34). In the end, on Reid's view, philosophers cannot accept the existence of anything else but ideas in mind.

[3]In the *Inquiry*, Reid enunciates that the common theory of ideas presents two main problems, namely, that its very parodoxal skeptical conclusions contradict the common sense of humankind and that the authors have never presented one proof of the existence of ideas. He claims: "we shall afterwards examine this system of ideas, and endeavour to make it appear, that no solid proof has ever been advanced in the existence of ideas; that they are a mere fiction and hypothesis, contrived to solve the phenomena of the human understanding; that they do not at all answer this end; and that this hypothesis of ideas or images of things in the mind, or in the sensorium, is the parent of those many paradoxes so shocking to common sense, and of that scepticism, which disgrace our philosophy of the mind, and have brought upon it the ridicule and contempt of sensible men" (*IHM*, II, III. p. 28). Despite the enunciation of the task of criticizing the common theory of ideas, Reid does not develop its critic throughout the *Inquiry*. In the *Intellectual Powers*, Reid discusses in more details why the ideal hypothesis should be eliminated from philosophy. In order to do this, he presents five reflections on the common theory of ideas (*EIP*, II, XIV, p. 171-87).

alternative explanation of the operations of the powers of mind–a psychology which sets aside the ideal hypothesis– and by identifying the true principles of human knowledge.

In the light of this didactic separation, I claim that I concentrate my attention on that constructive aspect of Reid's philosophy, on his positive efforts to lay down a solid foundation upon which human knowledge should be built. I want to understand how he intends to establish reliable knowledge about, for instance, our own minds, the right and wrong in actions and the conduct of human beings when united into a political society. In other words, I am interested in Reid's view on *the foundations of human knowledge*. The main goal of this thesis is to explain his theory of the first principles, in particular, his theory of the first principles of philosophy of mind–which I generally call, with some caution, *speculative knowledge*[4], morals and politics. With this general purpose in sight, I intend to discuss at least three particular theses.

Firstly, I want to explain Reid's foundationalist views on speculative and moral knowledge and claim that it is not clear if he can be understood as a foundationalist with regard to political knowledge. The main ideas of a standard foundationalist theory of epistemic justification can be found in his discussion on the first principles of speculative and moral knowledge. In politics, contrarily, these ideas are not presented. For instance, it is not clear if Reid sees the first principles of politics as self-evident principles of knowledge, that is, principles justified from the start. Difficulties like this make me doubt if it is possible to claim that Reid is really a foundationalist with regard to politics.

Secondly, I want to discuss the idea that common sense – as the original constitution of mind which provides us with our immediate and irresistible beliefs – is the foundation of many branches of knowledge, among them, philosophy of mind and morals, but it is not the foundation upon which the science of politics is built. According to Reid, as I understand him, science of politics is based upon the *knowledge of mankind*, which is the knowledge of the principles of human actions and the general inclination of human conduct when human beings are united into a political society. As I argue throughout this thesis, the first principles of political knowledge do not come from the original constitution of mind; they are not dictated by common sense, the immediate and irresistible judgments of our natural faculties shared by the greatest part

[4] See pages 17-18.

of humankind. For this reason, there is a sense that it is possible to say they are not results of common sense. The first principles of science of politics are due to a mixture of experience and sagacity of the political scientist. I have come to this thesis by striving to explain how those first principles of politics enumerated by Reid could be understood as first principles of common sense. I have understood that the difficulty to explain the first principles of politics as results of common sense was due to the fact that they could not be understood as immediate and irresistible beliefs shared by the greatest part of humankind, that is, they are not common sense beliefs.

Thirdly, I want to offer my own view on how Reid defends the truth of the first principles of common sense from the skeptical attack. I intend to show that Reid goes beyond the mere psychological description of common sense beliefs–that is, that they are immediate and irresistible beliefs shared by the greatest part of humankind – in this defense. I believe Reid has a set of arguments which are presented in order to show the skeptic–who doubts our common beliefs in the light of a doubt upon the reliability of the powers of mind – why we are legitimate in assuming them as true beliefs. Firstly, Reid shows why it is impossible to prove the reliability of the power of mind and why, for that reason, philosophers should start their investigations by accepting the truth of all beliefs due to those powers. Secondly, he shows that it is inconsistent to choose one of the powers of mind as if it were the only source of true beliefs. This is arbitrary. Those who choose consciousness as a source or reliable knowledge only strengthen the argument that all mental powers are equally reliable: like consciousness, all of them yield immediate beliefs and irresistible beliefs. Thirdly, if the powers of mind properly operates, that is, when the human mind is not affected by any disorder or disease, there are no good reasons to put into question the reliability of them and, therefore, to question the truth of the beliefs due to them. My view on this point is mainly based upon other commentaries on Reid's philosophy – particularly, William Alston, Alvin Plantinga, Philip de Bary and John Greco. However, I believe the way I concatenate those commentaries is completely original.

About the sources to which I appeal to understand Reid's philosophy

In general, I appeal to the *Inquiry into Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764) and to the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785) as the main sources of Reid's view on philosophy of mind. My efforts to comprehend his

view on the speculative knowledge are mainly based upon the interpretation of these two works. I confess that I do not intend to discuss the question of knowing if there is a significant change of view from the *Inquiry* to the *Intellectual Powers* on how Reid understands the theory of the first principles of knowledge. Most of the time, I appeal to the text of the *Inquiry* to reinforce an argument or a point of view presented in the *Intellectual Powers*. However, I assume I take for granted that both works present a similar view at least with regard to the main points I treat on this thesis. For instance, I hold Reid maintains similar views on what common sense is - the original constitution of human mind or what is dictated by the original constitution of mind; on common sense as the foundation of speculative knowledge; on the value of the irresistible and immediate beliefs of common sense for knowledge. I discuss these points in more details throughout this thesis and I accept that, at least on these points, I can appeal to one or another work to do it.

In the discussion of moral matters, I mainly appeal to the *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (1789). Essays I, III and V are the most significant to my task of understanding his view on moral knowledge. To discuss Reid's political thought, however, it is necessary to appeal to other sources. He has not published a book about politics. In order to understand his political views, it is possible to appeal to one or another passage of both the *Inquiry* and the *Intellectual Powers*. In the latter work, I underline two main occasions: Reid's discussion on the evidence of the political reasonings (*EIP*, VII, III, p. 559) and his comments on the eleventh principle of contingent truth (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 488-9) which have a close relation with political discussions. I return to these topics later in this thesis. It is more significant, in my view, Reid's theory of the principles of human action presented in the Essay III of the *Active Powers*. Why do I suppose this have importance to Reid's political thought? On the one hand, this essay presents a philosophical investigation of the principles which motivate human actions. By means of the reflection upon the motives to act within his own mind and the observation of the conduct of other human beings, Reid intends to determine and classify the several principles which are able to motivate human action. This is clearly a project of a philosopher of mind. But this investigation also matters for politics. I claim that Essay III presents a political investigation in which Reid deals with matters related to human actions, in other words, he deals with the source of the first principles of the science of politics. I hope this point becomes clearer subsequently, but, in advance, as Reid argues, the source of the first principles of politics is the *knowledge*

of mankind, the knowledge of the character of human beings and of the principles which motivate their actions. To know the principles of human action is an important task of the political scientist. For this reason, I dedicate a section of this chapter to discuss Essay III of the *Active Powers*.

I turn my attention to the major source of Reid's political thought: his manuscripts on political matters that are gathered in *Thomas Reid on society and politics*, a volume organized by Knud Haakonssen and Paul Wood. This volume presents:

(1) The manuscripts of Reid's notes on political / social / economical books. Among these notes, it is possible to find, for instance, Reid's notes on Martin Folkes' *A Table of English Silver Coins* (1745), on Ange Goudar's *Les Intérêts de la France Mal Entendus* (1756) and on Jean-Louis de Loume's *The Constitution of England* (1771);

(2) The manuscripts of Reid's notes on lectures he gave at the University of Glasgow between the years of 1764 and 1780. This volume presents, for instance, Reid's lectures on the first principles of politics (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 22-34) and on three forms of constitution–*republican*, *monarchic* and *despotic*–and their effects upon political societies (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 34-47);

(3) The manuscripts of Reid's papers presented to the Aberdeen Philosophical society and the Glasgow Literary Society. It is possible to find Reid's paper on the benefits on paper credit, on the rise of the servant wages and the population growth.

The second set of manuscripts, of Reid's lectures on politics, constitute the basic textual ground to which I appealed to understand Reid's political thought. I mainly base my interpretation of Reid's science of politics upon this text.

The first challenge in the writing of this thesis: separating the chapters

I would like to explain some important decisions I have made in the writing of this thesis. My first challenge in the process of writing this work was related to the problem of knowing how to separate its chapters. In the first version of this thesis, I tried to follow the most obvious division of chapters, that is, I tried to divide them in accordance with the branch of knowledge I treated: a chapter about Reid's philosophy of mind, a chapter about Reid's morals and a chapter about Reid's politics. This

separation, however, faced a problem of imbalance: there was too much to say about philosophy of mind and, for that reason, the chapter about philosophy of mind was too extent when compared to the other two. Moreover, the main hypothesis of this thesis–the science of politics is not based upon common sense (at least not upon common sense as I understand it, the original constitution of mind), such as philosophy of mind and morals, was treated only in the last pages of the thesis. These two difficulties had motivated me to find another way of separating the chapters. In the process of writing the second version of this thesis, I tried to follow another criterion: I followed Reid's distinction between the intellectual powers–philosophy of mind–and the active powers of mind–morals and politics. This version faced another problem: the sources of the first principles of morals and politics are different. Morals is based upon the first principles of common sense and politics, upon the first principles of the knowledge of mankind. This separation obligated me to treat common sense matters twice, one in the context of the intellectual powers–philosophy of mind, another in the context of the active powers - morals. I disliked this imbalance as well.

Therefore, in what follows, I present the third version of my thesis. I opted to separate the chapters in accordance with their themes, not in accordance with the branch of knowledge I treated. In the first chapter, I discuss Reid's foundationalist commitments in philosophy of mind, morals and politics. I argue that he is clearly a foundationalist about speculative and moral knowledge, but it is not clear if he keeps foundationalist commitments with regard to political knowledge–the first principles of politics are not self-evident beliefs: they are not justified from the start and, therefore, they do not have what is needed for being basic beliefs in a foundationalist view of the structure of knowledge. In the second chapter, I discuss Reid's understanding of the sources of speculative, moral and political knowledge, namely, common sense and knowledge of mankind. I argue that while philosophy of mind and morals are based upon the first principles of common sense–immediate and irresistible beliefs due to the original constitution of mind, politics is based upon first principles of the knowledge of mankind–beliefs that are due to a mixture of the sagacity and the experience of the political scientist. In the third chapter, I try to explain Reid's understanding of the first principles of philosophy of mind, morals and politics: what a first principle is, the distinction between the principles of contingent and necessary truths and the means we have to identify the first principles of knowledge. The fourth and last chapter, however,

is entirely dedicated to common sense. More particularly, I discuss Reid's defense of the first principles of common sense from the skeptical attack.

I hope the general scheme presented above is clear. In Chapter 1, I try to explain Reid's general view on the structure of human knowledge–paying special attention to his conception of science and his foundationalist views. In Chapter 2, I discuss his views on the sources of the principles of some branches of knowledge–common sense and knowledge of mankind, the origin of the principles of philosophy of mind, morals and politics. In Chapter 3, I treat the first principles of knowledge in details. Finally, in Chapter 4, I focus on common sense, trying to explain how Reid argues in the favor of the truth of the first principles of common sense.

The second challenge in the writing of this thesis*: *the place of philosophy of mind in moral and political matters

I have to confess that I had some difficulties in the attempt of dealing with philosophy of mind, morals and politics in a separate way. The difficulty concerns mainly to the fact that much of what Reid has to say about moral and political matters may be better understood in the context of the philosophy of mind. I open a small parenthesis to explain this point in more details. Reid holds that human knowledge may be separated into two large branches, distinguished by the object to which they refer. On the one hand, human beings are able to know material beings, the objects of the physical world; on the other hand, they are able to know intellectual beings[5]–their own minds, other minds, the mind of other animals and the mind of the Creator (at least God's purposes in relation to creatures)[6]. Reid grounds this distinction upon the metaphysical thesis according to which the universe–at least what human beings are able to know about it–is composed by material beings, characterized by their extension and inactivity,

[5] Reid states about this separation: "the whole system of bodies in the Universe, of which we know but a very small part, may be called the Material World; the whole system of minds, from the infinite Creator to the meanest creature endowed with thought, may be called the Intellectual World. These are the two great kingdoms of nature that fall within our notice; and about the one, or the other, or things pertaining to them, every art, every science, and every human thought is employed" (*EIP*, *Preface*, p.11).

[6] Reid claims in a passage of the *Intellectual Powers*: "every man is conscious of a thinking principle or mind in himself, and we have sufficient evidence of a like principle in other men. The actions of brute animals show that they have some thinking principle, though of a nature far inferior to human mind. And every thing about us may convince us of the existence of a supreme mind, the Maker and Governor of the Universe. These are all the minds of which reason can give us any certain knowledge" (*EIP*, *Preface*, p. 12).

and intellectual beings, characterized by their intelligence and activity[7]. Reid admits he follows Descartes in this dualistic view of the universe[8]. The distinction between material and intellectual worlds is the ground upon which Reid bases the division between the two domains of philosophical knowledge[9]. On Reid's view, natural philosophy and pneumatology–or *philosophy of mind*, such as he usually refers to the science which investigates mental phenomena–have a *propaedeutic role* with regard to other sciences and arts:

> The sciences may be distinguished into two classes, according as they pertain to the material or to the intellectual world. The various parts of Natural Philosophy, the mechanical Arts, Chemistry, Medicine, and Agriculture, belong to the first; but, to the last, belong Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, Natural Theology, Morals; Jurisprudence, Law, Politics, and the fine Arts (*EIP*, *Preface*, p. 14).

About the relation between philosophy of mind and those particular sciences which depend upon it, Reid argues: "the knowledge of human mind is the root from which these grow, and draw their nourishment" (*EIP*, *Preface*, p. 14-5). This latter consideration justifies his intention of undertaking the investigation of mental phenomena before any other exam:

> In the arts and sciences which have least connection with the mind, its faculties are the engines which we must employ; and the better we understand their nature and use, their defects and disorders, the more skillfully we shall apply them, and with the greater success. But in the noblest arts, the mind is also the subject upon which we operate. The painter, the poet, the actor, the orator, the moralist, and the statesman, attempt to operate upon the mind in different ways, and for different ends; and they succeed, according as they touch properly the strings of the human frame. Nor can their several arts ever stand on a *solid foundation*, or rise to the dignity of science, until they are built on the *principles of the human constitution* (*IHM*, I, I, p. 13, emphasis added).

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[7] Reid claims in the *Intellectual Powers*: "whether there be in the Universe, beings, which are neither extend, solid and inert, like body, nor active and intelligent, like mind, seems to be beyond the reach of our knowledge" (*EIP*, *Preface*, p. 11).

[8] Reid states about this influence: "Des Cartes must be allowed the honour of being the first who drew a distinct line between the material and intellectual world, which, in all the old systems, were so blended together, that it was impossible to say where the one ends and the other begins. How much this distinction hath contributed to the improvements of modern times, in the philosophy both of body and of mind, is not easy to say" (*EIP*, II, VIII, p. 118).

[9] "The properties of body, and the laws that obtain in the material system, are the objects of *natural philosophy*, as that word is now used. The branch which treats of the nature and operations of minds has by some been called *Pneumatology*. And to the one or the other of these branches, the principles of all the sciences belong" (*EIP*, *Preface*, p. 12, emphasis added).

Reid intends to think philosophy of mind before those other particular branches of knowledge, in particular, morals and politics. On Reid's view, philosophy of mind is a preliminary study, a *propaedeutic science*. Understanding the operations of mind is a necessary condition for the development of human knowledge, among them, morals and science of politics. For this reason, matters of philosophy of mind are deeply involved in the discussion of moral and political matters. On the one hand, Reid's moral and political discussions depend on the philosophical investigation of mind, such as, for instance, when it is necessary to understand the source of moral approval and disapproval–according to Reid, this branch of morals is called *theory of morals*–and to determine the principles which govern human actions–Reid's psychology of the principles of human action. On the other hand, after the philosophical investigation of those mental phenomena related to moral and political matters, Reid undertakes the project of establishing a science of morals–according to Reid, a *system of morals*–and a science of politics, an investigation of the several sorts of constitutions, the several disorders which may affect a society and the cure for those disorders. In brief, it is not always clear when Reid plays the role of the philosopher of mind, the moral scientist and the political scientist. I shall endeavor to make clear when Reid plays each one of these roles in the development of this thesis.

I also use this opportunity to explain my employment of two words in this thesis, namely, the words *speculative* and *faculty*. Firstly, in order to refer to the knowledge we have in philosophy of mind, I employ the expression *speculative knowledge*. This use deserves some observations. Reid uses the term *speculative* to refer to the intellectual powers of mind, such as, for instance, the powers of consciousness, memory, perception, taste and reasoning[10]. Therefore, speculative knowledge does not only concern the knowledge obtained in philosophy of mind. Mathematics and natural philosophy, for instance, are speculative knowledges as well. I ask permition to restrain the meaning of this term to mean only the knowledge of the philosophy of mind, contrasting it with moral and political knowledge. Secondly, I follow Reid in the employment of the terms *power* and *faculty*, which are not interchangeable words. If all the operations of mind come from the exertion of powers, not all the powers imply the

[10] For instance, this use of the term is presented as follows, in the *Active Powers*: "the term active power is used, I conceive, to distinguish it from speculative powers. As all languages distinguish action from speculation, the same distinction is applied to the powers by which they are produced. The powers of seeing, hearing, remembering, distinguishing, judging, reasoning, are speculative powers the power of executing any work of art or labour is active power" (*EAP*, I, I, p. 12).

operation of a faculty. There is a distinction between *faculties* and *habits* of mind. Faculties and habits come from the exertion of a power, but:

> I apprehend that the word *faculty* is most properly applied to those powers of the mind which are original and natural, and which make a part of the constitution of the mind. There are other powers which are acquired by use, exercise, or study, which are not called faculties, but *habits*. There must be something in the constitution of the mind necessary to our being able to acquire habits, and this is commonly called *capacity* (*EIP*, I, I, p. 21).

The original operations of mind are called faculties. In general, I employ this term to refer to the powers of consciousness, memory, perception, taste and conscience. Reid calls the other operations–which exist originally as capacities to be developed–*habits*. The powers of reflection (*EIP*, I, I, p. 56-9), imitation (*EIP*, IV, IV, p. 341) and invention (*EIP*, I, I, p. 342) are examples of mental capacities.

CHAPTER 1) UNDERSTANDING REID'S FOUNDATIONALISM

I dedicate this chapter to explain the reasons that led me to understand Reid as a foundationalist philosopher. In the first section, I present some notions which are important to comprehend what a foundationalist theory of epistemic justification is. In the second section, I discuss Reid's conception of science and his general foundationalist commitments, as well as his foundationalism in philosophy of mind and morals. I claim that we do not have textual ground to state that Reid is a foundationalist with regard to political knowledge, however. In the third section, I discuss and try to point the difficulties of three different interpretations of Reid's view on knowledge, namely, the interpretations which state that Reid is an *antifoundationalist*–Nicholas Wolterstorff, a *coherentist*–Keith Lehrer and John-Cristian Smith–or a *foundationalist / coherentist*–Gregory Poore.

1.1) What is a foundationalist theory of epistemic justification?

I discuss in this section what a foundationalist theory of epistemic justification is. I intend firstly to discuss the concept of *epistemic justification* and how it may be understood from the perspective of the epistemic regress problem. I present some observations on what a foundationalist theory of knowledge is and also consider three forms of foundationalism. In this presentation, I follow some texts of contemporary epistemology of authors like Laurecence Bonjour, James Van Cleve and Michael DePaul. In my view, this section is important as far as it allows me to show why Reid keeps a foundationalist view with regard to philosophy of mind and morals. Moreover, it allows me to explain some fundamental concepts that I intend to employ in Chapter 4, when I discuss Reid's defense of the first principles of common sense.

1.1.1) The notion of *epistemic justification*

In brief, a theory of epistemic justification is a philosophical theory which has in sight to account for the legitimacy of a belief, to explain why we would be justified in assuming it as a true belief, as knowledge[11]. In *The structure of empirical knowledge*

[11] In *Is justified true belief knowledge?* (1963), Edmund Gettier has shown why a true justified belief could not be assumed as knowledge in all cases–there would be circumstances in which a person actually

(1985), Laurence Bonjour explains when a theory of the epistemic justification is relevant for the discussion on knowledge:

> What makes us cognitive beings at all is our capacity for belief, and the goal of our distinctively cognitive endeavors is *truth:* we want our beliefs to correctly and accurately depict the world. If truth were somehow immediately and unproblematic ally accessible (as it is, on some accounts, for God) so that one could in all cases opt simply to believe the truth, then the concept of justification would be of little significance and would play no independent role in cognition (BONJOUR, 1985, p. 07).

This ideal epistemic situation described by Bonjour is not available for human beings. We are not able to reach the truth in an *immediate* and *non-problematic* way. For this reason, a theory of epistemic justification may be understood as an attempt to explain when we can be sure about the truth of our beliefs:

> The basic role of justification is that of a *means* to truth, a more directly attainable mediating link between our subjective starting point and our objective goal. We cannot, in most cases at least, bring it about directly that our beliefs are true, but we can presumably bring it about directly (though perhaps only in the long run) that they are epistemically justified (BONJOUR, 1985, p. 07-8).

The epistemic justification is provided as *warrants*, *proofs* or *signs* that some of our beliefs may lead us to truth, it indicates the proper way to achieve truth and avoid falsehood: the justification of a belief allows me to claim "I know that P". Therefore, quoting Bonjour in his defense of the good reasons to search for a theory of this sort:

> If epistemic justification were not conducive to truth in this way, if finding epistemically justified beliefs did not substantially increase the likelihood of finding true ones, then epistemic justification would be irrelevant to our main cognitive goal and of dubious worth. It is only if we have some reason for thinking that epistemic justification constitutes a path to truth that we as cognitive beings have any motive for preferring epistemically justified beliefs to epistemically unjustified ones (BONJOUR, 1985, p. 08).

Epistemic justification, therefore, may be understood as a path by means of which we would be able to find true beliefs with more certainty. And, as Bonjour shows, we have good reasons to prefer justified beliefs instead of unjustified ones.

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have a true justified belief and she still does not have knowledge. In this thesis, I do not consider this problem. However, I am committed to the thesis that, on Reid's view, a justified belief (based upon the evidence of the original constitution of mind) is a true belief and it is indeed knowledge.

I ask permission for discussing what a theory of justification is in a different perspective, namely, in the light of the *epistemic regress problem*. The search for the reasons which justify our beliefs implies a regress that may remain, if not interrupted, to infinity: the belief B justifies the belief A, the belief C, in turn, justifies the belief B, the belief D is the warrant for the belief C, and so forth. In case of an infinity chain of justifying beliefs, it is impossible to indicate where the knowledge rests. In the view of the possibility of a regress *ad infinitum*, some authors may suggest that none of our beliefs is ultimately justified and, consequently, knowledge would be impossible. In short, this would be the argument of the epistemic regress, traditionally attributed to Aristotle[12].

In the light of the epistemic regress problem, it is possible to understand the purposes of a theory of epistemic justification as an attempt to indicate, as far as possible, when human beings are authorized to stop asking for reasons to justify their beliefs. James Van Cleve, based upon a four proposition scheme, shows some of the possibilities we have to try to justify our beliefs in the face of the epistemic regress problem (VAN CLEVE, 2005, p. 168). The four propositions are:

(1) Some beliefs are justified.

(2) No belief is justified unless some other belief serves as a reason for it.

(3) One belief cannot serve as a reason justifying another unless the first is itself justified.

(4) If A serves as a reason justifying B, then B cannot serve (directly or indirectly) as a reason justifying B.

Firstly, *skeptics* are those who deny the proposition (1), holding that none of our beliefs is justified; secondly, *foundationalists* are those who deny the proposition (2), holding that some of our beliefs are justified; thirdly, *positists* are those who deny the proposition (3), holding that chains of justifications may end in justifications which are

[12] A passage of the *Posterior Analytics*, Book I, Part 3, is usually quoted as illustrating this argument: "some people think that because you must understand the primitives there is no understanding at all; others that there is, but that there are demonstrations of everything. Neither of these views is either true or necessary. The one party, supposing that you cannot understand in any other way, claim that we are led back ad infinitum on the ground that we shall not understand the posterior items because of the prior items if there are no primitives […]. The other party agrees about understanding, which they say, arises only through demonstration. But they argue that nothing prevents there being demonstrations of everything; for it is possible for demonstrations to proceed in a circle or reciprocally" (ARISTOTLE, 2002, p. 04-5).

not themselves justified; fourthly, *coherentists* are those who deny the proposition (4), holding that our beliefs may be justified in virtue of some mutual relations among them; finally, *infinitists* are those philosophers who accept the four propositions, consequently, they admit the regress epistemic. Subsequently, I consider some sorts of foundationalist theories of justification.

1.1.2) Foundationalist theories of epistemic justification

A foundationalist theory of epistemic justification has two major principles: (1) there is a set of beliefs which are self-evident or immediately justified, that is, a set of beliefs that do not depend on other beliefs to be justified; (2) there is a set of beliefs that are justified in virtue of their relations with those self-evident or immediately justified beliefs, that is, a set of beliefs that depend on other beliefs to be justified. Michael DePaul presents the following explanation of a foundationalist theory:

> Foundationalists about an epistemic property hold that the beliefs having that property are structured like the blocks in a building. Thus, e.g., foundationalists regarding justification recognize that many of our justified beliefs depend for their justification on other justified beliefs we hold. But they also insist that some of our justified beliefs do not depend for their justification on any other justified beliefs. These beliefs are *basic* or *foundational*. Finally, such foundationalists hold that every one of our justified beliefs is either basic or part of the superstructure, with all superstructure beliefs eventually justified by one or more basic beliefs (DePAUL, 2011, p. 236).

An important aspect of a foundationalist theory is the distinction between *basic* / *foundational beliefs* and *non-basic* / *non-foundational beliefs*. In short, an epistemic foundationalist holds that non-foundational beliefs are justified as far as they are based upon foundational beliefs, which are justified independently of any other belief.

Basic / foundational beliefs have a certain *epistemic property* that allows us to assume them as justified by themselves: they are *immediately justified*, they are *justified from the start*. In virtue of this property, basic beliefs may serve as the foundation upon which the *superstructure* of knowledge is built. As DePaul states, there is a *building metaphor* which illustrates very clearly a foundationalist view of knowledge:

> In a building constructed of blocks, many blocks are supported by other blocks, but some blocks are not supported by any other blocks. Blocks that are not supported by other blocks form the foundation, supporting the rest of the structure, i.e., all the superstructure blocks.

> Every block in the structure is either part of the foundation or part of the superstructure. Hence, the weight of every superstructure block is eventually carried by one or more foundation blocks (DePAUL, 2011, p. 236).

Basic beliefs are the blocks which do not depend on any other block to be firmly based. That foundational blocks support all the weight of the superstructure that is built upon it.

Laurence Bonjour suggests there would be at least three possible sorts of foundationalism. Firstly, there is a *strong* sort of foundationalism: "historical foundationalist positions, typically make stronger and more ambitious claims on behalf of their chosen class of basic beliefs. Thus such beliefs have been claimed to be not just adequately justified, but also *infallible*, *certain*, *indubitable*, or *incorrigible*" (BONJOUR, 1985, p. 26). In a *moderate* sort, the basic beliefs do not have that absolute certitude which characterizes the basic beliefs in the stronger sort of foundationalism: they do not have any privileged status of justification, such as infallibility, indubitability and incorrigibility. According to a moderate foundationalist, fallible, doubtful and corrigible beliefs may be a solid foundation for the superstructure of knowledge. In the third sort of foundationalism, the *weaker* one,

> Basic beliefs possess only a very low degree of epistemic justification on their own, a degree of justification insufficient by itself either to satisfy the adequate-justification condition for knowledge or to qualify them as acceptable justifying premises for further beliefs. Such beliefs are only 'initially credible', rather than fully justified (BONJOUR, 1985, p. 26).

In the following, I discuss Reid's foundationalism in the light of the concepts presented in this subsection.

1.2) Reid's foundationalist commitments discussed

I claim that Reid is a foundationalist philosopher. I begin by explaining the general traces of a foundationalist theory of epistemic justification in Reid's philosophy –explaining Reid's conception of scientific knowledge, discussing his distinction between *intuitive propositions* and *propositions based upon argument* and his view on the self-evidence of the first principles. I also discuss in more details why Reid is a foundationalist with regards to speculative and moral knowledge and I also point out the

reasons I have to claim that we do not have textual ground to state that he keeps foundationalist commitments with regard to political knowledge.

1.2.1) A conception of science x a foundationalist view of the structure of knowledge

I begin this discussion by presenting Reid's conception of science. On his view, all *scientific knowledge* should be built in accordance with the *axiomatic system* of mathematics proposed by Euclid. In brief, an axiomatic system in mathematics begins by the establishment of a set of axioms from which the reasonings of the mathematician should be extracted. Mathematical knowledge is derived from these axioms. What matters for Reid, thus, is the very conception of science, the very model of scientific knowledge: in order to have scientific knowledge of something–the physical world, in natural philosophy, the mental phenomena, in philosophy of mind, it is necessary to appeal to this axiomatic system of knowledge: a set of axioms from which the reasonings will be extracted, upon which scientific knowledge is built. I agree with Haakonseen and Wood when they observe in the introduction of *Thomas Reid on society and politics*: "[…] he argued that the feature which made intellectual endeavours into philosophical disciplines, or 'sciences', was a self-conscious dependence upon a common set of 'axioms or common notions' in argumentation" (HAAKONSSEN & WOOD, 2015, p. xliv). Scientific knowledge is knowledge based upon axioms. This model of science is what I have in mind when I refer to Reid's conception of science.

I think Reid presents at least two reasons to follow this conception of science in epistemological matters. Firstly, according to him, it is really a matter of necessity to assume this conception of science when engaged in philosophical investigations. Indeed, philosophers have to appeal to axioms or first principles from which their reasonings will be extracted and upon which knowledge will be built: "[…] I hold it to be certain, and even *demonstrable*, that all knowledge got by reasoning must be built upon first principles" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 454, emphasis added). It is the very possibility of reasoning / knowledge that depends on the existence of axioms or first principles. Both analytical and synthetic reasonings depend on them. Analysis could not come to an end if there are not first principles which prevent the regress *ad infinitum*. Synthetic reasonings, in turn:

> Let us again consider a synthetical proof of any kind, where we begin with the premises, and pursue a train of consequences, until we come to the last conclusion, or thing to be proved. Here we must begin either with self-evident propositions, or with such as have been already proved. When the last is the case, the proof of the propositions, thus assumed, is a part of our proof; and the proof is deficient without it. Suppose then the deficiency supplied, and the proof completed, is it not evident that it must rest upon them [the first principles] (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 455)?

Analytical and synthetical reasonings depend on the existence of some fundamental beliefs. Without them, the analytical reasonings could not have an end and the synthetic reasonings could not have a beginning.

Secondly, beyond the fact that it is necessary to follow this conception of science in philosophical investigations, Reid also explains the good reasons philosophers have to do so: the success of this model in both mathematics and natural philosophy. Mathematicians and natural philosophers have had the precaution of establishing the axioms and first principles of their sciences before the beginning of their investigations and this way of proceeding has produced good consequences in both branches of knowledge. Reid states about the success of the establishment of the axioms in mathematicians:

> [...][the axioms have been laid down] in mathematics, as far back as we have books. It is in this science only, that, for more than two thousand years since it began to be cultivated, we find no sects, no contrary systems, and hardly any disputes; or, if there have been disputes, they have ended as soon as the animosity of parties subsided, and have never been again revived. The science, once firmly stablished upon the foundation of a few axioms and definitions, as upon a rock, has grown from age to age, so as to become the loftiest and the most solid fabric that human reason can boast (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 457).

Natural philosophy has escaped from those endless disagreements and from that *fluctuating state* in which it has remained over the centuries in virtue of the establishment of its principles, such as Reid indicates in this passage:

> Lord Bacon first delineated the only solid foundation on which natural philosophy can be built; and Sir Isaac Newton reduced the principles laid down by Bacon into three or four axioms, which he calls *regulae philosophandi*. From these, together with the phaenomena observed by the senses, which he likewise lays down as first principles, he deduces, by strict reasoning, the propositions contained in the third book of his Principia, and in his Optics; and by this means has raised a fabric in those two branches of natural philosophy, which is not liable

> to be shaken by doubtful disputation, but stands immoveable upon the basis of self-evident principles (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 457).

This conception of science has enabled the progress of mathematics and natural philosophy, eliminating all the sophisms and contradictory opinions of their interior and giving stability to them. There are no sects, no contrary systems and not so many disputes in both branches of knowledge. According to how Reid understands the development of mathematics and natural philosophy, this axiomatic model has brought them to their *state of maturity*. Such as I understand Reid on this point, maturity is almost a matter of *stability*. It is possible to see this identification in both the *Inquiry* and the *Intellectual Powers*. In the *Inquiry*, Reid notes about the sciences of mechanics, astronomy, and optics: "there are really sciences, built upon laws of nature which universally obtain. What is discovered in them, is no longer matter of dispute: future ages may add to it, but till the course of nature be changed, what is already established can never be overturned" (*IHM*, I III, p. 16). Once again, he seems to identify the notions of *maturity* and *stability* in the *Intellectual Powers*:

> The *maturity* of a science may be judged by this: When it contains a system of principles, and conclusions drawn from them, which are so firmly established, that, among thinking and intelligent men, there remains no doubt or dispute about them; so that those who come after may raise the superstructure higher, but shall never be able to overturn what is already built, in order to begin on a new foundation (*EIP*, I, VI, p. 62, emphasis added).

A mature science is one whose conclusions are neither target of endless disputes nor target of frequent doubts. Moreover, it is expected that there will be no revolution in a branch of knowledge which has reached the condition of a mature science: knowledge will always be increased but never decreased. And to reach this state of maturity, to reach the stability necessary in a science, philosophers should follow that model of thinking scientific knowledge. This is not only necessary; the history of human knowledge shows us the success of this way of proceeding: it may guide a science to its maturity.

I want to claim that Reid's foundationalist commitments are beyond this engagement with a certain conception of science. According to how I understand Reid's philosophy, his distinction between *intuitive propositions* and *propositions based upon arguments* and his view on the self-evidence of the first principles of knowledge is what makes him a foundationalist philosopher par excellence. That distinction, presented in

the chapter *Of first principles in general* in the *Intellectual Powers*, corresponds to the foundationalist distinction between basic / foundational beliefs and non-basic / non-foundational beliefs. Reid not only acknowledges the epistemic regress problem, resulting from the search for the foundations of knowledge, but he also acknowledges the necessity of a distinction between two sorts of beliefs, beliefs which are foundational and beliefs which are based upon the foundational ones. The settlement of foundational propositions is what prevents the regress *ad infinitum* in philosophical inquiry:

> 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. The same thing may be said of the propositions that support it; and of those that support them, as far back as we can go. But we cannot go back in this track to infinity. Where then must this analysis stop? It is evident that it must stop only when we come to propositions which support all that are built upon them, but are themselves supported by none (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 455, emphasis added).

Therefore, just as Reid claims: (1) there is a set of beliefs that are self-evident or immediately justified, that is, beliefs which are not based upon any other belief; (2) there is another set of beliefs that are justified in virtue of the relation they have with those self-evident immediately justified beliefs, that is, beliefs that are based upon other beliefs. The former are expressed by *intuitive propositions*, the latter, by *propositions based upon arguments*. Reid claims about the propositions based upon arguments:

> [...] some are of such a nature that a man of ripe understanding may apprehend them distinctly, and perfectly understand their meaning *without finding himself under any necessity of believing them to be true or false, probable or improbable*. The judgment remains in suspense, until it is inclined to one side or another by reasons or arguments (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 452, emphasis added).

Propositions based upon arguments are propositions whose assent, the belief about the truth or falsehood of what they affirm or deny, is mediate, once they depend on some argument–an argument that help us recognize their evidence. The belief is produced only after the presentation of some argument that leads the mind to judge the truth or falsehood of the proposition. In other words, it is possible to hold our assent until the recognition of the evidence. Reid claims about the intuitive propositions, in turn:

> But there are other propositions which are no sooner understood than they are believed. The judgment follows the apprehension of them

> necessarily, and both are equally the work of nature, and the result of our original powers. There is no searching for evidence, no weighing of arguments; the proposition is not deduced or inferred from another; it has the light of truth in itself, and has no occasion to borrow it from another (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 452).

Intuitive propositions are those propositions whose assent, the belief about the truth or falsehood about what it affirms or denies, is immediate: we immediately discover its evidence in a non-inferential way. The belief, in the case of the intuitive propositions, does not depend on any sort of argument. These propositions carry the light of truth in themselves, they are *self-evident*, and for this reason, the mind assent to them in an immediate and irresistible manner. As a foundationalist philosopher claims, they are immediately justified beliefs; they are justified from the start. Those self-evident propositions are the first principles upon which the human knowledge should be built: "propositions of the last kind, when they are used in matters of science, have commonly been called *axioms*; and on whatever occasion they are used, are called *first principles, principles of common sense, common notions, self-evident truths*" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 452).

As I argue later–Chapter 4, the epistemic property that make those foundational beliefs justified from the start, on Reid's view, is the evidence of the original constitution of mind: they are due to a set of reliable powers of mind, such as, for instance, consciousness, memory, perception and conscience which make us to immediately and irresistibly accept them as true beliefs. Therefore, beyond the engagement with a certain conception of science, there are cases in which Reid presents foundationalist commitments with regard to knowledge: a distinction between basic / foundational beliefs and non-basic / non-foundational beliefs and the idea that the basic / foundational beliefs are immediately justified, justified from the start.

1.2.2) Foundationalism in the philosophy of mind

Reid shows concern for the problem of the foundation of philosophy of mind in both the *Inquiry* and the *Intellectual Powers*. On Reid's view, a foundational problem is what has prevented the development of philosophy of mind over the centuries, what has prevented it from achieving the state of a mature knowledge. Philosophy of mind, he argues, has not achieved the status of a *science*; it is not a *scientific knowledge*, free from obscurities and endless debates. Reid's remarks about the progress of philosophy of mind, in particular, about its development in the 17th and 18th centuries, are actually

very negative. When compared to the progress of natural philosophy, for instance, the development of philosophy of mind seems to be really miserable. The supposed knowledge of mind is filled with fantastic principles where philosophers should find only a *solid foundation*:

> It is genius, and not the want of it, that adulterates philosophy, and fills it with error and false theory. A creative imagination disdains the mean offices of digging for a foundation, of removing rubbish, and carrying materials: leaving these servile employments to the *drudges* in science, it plans a design, and raises a fabric. Invention supplies materials where they are wanting, and fancy adds colouring, and every befitting ornament. The work pleases the eye, and wants nothing but *solidity* and a *good foundation* (*IHM*, I, II. p. 15, emphasis added).

Reid's critique of the authors who intend to investigate the human mind is severe: despite their genius, some of them have denied the challenging task of searching for the foundation, for something which could be employed as a base for the philosophical knowledge of mind. Instead, they have chosen to produce fantastic principles where true principles were necessary, adorning them as they have wanted. In this regard, Reid proposes to be a *drudge*: he intends to dig for a foundation, to remove the rubbish and to eliminate all the fantastic materials which fill the knowledge of mind. It is necessary to find a solid foundation upon which philosophy of mind should be settled. We find the same observations on the foundational problem of philosophy of mind in the *Intellectual Powers*:

> It may happen in science, as in building, that an error in the foundation shall weaken the whole; and the farther the building is carried on, this weakness shall become the more apparent and more threatening. Something of this kind seems to have happened in our systems concerning the mind (*EIP*, I, VI, p. 63).

Philosophy of mind suffers from a foundational problem, in such a way that the whole of the building of knowledge is threatened by the debility of its foundation. The modern skepticism of authors like Berkeley and Hume may be understood as a consequence of this lack of foundation:

> The accession they have received by modern discoveries, though very important in itself, has thrown darkness and obscurity upon the whole, and has led men rather to skepticism than to knowledge. This must be owing to some fundamental errors that have not been observed; and when these are corrected, it is to be hoped, that the improvements that have been made will have their due effect (*EIP*, I, VI, p. 63).

Reid claims that the foundation of philosophy of mind is a set of beliefs that are self-evident or immediately justified and that everything else, the superstructure of the knowledge on the mental phenomena, should be built upon them:

> There are, therefore, common principles, which are the foundation of all reasoning, and of all science. Such common principles seldom admit of direct proof, nor do they need it. Men need not to be taught them; for they are such as all men of common understanding know; or such, at least, as *they give a ready assent to them*, as soon as they are proposed and understood (*EIP*, I, II, p. 39, emphasis added).

They are self-evident principles of knowledge, since human beings *give a ready assent to them*. According to Reid, it is the very *original constitution of human mind* that dictates us the first principles of philosophy of mind. They are the *common opinion* of humankind, the *universal agreement* of people about self-evident beliefs. The common opinion or the universal agreement of human beings is the result of the very original constitution of human mind, the foundation upon which not only philosophy of mind but many other branches of knowledge should be built. They are results of the original constitution of mind, the *natural result of the human faculties*:

> Where there is such universal consent in things not deep nor intricate, but which lie, on the surface, there is the greatest presumption that can be, that it is the natural result of the human faculties; and it must have great authority with every sober mind that loves truth (*EIP*, I, II, p. 45).

They are the foundation upon which the *superstructure* of human knowledge:

> I acknowledge, that if we were to rest in those judgments of Nature of which we now speak, without building others upon them, they would not entitle us to the denomination of reasonable beings. But yet they ought not to be despised, for *they are the foundation upon which the grand superstructure of human knowledge must be raised* (*EIP*, VI, I, p. 412, emphasis added).

Therefore, on Reid's view: (1) there is a set of beliefs that are self-evident or immediately justified, that is, beliefs which are not based upon any other belief–the first principles of philosophy of mind; (2) there is another set of beliefs that are justified in virtue of their relation with those self-evident or immediately justified beliefs, that is, beliefs that are based upon other beliefs. Beyond this distinction, Reid's statements about the self-evidence of the first principles of philosophy of mind, about how they are

justified from the start motivate me to think Reid as keeping foundationalist commitments with regard to speculative knowledge.

1.2.3) Foundationalism in the system of morals

Reid maintains a foundationalist view concerning moral knowledge, our knowledge of how to act in accordance with our duty. I begin by presenting an important distinction to understand Reid's view on moral knowledge. According to him, a *system of morals*–a system of rules which help us in recognizing right and wrong, virtuous and vicious conduct–does not embrace a *theory of morals*: "by the theory of morals is meant a just account of the structure of our moral powers; that is, of those powers of the mind by which we have our moral conceptions, and distinguish right from wrong in human actions" (*EAP*, V, II, p. 282). Such as I understand this passage, Reid claims that the investigation of the powers of mind involved in moral approval and disapproval, the investigation of the mental phenomena related to the moral appreciation of human conduct–in brief, philosophy of mind, does not integrate a system of morals. There would not be room for a psychology of conscience in a system of rules of conduct. An anatomy of conscience could not decisively contribute to the identification of moral obligation. It could not help us recognize what action is right, what is wrong, what are the virtuous and what are the vicious ones. Reid illustrates this by an analogy: one may certainly be a good judge of the colors and of the other qualities of external objects without knowing anything about the anatomy of the eye or knowing anything about the theory of vision. In a similar manner, one may be a good judge of the right and wrong in conduct without knowing anything about the anatomy of the conscience. Thus, a theory of morals could not help in the improvement of the moral belief:

> I mean not to depreciate this branch of knowledge. It is a very important part of the philosophy of the human mind, and ought to be considered as such, but not as any part of morals. By the name we give to it, and by the custom of making it a part of every system of morals, men may be led into this gross mistake, which I wish to obviate, That in order to understand his duty, a man must needs be a philosopher and a metaphysician (*EAP*, V, II, p. 283).

It is worth to note, Reid observes, that although the anatomists–"moral theorists"–diverge on anatomical matters, for instance, on the powers involved in the recognition of the moral obligation and in the approval and disapproval of actions, they

generally agree with regard to what our duties are. In other words, theoretical disagreement does not imply practical disagreement in moral matters:

> In the former, the Epicurean, the Peripatetic and the Stoic, had each different system of old; and almost every modern author of reputation has a system of his own. At the same time, there is no branch of human knowledge, in which there is so general agreement among ancients and moderns, learned and unlearned, as in the practical rules of morals (*EAP*, V, IV, p. 290).

In general, philosophers are unanimous concerning the rules of morals. Reid believes he can explain this phenomenon:

> From this discord in the theory, and harmony in the practical part, we may judge, that the rules of morality stand upon another and a firmer foundation than the theory. And of this it is easy to perceive the reason.
> For, in order to know what is right and what is wrong in human conduct, we need only listen to the dictates of our conscience, when the mind is calm and unruffled, or attend to the judgment we form of others in like circumstances. But, to judge of the various theories of morals, we must be able to analyze and dissect, as it were, the active powers of the human mind, and especially to analyze accurately that conscience or moral power by which we discern right from wrong (*EAP*, V, IV, p. 290).

The source of moral beliefs is a moral faculty shared by the greatest part of humankind. This common moral faculty explains this general agreement about the moral obligation. Anatomical investigations, on the other hand, depend greatly upon other factors, such as, for instance, the capacity of performing an accurate and detailed examination of mind. This accounts for the disagreements on anatomical matters. Between the moral rule laid down by conscience and the theory of morals, Reid claims, it is necessary to conform to the former:

> That wherever we find any disagreement between the practical rules of morality, which have been received in all ages, and the principles of any of the theories advanced upon this subject, the practical rules ought to be the standard by which the theory is to be corrected, and that it is both unsafe and unphilosophical to warp the practical rules, in order to make them tally with a favourite theory (*EAP*, V, IV, p. 291).

To return to the main subject of this subsection, Reid's view on a system of morals is mainly based upon the distinction between basic / foundational moral beliefs– the first principles of morals–and non-basic / non-foundational moral beliefs. Non-foundational moral beliefs are justified in virtue of their relation with foundational

moral beliefs, which are justified independently of any other belief–they are justified once they are dictates of the original constitution of mind. A system of morals depends on self-evident first principles–beliefs justified from the start, which are the foundation upon which the superstructure of our moral knowledge should be built. It is up to philosophers to search for the first principles in morals:

> All reasoning must be grounded on first principles. This holds in moral reasoning, as in all other kinds. There must therefore be in morals, as in all other sciences, first or self-evident principles, on which all moral reasoning is grounded, and on which it ultimately rests (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 177).

According to Reid, conscience is not only the source of our moral conceptions but it is also the source of our moral beliefs:

> [...] by an original power of the mind, which we call *conscience*, or the *moral faculty*, we have the conceptions of right and wrong in human conduct, of merit and demerit, of duty and moral obligation, and our other moral conceptions; and that, by the same faculty, we perceive some things in human conduct to be right, and others to be wrong; that the first principles of morals are dictates of this faculty; […] (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 180).

Our immediate and irresistible moral beliefs are the self-evident first principles of morals, so that moral reasonings should be extracted from them: "the truths immediately testified by our moral faculty, are the first principles of all moral reasoning, from which all our knowledge of our duty must be deduced" (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 176-7). These self-evident principles are the real foundation of morals:

> From such self-evident principles, conclusions may be drawn synthetically with regard to moral conduct of life; and particular duties or virtues may be traced back to such principles, analytically. But, without such principles, we can no more establish any conclusion in morals, than we can build a castle in the air, without any *foundation* (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 177, emphasis added).

On the one hand, there are cases in which we can know our moral obligation by deducting it from a first principle (synthetical reasoning). A system of morals, by presenting us a set of self-evident first principles, may help us to know how to act in certain circumstances: we would deliberate in the light of those first principles. On the other hand, our particular moral beliefs, when we analyze them, can be traced back to those first principles (analytical reasoning).

As Reid states, everything which is built upon this foundation, upon those self-evident first principles of conscience, constitutes the *superstructure* of our moral knowledge: "and this indeed is common to every branch of human knowledge that deserves the name of science. There must be first principles proper to that science, by which the whole *superstructure* is supported" (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 178, emphasis added). When based upon this foundation, the superstructure of moral knowledge is no less stable than the superstructure of other solid branches of knowledge:

> In every branch of knowledge, where disputes have been raised, it is useful to distinguish the first principles from the superstructure. They are the foundation on which the whole fabric of the science leans; and whatever is not supported by this foundation can have no *stability* (*EAP*, V, I, p. 270, emphasis added).

Therefore, on Reid's view: (1) there is a set of moral beliefs that are self-evident or immediately justified, that is, beliefs which are not based upon any other belief–the first principles of morals; (2) there is another set of moral beliefs that are justified in virtue of their relation with those self-evident or immediately justified beliefs, that is, beliefs that are based upon other beliefs–our particular moral beliefs on how to act in certain circumstances. Beyond this distinction, Reid's statements about the self-evidence of the first principles of morals, about how they are justified from the start motivate me to think Reid as keeping foundationalist commitments with regard to moral knowledge.

1.2.4) Foundationalism in the science of politics?

I have to confess that I am not sure if Reid maintains a foundationalist view with regard to political knowledge. The textual ground to think his foundationalism in political science is at least inconclusive. Based upon the text of the *Lectures on Politics*, it is possible to suppose that Reid understands politics in accordance with that conception of science presented above, but it is not possible to conclusively state he is a foundationalist in politics. I try to explain these difficulties subsequently.

The *Lectures on Politics* give us the grounds to understand Reid's most basic distinction in the field of political knowledge, the distinction between politics as *art* and politics as *science*, a distinction presented in the introductory lesson of his political course. In brief, this distinction may be understood as the distinction between the

exercise of politics and a *theory of politics*. Firstly, Reid defines the art of politics as follows: "if we consider it as an Art it may be defined to be The Art of Modeling & Governing a State so as to answer the End intended by it" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 25). The art of politics is the practice of politics performed by the individual who governs a political society. The politician should have an end in sight and, about it, Reid states:

> It is very obvious that the end of Government ought to be the good and happiness of the Governed: And therefore every Model or Form of Government, if we judge of it by the moral Standard is to be more or less approved according as it tends more or less to promote this end (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 25).

To master the art of politics, in this sense, is related to the knowledge of the means to promote the good and the happiness of the individuals united into a political society. The good politician should be able to identify the best means to promote this end:

> The business of the politician is either to frame a Model of Government for a larger or lesser political Society. Or to preserve repair alter or amend a Government already formed. To discover the latent seeds of those diseases, which if not cured in time are destructive of the political Union, & bring it to dissolution at last, & to be able to find out and apply the proper Remedies (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 25).

Secondly, in Reid's very words: "Politicks considered as a Science is the Knowledge of those principles by which we may Judge of the Constitution and Effects of Government" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 26). Moreover:

> In Politicks we do not enquire what is Right or wrong, but what are the Causes that produce such or such Events in Society; or on the other had what are the Effects and consequences that follow from such or Such Constitutions (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 71-2).

The science of politics, in its strict sense, does not concern the knowledge of the right or wrong. This is up to the moral philosopher. It is up to political scientists instead to account for the causes of the political events in human societies; it is up to them to investigate the effects of certain kinds of constitution upon the political societies. Reid's Lectures on Politics have presented the study of three forms of constitution and their effects: *republican constitution* (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 38-44), *monarchic constitution* (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 44-7) and *despotic constitution* (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 34-8). Reid also considers the mixed British constitution (*Lectures on*

Politics, 2015, p. 47-54). The starting point of the science of politics, however, is the establishment of the first principles from which the political scientist reasonings should be extracted. It is up to the political scientist to settle the foundations of the political knowledge, the first principles of the science of politics:

> Every science must be grounded on certain principles & if Politicks can be at all reduced to a Science, as I doubt not but it may, there must be certain Principles from which all our Reasonings in Politicks are deduced – as there are certain first Principles or Axioms in Mathematicks upon which all our Reasonings in Mathematicks are built, and and as there are in Morals certain first Principles, as we have had occasion to shew upon which our Reasoning in the Science of Morals are built (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 26-7).

In politics, there are first principles from which all reasonings are extracted, upon which all the political knowledge is built. However, in the text of the *Lecture on Politics*, we cannot find a passage in which Reid states that (1) there is a set of beliefs that are self-evident or immediately justified, that is, beliefs which are not based upon any other belief. It is not clear, therefore, if Reid sees the first principles of politics as beliefs justified from the start. It is not possible to claim that they have what is needed for being basic beliefs in a foundationalist view of the structure of knowledge.

Such as I understand a foundationalist theory of epistemic justification, basic / foundational belief should have the characteristic of being immediately justified, independently of any other belief. It is necessary to have this set of justified from the start beliefs. This is one of the basic ideas of a foundationalist theory. The possibility of a science of politics depends upon the possibility of identifying the first principles or axioms upon which the reasonings of the political scientist can be developed. However, the text of the *Lectures on Politics* is not clear if Reid is a foundationalist with regard to political knowledge. I do not claim, therefore, that it is indisputable that Reid keeps foundationalist commitments in politics.

1.3) Discussing some opposing interpretations

1.3.1) Wolterstorff's antifoundationalist interpretation

Nicholas Wolterstorff is one of the authors who do not accept the foundationalist interpretation of Reid's philosophy. Indeed, the author argues that Reid is an antifoundationalist philosopher. According to him, in *Thomas Reid and the story of*

epistemology (2001), Reid would not have developed a foundationalist theory of epistemic justification: he should be understood as "a metaphysical realist who was also, in his own way, an *antifoundationalist*" (WOLTERSTORFF, 2001, p. X, emphasis added). Reid would have abandoned the problem of justifying common sense beliefs, unlike many interpreters are tempted to think about his intentions:

> Beliefs come with a variety of distinct truth-relevant merits and demerits. They are *warranted, reliably, formed, entitled, justified, rational, cases of knowledge, fit for inclusion within science*, and so forth. Contemporary epistemology in the analytic tradition has been preoccupied, in recent years, with the attempt to offer analyses of such merits as these, and criteria for their application. A person trained in this tradition will naturally assume that Reid is engaged in the same enterprise. She will be inclined to extract from Reid a theory of warrant, a theory of entitlement, a theory of justification, or whatever (WOLTERSTORFF, 2001, p. 02, emphasis added).

Reid would not be interested by the problem of identifying the criteria by means of which we would be able to recognize true beliefs: "nowhere in Reid does one find a general theory of any doxastic merit (*doxa* = belief, in Greek)" (WOLTERSTORFF, 2001, p. 02). There are certainly many passages in Reid's works that may lead us to believe that the author is interested by the problem of epistemic justification. Nevertheless, Wolterstorff states, this would not be the main intention of his project: "he clearly indicates an interest in developing a general theory of 'good evidence', of 'just ground [s] of belief. But he found his interest stymied" (WOLTERSTORFF, 2001, p. 03). On Wolterstorff view, Reid would have limited his philosophical investigation to a descriptive project. Reid would never have had a foundationalist project in sight: he would intend to describe the process involved in the operations of the powers of mind. The first of Reid's interests would be related to discovering how the mind conceives the external objects:

> What accounts for the fact that we get entities in mind in such a manner as to be able to form beliefs and other modes of thought about them, and so to speak about them. In particular, what accounts for the fact that we get *nonmental* entities in mind in such a manner, and experienced events from past (WOLTERSTORFF, 2001, p. 04)?

The second one would be related to the nature of belief: "and secondly, what accounts for the fact that often we do not merely *entertain thoughts* about the entities we have in mind but *form beliefs* about them" (WOLTERSTORFF, 2001, p. 04)? This is, in short, Wolterstorff's antifoundationalist interpretation of Reid's philosophy.

As I argue before, Reid's distinction between intuitive propositions and propositions based upon arguments and his view on the self-evidence of the first principles of knowledge makes him a foundationalist philosopher par excellence. Differently from what Wolterstorff argues, Reid is interested in the question of how our beliefs are epistemically justified. His project is not merely descriptive: Reid really goes beyond the simple psychological description of the mental processes of belief formation. Unfortunately, I cannot clarify this point now, I cannot argue in favor of my view, since I discuss Reid's arguments in favor of the truth of the first principles later– Reid does not prove the truth of the first principles, but he presents some arguments in order to make their evidence *more apparent*[13]. I intend to explain Reid's theory of epistemic justification in Chapter 4, more particularly, I intend to discuss his view on the epistemic justification of the first principles of common sense, that is, the basic / foundational beliefs of speculative and moral knowledge. On Reid's view, the first principles of common sense are really true beliefs: they are results of the original constitution of mind; they are due to reliable powers of mind and, for this reason, human beings are justified in assuming them as true beliefs.

1.3.2) Lehrer and Smith's coherentist interpretation

There are also some authors who understand Reid as a coherentist philosopher, instead of a foundationalist one. Indeed, according to Keith Lehrer and John-Cristian Smith (1985), for instance, there are some passages of both the *Inquiry* and the *Intellectual Powers* which may lead us to understand Reid's theory of the first principles as a sort of coherentism. They have found three passages to base their interpretation. The first one appears in the *Inquiry*:

> There is a much greater similitude than is commonly imagined, between the testimony of nature given by our senses, and the testimony given by language. The credit we give to both is at first the effect of instinct only. When we grow up, and begin to reason about them, the credit given to human testimony is restrained, and weakened, by the experience we have of deceit. *But the credit given to the testimony of our senses, is established and confirmed by the uniformity and constancy of the laws of Nature* (*IHM*, VI, XX, p. 171, emphasis added).

[13] See p. 172-3.

On their view, this passage is important in that it suggests the testimony of senses may be confirmed. In other words, that the coherence among perceptual beliefs would confirm the first principles about the reliability of perception (LEHRER & SMITH, 1985, p. 26). The second passage is presented in the same work:

> Common sense and reason have both one author; that Almighty author, in all whose other works we observe a consistency, uniformity, and beauty, which charm and delight the understanding: there must therefore be some *order and consistency* in the human faculties, as well as in other parts of his workmanship (*IHM*, V, VII, p. 69, emphasis added).

According to the authors, the order and consistency of the faculties of mind may be a sign of Reid's coherentist commitments. Finally, in the *Intellectual Powers*, we find the third passage–according to Lehrer and Smith, the strongest indication of Reid's coherentism view (LEHRER & SMITH, 1985, p. 37): "there is hardly any proposition, especially of those that may claim the character of first principles, that stands alone and unconnected. It draws many others along with it in a chain that cannot be broken" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 464). Those three passages would suggest that Reid in fact keeps a sort of coherentist theory of epistemic justification. On Reid's view, the truth of our beliefs "[…] is a consequence of the coherence of the system [of our beliefs] (LEHRER & SMITH, 1985, p. 37).

Despite what Lehrer and Smith claim, Reid actually assumes a foundationalist view with regard to knowledge. Reid's foundationalist assumptions are quite extensive to abandon them in favor of a coherentist interpretation, an interpretation that, after all, does not find much textual ground. I do not agree to abandon all those concepts to which Reid appeals–very important to foundationalist authors, such as *foundation*, *superstructure*, *intuitive propositions* (basic / foundational beliefs) and *propositions based upon arguments* (non-basic / non-foundational beliefs), immediately justified beliefs and the building metaphor–in favor of this interpretation fundamentally based upon three passages. As shown above, Reid claims that there are first principles–basic / foundational beliefs which are justified from the start–that are the foundation of many branches of knowledge, among them, philosophy of mind and morals. They are self-evident principles whose truth is immediately justified: they do not depend on anything else, not even on the coherence of our beliefs. The coherence of the beliefs due to the faculties of mind is not an element of their justification.

1.3.3) Poore's foundationalist / coherentist interpretation

Recently, Gregory Poore presents an interesting interpretation of Reid's theory of the first principles. According to him, a mixture of foundationalism and coherentism is present in Reid's philosophy[14]: "I argue that Reid's epistemology, while primarily foundationalist, is not simply foundationalist but contains coherentist strands: […] While such boosted justification is not generally necessary for knowledge, it can be valuable" (POORE, 2015, p. 213). He explains his interpretation in more details:

> By arguing that Reid's epistemology contains coherentism strands, I do not wish to suggest that coherence is the primary, let alone the only, source of justification. By itself, the justification supplied by coherence is not sufficient to justify a belief to the level required for knowledge, nor is it necessary for knowledge, at least in normal, non-skeptical contexts. I wish to argue merely that for Reid, the value of coherence is not simply the absence of defeaters–that is, the value of consistency. Coherence has positive epistemic value for Reid and *it can boost*, though not supplant, the justification of beliefs formed according to his externalist criteria (POORE, 2015, p. 223, emphasis added).

There is another element in Poore's interpretation which I do not intend to consider now, namely, the idea that God could play some epistemological role in this context of foundationalism and coherentism[15]. I believe it is sufficient, in the appreciation of this interpretation, to have in sight the assumption of an *additional justification* or *further justification* by means of the coherence of the system of beliefs. At first, this interpretation does not seem to present any difficulty, since coherence, as Poore puts it, is only a way of adding truth value to the first principles–which constitute, after all, the foundation of human knowledge. However, this assumption may imply a difficulty if it is not better explained. I appeal to Bonjour in order to throw light on this possible difficulty which may strikes Reid's view on the first principles in Poore's interpretation:

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[14] Susan Hack (1993) calls this mixture *foundherentism*. Poore does not use this term, however.

[15] This passage summarizes Poore's understanding on this point: "Reid's belief in a beneficent God is, as he states here, 'grounded upon the experience of his paternal care and goodness' – in other words, upon Reid's experiences via his perceptual faculties. Since Reid elsewhere gives arguments for the existence and perfections of God, his 'confidence and trust in a faithful and beneficent Monitor' is also grounded upon theistic reasons for trusting his perceptual beliefs are circular: based on perceptual beliefs, he believes in God's existence and goodness, and this belief gives him further justification for his perceptual beliefs. This inference is circular – viciously circular, if Reid were a simple foundationalist, but virtuously circular since his epistemology contains coherentist strands and these circles are coherence-building and hence justification-generating" (POORE, 2015, p. 225).

> The weak foundationalist solution to this problem [epistemic regress] is to attempt to augment the justification of both basic and nonbasic beliefs by appealing to the *concept of coherence*. Very roughly, if a suitably large, suitably coherent system can be built, containing a reasonably high proportion of one's initially credible basic beliefs together with nonbasic beliefs, then it is claimed, the justification of all the beliefs in the system, basic and nonbasic, may be increased to the point of being adequate for knowledge, where achieving high enough degree of coherence may necessitate the rejection of some of one's basic beliefs (BONJOUR, 1985, p. 28-9, emphasis added).

To suppose that basic / foundational beliefs need something more than themselves–that they can be boosted by the coherence of the doxastic system they yield–is to suppose a weak sort of foundationalist theory of epistemic justification. In this weak sort of foundationalism, the supposition of an additional justification may imply the decrease of the truth of the first principles of knowledge. That is, Reid's first principles of knowledge would not be able to play the epistemological role that Reid holds they do: they are not as true as the philosopher thought.

I do not believe Poore supposes Reid maintains a weak sort of foundationalism. He clearly admits that this epistemic booster is not necessary for the truth of the first principles. However, it is necessary to recognize something odd in the supposition of an additional justification: how to understand in what sense "self-evident" principles of knowledge can become more justified than they initially are? Such as Reid understands the first principles, they are self-evident principles and to suppose that there are ways to make them more justified is to suppose that they are actually "partially self-evident". As Reid explains, the proposition which expresses a first principle of knowledge "[…] has the light of truth in itself, and has no occasion to borrow it from another [proposition]" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 452). Poore's interpretation, if it does not lessen the importance of the first principles and their self-evidence, would have to explain what does it mean to add justification to self-evident principles. Of course Reid presents some arguments in order to show that philosophers have good reasons to assume common sense beliefs, first principles of knowledge, as true beliefs. As he claims, "there are ways by which the evidence of first principles may be made more apparent[16]". However, I am far from thinking that these arguments provide any *additional justification* for the first principles. The first principles of philosophy of mind and morals are entirely justified from the start.

[16] I discuss this point in chapter 4.

Conclusion

I have tried to explain the main reasons that led me to think Reid as a foundationalist philosopher. I have shown what a theory of epistemic justification is, as well as the main assumptions of a foundationalist theory of epistemic justification. I have also shown the main aspects of Reid's philosophy which make him a foundationalist philosopher in my view: his distinction between basic / foundational beliefs and non-basic / non-foundational beliefs, as well as his understanding that basic / foundational beliefs have the characteristic of being immediately justified, justified from the start. I have also shown why I suppose Reid as a foundationalist with regard to speculative and moral knowledge and the difficulties of knowing if he keeps foundationalist commitments in politics. Finally, I have presented three different interpretations of Reid's philosophy, the antifoundationalist, the coherentist and the foundationalist / coherentist interpretation, arguing why I suppose they are not right in denying Reid's foundationalist commitments.

CHAPTER 2) UNDERSTANDING REID ON THE SOURCES OF THE FIRST PRINCIPLES

I consider, in the second chapter of this thesis, Reid's remarks on the sources of the first principles of human knowledge. In particular, I intend to consider two sources of human knowledge, namely, common sense and knowledge of mankind. In the first section, I discuss Reid's view on the powers of judgment and belief and the role of evidence in their operations. Both notions are key concepts to understand Reid's view on the first principles. I consider, in the second section, the problem of understanding Reid's notion of *common sense* and I try to present his psychology of the powers of mind to which common sense beliefs are due. Common sense is the source of the first principles of philosophy of mind and morals. In the third section, I consider Reid's notion of *knowledge of mankind* and I present the psychology of the principles of human action. Knowledge of mankind is the source of the first principles of politics, which are not results of the original constitution of mind, in other words, they are not common sense beliefs. They cannot be found among the immediate and irresistible beliefs of common sense.

2.1) Reid on judgement / belief, evidence and knowledge

In this section, I would like to consider how Reid's psychology of the powers of judgment and belief, how he describes the operations of these powers and the role played by evidence in the operations of both of them. The notions of *judgment* and *belief* are key concepts to understand Reid's view on human knowledge, in particular, the sources of our knowledge, common sense and knowledge of mankind. Indeed, such as I understand them, the first principles of philosophy of mind, morals or politics are judgments and beliefs of two different sources. As I argue later, common sense judgments / beliefs are the foundations of philosophy of mind and morals, as well as the judgments and beliefs of the knowledge of mankind are the foundations of the science of politics.

2.1.1) Reid on judgment, belief and knowledge

Firstly, I consider Reid's view on the power of judging. I believe the clearest of Reid's consideration on this notion appears on the following passage, in the chapter *Sentiments of Philosophers concerning judgment*–in the context of a discussion on Locke's notion of *judgment*[17]:

> I understand by it [judgment] that operation of mind, by which we determine, concerning any thing that may be expressed by a proposition, whether it be true or false. Every proposition is either true or false; so is every judgment. A proposition may be simply conceived without judging of it. But when there is not only a conception of the proposition, but a mental affirmation or negation, an assent or dissent of the understanding, whether weak or strong, that is judgment (*EIP*, VI, III, p. 435).

Judgment is the power of stating if something is true or false by means of an affirmation or negation, and its form of expression is a proposition. A proposition is true or false in accordance with what it affirms or denies. Judgment, such as Reid understands it, may be a *tacit* operation of mind. On the one hand: "it [judgment] is a solitary act of the mind, and the expression of it by affirmation or denial is not at all essential to it. It may be tacit, and not expressed" (*EIP*, VI, I, p. 406). Reid appeals to the distinction between *solitary* and *social* powers of human mind to make this point clearer[18]. In the condition of a solitary power, judgment does not need to be expressed by means of words or signs. Judgment is a tacit act of mind and it is complete even when it is not communicated to other intelligent being. On the other hand: "affirmation and denial is very often the expression of testimony, which is a different act of the mind, and ought to be distinguished from judgment" (*EIP*, VI, I, p. 406). Judgment and testimony are different operations of mind. Judgment is a solitary act of mind, testimony, a social one. For this reason, testimony needs to be expressed by means of words and signs in order to be understood by other human beings. Moreover, testimony may be a lie, once it

[17] I appeal to the *Intellectual Powers* to explain Reid's view on judgment.

[18] About this distinction, Reid claims: "A man may understand and will; he may apprehend, and judge, and reason, though he should know of no intelligent being in the universe besides himself. But, when he asks information, or receives it,; when he bears testimony, or receives the testimony of another; when he gives a command to his servant, or receives one from a superior: when he plights his faith in a promise or contract; these are acts of social intercourse between intelligent beings, and can have no place in solitude" (*EIP*, I, VIII, p. 68). The solitary powers are those which do not suppose the intercourse with another intelligent being. The social powers, in turn, are those which suppose a sort of communication with another intelligent being: "they suppose understanding and will; but they suppose something more, which is neither understanding nor will; that is, society with other intelligent beings" (*EIP*, I, VIII, p. 68). The faculties of consciousness, memory, perception and taste, for instance, may be called *solitary / intellectual powers* of mind. The act of asking or receiving information, the act of testifying or receiving a testimony, for instance, may be called *social / intellectual powers* of mind. The social affections (benevolence and malevolence), in turn, may be called *social / active powers* of mind.

depends on the veracity of the one who performs it. Otherwise, a false judgment is just a mistake of who judges. To show that judgment is a tacit act of mind is important in that Reid intends to argue that some operations of mind, for instance, consciousness, memory, perception, taste and conscience, are accompanied by tacit judgments[19]: "[…] in persons come to years of understanding, judgment necessarily accompanies all sensations, perception by the senses, consciousness, and memory, but not conception" (*EIP*, VI, I, p. 409). When we are conscious of the operations and passions of our minds, when we perceive the objects of the external world or remember the past events by memory, we are performing tacit judgments about the existence of those mental operations by consciousness, the existence of those objects perceived by the external senses and the existence of those past events revealed by memory. Reid underlines that conception cannot be followed by judgment: "although there can be no judgment without a conception of things about which we judge; yet conception may be without any judgment" (*EIP*, VI, I, p. 408). They are indeed two different powers of mind: "[...] judgment is an act of the mind specifically different from simple apprehension, or the bare conception of a thing" (*EIP*, VI, I, p. 408). But there is no judgment involved in the operations of conception. It is a fact that the mind is capable of conceiving an object without judging about it. Nevertheless, the mind is not capable of judging the truth or falsehood of the existence of an object without conceiving it previously.

Secondly, I consider Reid's view on the power of *belief*[20]. Reid acknowledges the impossibility of defining this notion[21]. He presents some synonymous for this term: "*belief*, *assent*, *conviction*, are words which I think do not admit of logical definition, because the operation of mind signified by them is perfectly simple, and of its own kind.

[19] The difficulty of acknowledging that judgment accompanies many operations of mind concerning the fact we hardly make reference to them in our speeches. Reid notes that we do not express those judgments since it would be superfluous. It is worth to note another analogy that illustrates Reid's understanding on this point: "A woman with child never says, that, going such a journey, she carried her child along with her. We know that, while it is in her womb, she must carry it along with her. There are some operations of mind that may be said to carry judgment in their womb, and can no more leave it behind them than the pregnant woman can leave her child" (*EIP*, VI, I, p. 410). When I say "I see an oak", it is actually implicitly a judgment about the existence of the object I see, that is, that I judge there is an object and this object is perceived by my eyes.

[20] In order to explain what belief is, I follow both the *Inquiry* (mainly sections *Sensation and remembrance, natural principles of belief* / *Judgment and belief in some cases precede simple apprehension* / *Two theories of the nature of belief refuted*) and the *Intellectual Powers* (chapter *Of the evidence of sense, and of belief in general*).

[21] Reid explains: "but what is this belief or knowledge which accompanies sensation and memory? Every man knows what it is, but no man can define it. Does any man pretend to define sensation, or to define consciousness? It is happy indeed that no man does. And if no philosopher had endeavoured to define and explain belief some paradoxes in philosophy, more incredible than ever were brought forth by the most abject superstition, or the most frantic enthusiasm, had never seen the light" (*IHM*, II, V. p. 30).

Nor do they need to be defined, because they are common words, and well understood" (*EIP*, II, XX, p. 227, emphasis added). Some of the greatest paradoxes of the philosophy of mind come rightly from the attempt to define the power of belief in an inappropriate way[22]. Such as in the case of judgment, some operations of mind are always accompanied by belief:

> That there are many operations of mind in which, when we analyse them as far as we are able, we find belief to be an essential ingredient. A man cannot be conscious of his own thoughts, without believing that he thinks. He cannot perceive an object of sense, without believing that it exists. He cannot distinctly remember a past event without believing that it did exist. Belief therefore is an ingredient in consciousness, in perception, and in remembrance" (*EIP*, II, XX, p. 228).

Many of the operations of mind, like consciousness, memory, perception, taste and conscience are accompanied by belief: a belief in the existence of the operations and passions of which we are conscious, in the existence of the past events of which we are conscious, in the existence of the objects perceived by the senses, in the existence of aesthetic qualities appreciated by taste, that certain actions are right and others are wrong. Reid is not able to explain why those operations are accompanied by belief:

> Why sensation compels our belief of the present existence of the thing, memory a belief of its past existence, and imagination no belief at all, I hold no philosopher can give a shadow of reason, but that such is the nature of these operations: They are all simple and original, and therefore *inexplicable acts of the mind* (*IHM*, II, III. p. 28, emphasis added).

These are *inexplicable acts of the mind*. All Reid may state is that some operations of mind are accompanied by belief.

Thirdly, based upon what Reid claims about judgment and belief, I consider the question of understanding the relation between both powers of mind, a relation that is not so clear. On the one hand, it seems plausible to think that judgment and belief are powers so connected that, on Reid's view, both cannot be exerted independently. Thus, the terms *judgment* and *belief* could be understood as interchangeable terms in Reid's

[22] Reid has in sight Locke's (IHM, II, V, p. 31) and Hume's (IHM, II, V, p. 30) theories of belief. To define *belief* is not only noxious to the investigation but it is also unnecessary: "I conclude, then, that the belief […] is a simple act of the mind, which cannot be defined. It is in this respect like seeing and hearing, which can never be so defined as to be understood by those who have not these faculties; and to such as have them, no definition can make these operations more clear than they are already. In like manner, every man that has any belief, and he must be a curiosity that has none, knows perfectly what belief is, but can never define or explain it" (*IHM*, II, V. p. 31).

thought. On the other hand, Reid leaves open the question of knowing if judgment is a *necessary concomitant* or an *ingredient* of the operations of those powers, acknowledging, contrarily, that belief is an *essential ingredient* of those operations. Adam Pelser thinks the relation between judgment and belief as follows:

> While judgment is the momentary mental act of initially affirming or denying some proposition, belief is the mental state that follows immediately upon judgment as its natural consequence and, as it were, completes the judgment. In other words, judgment is the activity of beginning to believe (or disbelieve) (PELSER, 2010, p. 360).

The following passage seems to give textual ground for his view: "but it is certain, that all of them [sensation, perception, memory and consciousness] are accompanied with a determination that something is true or false, and a *consequent* belief" (*EIP*, VI, I, p. 409, emphasis added). Reid also claims: "it is a mental affirmation or negation; it may be expressed by a proposition affirmative or negative, and it is *accompanied* with the firmest belief (*EIP*, VI, I, p. 409, emphasis added). In Essay VII, another passage reinforces Pelser's view: "reasoning, as well as judgment, must be true or false; both are grounded upon evidence which may be probable or demonstrative, and both are *accompanied* with assent or belief" (*EIP*, VII, I, p. 543, emphasis added). Nevertheless, on the following passage, Reid claims:

> Belief is always expressed in language by a proposition, wherein something affirmed or denied. This is the form of speech which in all languages is appropriated to that purpose, and *without belief there could be neither affirmation nor denial*, nor should we have any form of words to express either (*EIP*, II, XX, p. 228, emphasis added).

This passage makes us think it is hard to claim that there is a temporal distinction between judgment and belief, as if the judgment could be the beginning of the process of believing, or the latter could be a complement of the former.

I would not discuss if Pelser is right in assuming the existence of a temporal criterion of distinction, if judgment precedes belief or vice versa. I would like to underline that, on Reid's view, a belief could not appear without a judgment about the truth or falsehood of an object, or a judgment could not be accomplished without a belief about the existence or inexistence of an object. To think the truth or falsehood of an object or to affirm or to deny its existence are always together in the operations of mind. This explains the reason I use the *belief*, in some cases, when Reid uses the term *judgment*. I believe this interchangeable use of the terms do not imply any difficulty to

understand Reid's theory of the first principles of speculative, moral and political knowledge, which are judgments and beliefs of common sense and knowledge of mankind. Some operations of mind yield judgments and beliefs and, more important, in the context of epistemological discussions, Reid understands both judgment and belief as *knowledge*. I quote two short passages as examples of his view. The first passage appears in the *Intellectual Powers*: "truth and falsehood are qualities *which belong to* judgment only; or to propositions by which judgment is expressed" (*EIP*, I, VII, p. 66, emphasis added); the second one appears in the *Inquiry*: "[…] what is this *belief or knowledge* which accompanies sensation and memory" (*IHM*, II, V. p. 30, emphasis added)? Both judgement and belief means knowledge, but not in all cases:

> *Knowledge*, I think, sometimes signifies things known; sometimes that act of the mind by which we know them. And in like manner *opinion* sometimes signifies things believed; sometimes the act of the mind by which we believe them. But judgment is the faculty which is exercised in both these acts of the mind. In knowledge, we judge without doubting; in opinion, with some mixture of doubt (*EIP*, VI, III, p. 435, emphasis added).

When the powers of judgment and belief operate without doubt, there is knowledge; if there is room for doubt, there is an opinion instead. Therefore, to discuss matters of truth and falsehood, that is, to discuss knowledge, is to discuss about judgments and beliefs and the propositions which express them. I present an example. The judgment and belief which accompany my perception of an oak may be expressed in a propositional way as follows: "I see an oak". This judgment / belief is true if I am actually seeing a tree, or it is false if I do not in fact perceive it. The same goes for the proposition: it is true in the case I see a tree, and it is false if I do not really perceive it. In the following subsection, I explain the role that evidence plays in the operations of judgment and belief.

2.1.2) Reid on evidence and knowledge

According to Reid, evidence is the ground from which the operations of judgment and belief are performed. He states about evidence and judgment: "evidence is *the ground of judgment*, and when we see evidence, it is impossible not to judge" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 410, emphasis added). He claims about evidence and belief:

> We give the name of evidence to whatever is a *ground of belief*. To believe without evidence is a weakness which every man is concerned to avoid, and which every man wishes to avoid. Nor is it in a man's power to believe any thing longer than he thinks he has evidence (*EIP*, II, XX, p. 228, emphasis added).

As both passages show, evidence works as the basis from which judgment and belief operate, stressing once again the connection between these two powers of mind. Evidence is what governs the powers of judging and believing: "to believe without evidence is a weakness which every man is concerned to avoid, and which every man wishes to avoid. Nor is it in a man's power to believe any thing longer than he thinks he has evidence" (*EIP*, II, XX, p. 228). For instance, I judge the truth of the existence of an oak perceived by senses and believe in its existence since I have evidence of the existence of this external object. On Reid's view, I am not able to judge or believe in the existence of the oak without having evidence of its existence. Human mind may be understood, by analogy, as an *internal tribunal* where judgments are performed:

> As a judge, after taking the *proper evidence*, passes sentence in a cause, and that sentence is called his judgment; so the mind, with regard to whatever is true or false, passes sentence, or determines according to the evidence that appears. Some kinds of evidence leave no room for doubt. Sentence is passed immediately, without seeking or hearing any contrary evidence, because the thing is certain and notorious. In other cases, there is room for weighing evidence on both sides before sentence is passed (*EIP*, VI, I, p. 407, emphasis added).

Mind, as well as a judge, judges in accordance with the evidence which appears to it. In the specific case of the judgments and beliefs which accompany the operations of perception, the evidence we have is the evidence of *the original constitution of mind*, the evidence of the external powers which makes us judge and believe in the existence of the oak when it is perceived[23].

In the previous chapter, I have discussed Reid's understanding of scientific knowledge: knowledge acquired by means of reasoning from a set of axioms or first principles. Such as I understand Reid, he claims that there is a first level of knowledge, previous to the scientific one. The judgments and beliefs resulting of the operations of the powers of mind–consciousness, memory, perception and conscience, for instance,

[23] In the *Inquiry*, Reid claims the same about the evidence of perception: "[…] that it is no less a part of the human constitution, to believe the present existence of our sensations, and to believe the past existence of what we remember, than it is to believe that twice two makes four. The evidence of sense, the evidence of memory, and the evidence of the necessary relations of things, are all distinct and original kinds of evidence, equally grounded on our constitution: none of them depends upon, or can be resolved into another" (*IHM*, II, VI, p. 32).

the judgments and beliefs which are based upon the evidence of the original constitution of mind, are knowledge by themselves. They do not depend on any sort of reasoning to be appropriately called knowledge. Moreover, in the light of that distinction between knowledge and opinion presented above, we see that the judgments and beliefs due to the powers of mind are not mere opinions, once "there is no room for doubt" in perception, such as there is no room for doubt in consciousness, memory, taste and conscience. By way of comparison, I quote David Hume on this point, an author to whom *knowledge* and *probability* seems to be only mediately acquired, that is, by means of the operations of reasoning:

> By knowledge, I mean the assurance arising from the comparison of ideas. By proofs, those arguments, which are deriv'd from the relation of cause and effect, and which are entirely free from doubt and uncertainty. By probability, that evidence which is still attended with uncertainty (HUME, 2009, p. 86).

In this brief but very clarifying passage, Hume acknowledges that knowledge, probability and proof depend on the operations of reasoning. On Reid's view, contrarily, there is knowledge acquired by an immediate mean, without the operations of reason. It is indifferent, however, if we call those operations *judgment* or *knowledge*:

> And if it be granted, that by our senses, our memory and consciousness, we not only have ideas or simple apprehensions, but form determinations concerning what is true, and what is false; whether these determinations ought to be called *knowledge* or *judgment*, is of small moment (*EIP*, VI, I, p. 411).

The immediate–and irresistible–judgments and belief of the mind are not only knowledge but they are also the foundation upon which several branches of knowledge are built. They are the first principles of common sense. This is the subject of the next section.

2.2) Reid on common sense

Reid holds that common sense is the foundation of philosophy of mind and many other branches of human knowledge–for instance, natural philosophy[24], grammar,

[24] On Reid's view, Newton has appealed to principles of common sense in his investigation of material phenomena: "his *regulae philosphandi* are maxims of common sense, and are practised every day in common life; and he who philosophizes by other rules, either concerning the material system, or concerning the mind, mistakes his aim" (*IHM*, I, I. p. 12). Moreover, about the twelfth first principle of

logic, mathematics, aesthetics, morals and metaphysics. Subsequently, I intend to discuss in details Reid's view on common sense as the foundation of human knowledge. Firstly, I discuss his view on the foundational role of common sense, as well as what he has in sight when he refers to common sense in the context of the discussion on the foundations of knowledge. Secondly, I consider how Reid understands the sources of common sense beliefs: his psychology of the powers of mind.

2.2.1) Reid's notion of *common sense*

A recurrent question among Reidian commentator concerns the understanding Reid has of the notion of *common sense*. Louise Marcil-Lacoste (1982), for instance, notes:

> Because Reid uses the term 'common sense' in a variety of ways, the version of common sense derived from these different references has been held to be confusing. Indeed, although a few commentators on Reid's philosophy insist that his notion of common sense has one central meaning, most commentators have found from two to five different meanings in his use of the term (MARCIL-LACOSTE, 1982, p. 74).

Marcil-Lacoste points out some of the common sense meanings presented by Reidian commentators: (1) *common sense* may be interpreted as a faculty, sometimes identified with practical sagacity, intuitive reason, average intelligence, well-balanced intellect; (2) *common sense* may be interpreted as a set of principles, sometimes identified as self-evident truths, ordinary beliefs, popular conclusions, intuitive judgments, laws of the mind; (3) *common sense* may be interpreted as a doctrine or a set of assumptions concerning the source of certainty / evidence / truth, sometimes identified as philosophical or popular, as principles of deductions or necessary conditions in the exercise of rational powers.

I hold that it is possible to understand Reid's notion of *common sense*, mainly when it is employed in the context of the discussion on the foundations of knowledge, as the *original constitution of mind* or *what is dictated* by the original constitution of human nature. I would not claim neither it is a faculty nor it is a doctrine or a set of assumptions concerning the source of truth, such as the definitions (1) and (3) presented

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contingent truths – the one related to the regularity of the events in nature : "I need hardly to mention, that the whole fabric of natural philosophy is built upon this principle, and, if it be taken away, must tumble down to the foundation" (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 489).

by Marcil-Lacoste. However, I hold it is possible to understand common sense, as a set of principles, a set of beliefs due to the power of mind, a view which may be understood in the light of definition (2).

I open a parenthesis to clarify that I do not discuss if there is some significant change of view on the notion of *common sense* from the *Inquiry* to the *Intellectual Powers*. My view on this point is that, in the context of the discussion on the foundations of knowledge, both works present similar views on common sense: human knowledge–particularly, speculative and moral knowledge–should be based upon the *original constitution of mind* or *what is dictated* by the original constitution of human mind. In this context, at least, I suppose there is no significant change of view in how Reid conceives common sense.

In the *Inquiry*, this meaning may be apprehended in the light of the notion of *suggestion*. As Reid states, the original constitution of mind *suggests* many of our judgments and beliefs:

> I beg leave to make use of the word *suggestion*, because I know not one more proper, to express a power of the mind, which seems entirely to have escaped the notice of philosophers, and to which we owe many of our simple notions which are neither impressions nor ideas, as well as many original principles of belief" (IHM, II, VII. p. 38).

Reid distinguishes between two sorts of suggestion in human mind, one acquired by experience, *habitual*, and another sort that comes from the original constitution of mind, *natural*. The former sort is illustrated by the following example: "we all know, that a certain kind of sounds suggests immediately to the mind, a coach passing in the street; and not only produces the imagination, but the belief, that a coach is passing" (*IHM*, II, VII. p. 38). Habitual suggestion depends on a previous experience. In the example case, it is necessary that mind has previously heard another coaches in motion to be able to suggest the belief that those sonorous sensations are caused by a coach passing in the street. There are another set of beliefs that are not due to experience, but are the result of natural suggestions of mind:

> Particularly, that sensation suggest the notion of present existence, and the belief that what we perceive or feel, does now exist; that memory suggests the notion of past existence, and the belief that what we remember did exist in time past; and that our sensations and thoughts do also suggest the notion of a mind, and the belief of its existence, and of its relation to our thoughts. By a like *natural principle* it is, that a beginning of existence, or any change in nature, suggests to us the

> notion of a cause, and compels our belief of its existence. And in like manner, as shall be shewn when we come to the sense of touch, certain sensations of touch, *by the constitution of our nature*, suggest to us extension, solidity, and motion, which are nowise like sensations, although they have been hitherto confounded with them (*IHM*, II, VII. p. 38, emphasis added).

Common sense, *as the constitution of our nature*, suggests many of our beliefs, such as those about the existence of the external objects perceived by sense, the existence of past remembered by memory, the existence of a mind which thinks and that a change in nature must have a cause.

It is out of philosophers' reach to account for the causes of those natural suggestions. Philosophy cannot explain why or how those beliefs are suggested by original constitution of mind, how mind guides human beings in their beliefs. Indeed, in the section *Of the systems of philosophers concerning the senses* in the *Inquiry*, Reid observes the impossibilities of philosophy on this point:

> How a sensation should instantly make us conceive and believe the existence of an external thing altogether unlike it, I do not pretend to know; and when I say that the one suggest the other, I mean not to explain the manner of their connection, but to express a fact, which every one may be conscious of; namely, that, by a law of our nature, such a conception and belief constantly and immediately follow the sensation (*IHM*, V, VIII. p. 74).

This is a fact about the original constitution of mind which cannot be explained by philosophy. Ahead in the text, he adds:

> The sensations of touch, of seeing, and hearing, are all in the mind, and can have no existence but when they are perceived. How do they all constantly and invariably suggest the conception and belief of external objects, which exist whether they are perceived or not? No philosopher can give any other answer to this, but *that such is the constitution of our nature*. How do we know, that the object of touch is at fingers end and no where else? That the object of sight is in such a direction from the eye, and in no other, but may be at any distance? And that the object of hearing may be at any distance, and in any direction? Not by custom surely; not by reasoning, or comparing ideas, but by constitution of our nature (*IHM*, VI, XII, p. 125-6, emphasis added).

There are limits concerning the account of how common sense, or the original constitution of mind, makes us believe in the existence of the operations of mind, the existence of past events and the existence of external objects. All philosophers are authorized to claim is *that such is the constitution of our nature*.

The very constitution of mind suggests those beliefs Reid assumes as first principles of knowledge. This is how common sense plays its foundational role: the *original constitution of human mind* dictates to us the very way according to which human mind determines us with regard to our conceptions, judgments and beliefs. Common sense signifies the judgments and beliefs that are due to the powers of mind, the natural judgments related to the unreflected and instinctive side of mind. This original constitution is shared for the great part of humankind. For this reason, natural beliefs may be understood as common principles, first principles of common sense. In the context of the discussion on the natural judgments of the mind on the existence of the external objects, Reid observes:

> Such original and natural judgments are therefore a part of that furniture which nature hath given to the human understanding […] They serve to direct us in the common affairs of life, where our reasoning faculty would leave us in the dark. They are a part of our constitution, and all the discoveries of reason are grounded upon them. *They make up what is called* [emphasis added] *the common sense of mankind*; and what is manifestly contrary to any of those first principles, is what we call *absurd* (*IHM*, VII, p. 215).

The judgments and beliefs of the original constitution of mind are the first principles of common sense, the foundation of philosophy of mind:

> if there are certain principles, as I think there are, *which the constitution of our nature leads us to believe, and which we are under a necessity to take for granted in the common concerns of life*, without being able to give a reason for them; these are what we call the principles of common sense; and what is manifestly contrary to them, is what we call absurd (*IHM*, II, VI. p. 33, emphasis added).

Therefore, to appeal to common sense in philosophical investigation is to appeal to the judgments and beliefs of the original constitution of human mind.

In the *Intellectual Powers*, Reid carefully discusses what he understands by the notion of *common sense*[25]. He begins chapter *Of common sense* by explaining the meaning of the term *sense*. He notes the modern authors have employed *sense* to signify only the powers of the mind by means of which the mind would be able to have conceptions or notions. For instance: the external senses would form the conceptions of

[25] On James Somerville's view (1987), this detailed discussion is due to Joseph Priestley's (1733-1804) critique of Reid's use of the term *common sense* in the *Inquiry*. Priestley, according to Sommerville, would have accused him of making an unusual employment of the term, giving to common sense a meaning that is actually not common. Thus, Reid would have been invited to explain more systematically his understanding of *common sense* (SOMMERVILLE, 1987, p. 418).

the qualities of the external objects; the sense of beauty would form the conceptions of the aesthetical qualities of the objects of nature and art; the moral sense would form the conceptions of right and wrong, virtue and vice. According to him, on the contrary, in its most common use, shared by the greatest part of humankind, the term *sense* is employed to signify not only the powers by means of which we yield our conceptions but also to signify the powers by means of which mind judges: "seeing and hearing by Philosophers are called senses, because we have ideas by them; by the vulgar they called sense, because we judge by them" (*EIP*, VI, II, p. 424). Thus, sense implies not only the source of notions, but also the origin of judgments and beliefs. And common sense may be understood, Reid claims, as a *degree of judgment* common to the greatest part of humankind:

> In common language, sense always implies judgment. A man of sense is a man of judgment. Nonsense is what is evidently contrary to right judgement. *Common sense* is that degree of judgment which is common to men with whom we can observe and transact business (*EIP*, VI, II, p. 424, emphasis added).

On the one hand, there is a context related to the human action, to the practical ambit, in which human beings are endowed with common sense:

> This inward light or sense is given by Heaven to different persons in different degrees. There is a certain degree of it which is necessary to our being subjects of law and government, capable of managing our own affairs, and answerable for our conduct toward others; This is called common sense, because it is common to all men with whom we can transact business, or call to account for their conduct (*EIP*, VI, II, p. 426).

On the other hand, there is a context related to knowledge, more directly related to the discovery of the truth: "the same degree of understanding which makes a man capable of acting with common prudence in the conduct of live, 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, p. 426). That degree of judgment common to the greatest part of humankind is the source of the true judgments and beliefs which should be assumed as the first principles of knowledge.

It is worth to note Reid's observations on the relation between common sense and reason. It is possible to find some passages in the *Inquiry* in which Reid seems to oppose them both. For instance: "to reason against any of these kinds of evidence [the evidence of the powers of mind], is absurd; nay to reason for them, is absurd. They are

first principles; and such fall not within the province of Reason, but of Common Sense" (*IHM*, II, V, p. 32). And also: "Common sense and reason have both one author; that Almighty author, in all whose other works we observe a consistency, uniformity, and beauty, which charm and delight the understanding" (*IHM*, V, VII, p. 68). Nevertheless, this opposition is more apparent than real. Reason, as power of mind, the power of "passing from one judgment from another", cannot oppose common sense, the original constitution of mind. Reason, like consciousness, memory and perception, for instance, constitutes common sense. How can we explain those passages? Reid has in sight in those passages the opposition between judgments acquired by reasoning–that is, the mediate judgments which depend on some process–and judgments which are results of the original constitution of mind–that is, the immediate judgments of nature. In the *Intellectual Powers* Reid makes this point clearer. Common sense cannot oppose reason, in the same way, reason cannot oppose common sense: "it is absurd to conceive that there can be any opposition between reason and common sense. It is indeed the first-born of reason, and as they are commonly joined together in speech and in writing, they are inseparable in their nature" (*EIP*, VI, II, p. 432-3). There is no opposition as far as common sense and reason are only distinct degrees of the same aspect of mind:

> We ascribe to reason two offices, or two degrees. The first is to judge of things self-evident; the second is to draw conclusions that are not self-evident from those that are. The first of these in the province and the sole province of common sense; and therefore it coincides with reason in its whole extent, and is only another name for one branch of some degree of reason (*EIP*, VI, II, p. 433).

On the one hand, reason may be understood as the power of recognizing what is self-evident: a degree of judgment necessary to state what is true. On the other hand, reason may be understood as the power of reasoning from what is self-evident, "[…] the process by which we pass from one judgment to another which is the consequence of it" (*EIP*, VII, I, p. 542). The first degree of reason, common sense, is original, the second one, acquired by exercise and education[26]. If one is born without common sense, there is no way to acquire it:

[26] Reid says about the capacity of reasoning: "it is nature undoubtedly that gives us the capacity of reasoning. When this is wanting, no art nor education can supply it. But this capacity may be dormant through life, like seed of a plant, which, for want of heat and moisture, never vegetates" (*EIP*, VII, I, p. 543). He continues on the following paragraph: "although the capacity be purely the gift of Nature, and probably given in very different degrees to different persons; yet the power of reasoning seems to be got by habit, as much as the power of walking or running" (*EIP*, VII, I, p. 543).

> The first is purely the gift of Heaven. And where Heaven has not given it, no education can supply the want. The second is learned by practice and rules, when the first is not wanting. A man who has common sense may be taught to reason. But if he has not that gift, no teaching will make him able either to judge of first principles or to reason from them (*EIP*, VI, II, p. 433).

Reid explains why that first degree of reason has a name to it, *common sense*, and it is not called reason, as the power of reasoning:

> That in the greatest part of mankind no other degree of reason is to be found. It is this degree that entitles them to the denomination of *reasonable creatures*. It is this degree of reason, and this only, that makes a man capable of managing his own affairs, and answerable for his conduct towards other. There is therefore the best reason why it should have a name appropriated to it (*EIP*, VI, II, p. 433, emphasis added).

The above passage elucidates in what sense Reid wants to approach the notions of *common sense* and *reason*: common sense may be understood as *reasonableness*, what makes human beings in accordance with reason, what makes them *reasonable creatures*. Therefore, a human being who denies the natural judgments of the original constitution of mind, one who refuses to admit the existence of her thoughts and passions when she is conscious of them, who refuses to admit the existence of the remembrances brought by memory, who refuses to believe in the existence of the objects of the external world (when she is affected, for instance, by a mental disorder), is seen as an *unreasonable person*, an *irrational human being*. That is why Reid strongly criticizes those who condemn the appeal to common sense as a principle of knowledge. Deny this foundation, he argues, is not a *wise* decision of philosophers:

> I apprehend, that whatever censure is thrown upon those who have spoken of common sense as a principle of knowledge, or who have appealed to it in matters that are self-evident, will fall light, when there are so many to share in it. Indeed, the authority of this tribunal is too sacred and venerable, and has prescription too long in its favour to be now *wisely* called in question (*EIP*, VI, II, p. 432).

In self-evident matters, philosophers do not have more authority than anyone who has common sense:

> Indeed, with regard to first principles, there is no reason why the opinion of a Philosopher should have more authority than that of another man of common sense, who has been accustomed to judge in such cases. The illiterate vulgar are competent judges; and the Philosopher has no prerogative in matters of this kind; but he is more

> liable than they to be misled by a favourite system, especially if it is his own (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 499).

To conclude, common sense as I understand it, in the light of what is presented in the *Inquiry* and the *Intellectual Powers*, is not a specific faculty of mind, such as the faculties of consciousness, memory and perception. I hold we cannot understand common sense as if it were a faculty which operates along with the operations of those other mental powers. Common sense, contrarily, is composed by all the original powers of mind. It may be comprehended as the original constitution of mind, what suggests us many of our beliefs, what dictates us many principles that should be followed in the conduct of our practical and intellectual lives. Common sense, as the original constitution of mind, cannot oppose reason, reason is only another of the powers that constitute human nature. It is actually the observation of what common sense dictates to us, those self-evident beliefs which are immediately and irresistibly admitted by the greatest part of humankind, that make us reasonable creatures. Finally, common sense cannot be ultimately explained by philosophers. It is a fact that it suggests us our beliefs about the existences of the objects of the external world, however, to account for why or how this happens is out of the philosophers' reach, it is beyond the observation and experimentation of the facts.

Reid on the foundational and instrumental roles of common sense

I open a parenthesis to consider Reid's view on the double philosophical role of common sense: it is foundational and instrumental roles. According to Reid, common sense reveals us what are the boundaries of philosophical investigation. Indeed, he notes that the absurd conclusions of 17^{th} / 18^{th} centuries systems–in particular, Berkeley's and Hume's conclusions about the existences of the external world and the mind–may be understood as being results from the attempt to overcome the boundaries laid down by common sense and its principles:

> It may be observed, that the defects and blemishes in the received philosophy of the mind, which have most exposed it to the contempt and ridicule of sensible men, have chiefly been owing to this: that the votaries of this Philosophy, from a natural prejudice in her favour, have endeavoured to extend her jurisdiction beyond its just limits […] (*IHM*, I, IV. p. 19).

The miserable condition of philosophy–especially when it is compared to the success of mathematics and the progress natural philosophy–is due to the mistake of trying to overcome the boundaries indicated by common sense, of extending philosophy jurisdiction beyond the limits of common sense. Such as Reid understands the history of philosophy, modern philosophers would not have estimated common sense as it deserved: they "[…] decline this jurisdiction; they disdain the trial of reasoning, and disown its authority; they neither claim its aid, nor dread its attacks" (*IHM*, I, IV. p. 19). Reid explains it by the fact that common sense introduces some boundaries for investigation which seems to restrict philosophy's authority. The strength of common sense and its principles is certainly greater than the strength of our philosophical reasonings. For that reason, modern authors have tried to abandon it. In doing this, they have produced a real war between philosophy and common sense:

> The philosophers of the last age, whom I have mentioned [Descartes, Malebranche and Locke], did not attend to preserving the union and subordination so carefully as the honour and interest of philosophy required: but those of the present [Berkeley and Hume] have waged *open war* with Common Sense, and hope to make a complete conquest of it by the subtilties of Philosophy; an attempt no less audacious and vain, than that of the giants to dethrone almighty Jove (*IHM*, I, IV. p. 19, emphasis added).

As Reid states, the absurd condition of philosophy of mind, a branch of knowledge filled with paradoxes and skeptical conclusions (the very existences of the world and mind have been called into question), come exactly from the separation between philosophy and common sense. That explains why Reid conceives his task as an attempt to reconcile these two separated fields:

> It is a bold philosophy that rejects, without ceremony, principles which irresistibly govern the belief and the conduct of all mankind in the common concerns of life; and to which the philosopher himself must yield, after he imagines he hath confuted them. Such principles are older, and of more authority, than Philosophy: she rests upon them as her basis, not they upon her. 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 no less ridiculous, than if a mechanic should contrive an *axis in peritrochio* to remove 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 one another (*IHM*, I, V. p. 21).

Here is the metaphor which explains the relation between philosophy of mind and common sense: philosophy "[…] has no other root but the principles of Common Sense;

it grows out of them, and draws its nourishment from them: severed from its root, its honours wither, its sap is dried up, it dies and rots" (*IHM*, I, V. p. 19). Common sense is the roots from which philosophy should extract its life. Common sense should play a foundational role in philosophy of mind, on Reid's view. This is the true foundation of philosophy of mind and many other branches of knowledge:

> All knowledge, and all science, must be built upon principles that are self-evident; and of such principles, every man who has common sense is a competent judge, when he conceives them distinctly. Hence it is, that disputes very often terminate in an appeal to common sense (*EIP*, VI, II, p. 426).

It is worth to note that besides this primary foundational role, common sense has a secondary role in Reid's philosophy, as a *refutation instrument*. Like Reid understands it, common sense is the domain of the self-evident principles from which conclusions are extracted by reasoning. Nevertheless, common sense cannot serve as an instrument for confirming those conclusions when they are consistent with it: a conclusion cannot be considered true only in virtue of being in accordance with common sense. Otherwise, a conclusion which contradicts it has one of the marks of falsehood. Common sense serves as an instrument for refuting conclusions, when they oppose it:

> I have only this farther to observe, that the province of common sense is more extensive in refutation than in confirmation. A conclusion drawn by a train of just reasoning from true principles cannot possibly contradict any decision of common sense, because truth will always be consistent with itself. Neither can such a conclusion receive any confirmation from common sense, because it is not within its jurisdiction (*EIP*, VI, II, p. 433).

I underline that this employment of common sense is secondary since there are forms of appeal to common sense in which this refutative use may be understood as its main use. As Laurent Jaffro (2006) explains to us:

> Quelle est la thèse principale d'une philosophie du sens commun? Sous sa *forme extrême*, elle affirme qu'une théorie qui soutient des principes ou tire de conséquences qui sont contraires aux croyances ordinaires et communes doit être rejetée comme fausse. Une philosophie du sens commun, ainsi définie, est essentiellement réactive – elle réfute des philosophies en montrant qu'elles sont contraires au sens commun (JAFFRO, 2006, p. 19, emphasis added).

In my view, Reid does not hold this extreme sort of common sense philosophy. Such as I understand him, common sense and its principles are above all the foundation upon

which knowledge should be built. Its refutative use is secondary and has its use limited to the negative aspect of Reid's philosophy, in brief, the exam of the systems of other authors and the theory of ideas[27].

2.2.2) Reid's psychology of the powers of mind

I discuss in this subsection how Reid understands and describes the operations of the powers of the mind that are accompanied by judgment and belief, the judgments and beliefs suggested by the original constitution of mind and which constitute the common sense of humankind. I would like to follow a sort of *theoretical model* in this presentation, a model based upon how Reid explains the power of perception. The following table presents this model:

Faculties	Conception	Belief	Sentation / feeling	Affection
Consciousness	X	X		
Memory	X	X		
Perception	X	X	X	
Taste	X	X	X	
Conscience	X	X	X	X

The operations of the powers I consider involve a conception and a judgment. The judgments of the power of perception and taste are accompanied by a sensible element: a sensation (perception) and a feeling (taste). In order to explain Reid's psychology, I begin by considering the powers of conception, sensation and feeling, common elements in the operations of the faculties of consciousness, memory, perception, taste and conscience.

Conception, sensation and feeling

In brief, *conception* is a mental power which is no more than a thought about an object, without the presence of any judgment or belief about this object. In the

[27] For instance, when Reid presents his five reflexions on the theory of ideas, he initially claims: "the *first* reflection I would make on this philosophical opinion is, That it is directly contrary to the universal sense of men who have not been instructed in philosophy" (*EIP*, II, XIV, p. 172). And he continues, after considering the position of some authors about the existence of the external objects: "[…] to the uninstructed in philosophy, it must appear extravagant and visionary, and most contrary to the dictates of common understanding" (*EIP*, II, XIV, p. 173).

Intellectual Powers, Reid dedicates Essay IV to the psychology of the power of conception[28]. Just as Reid claims, the reflexive exam of mind shows that *conception, notion* or *simple apprehension* is an element present in every operation of mind. Conception is present even in the operations of the active powers:

> It may be observed, that conception enters as an ingredient in every operation of the mind: Our senses cannot give us the belief of any object, without giving some conception of it at the same time: No man can either remember or reason about things of which he hath no conception: When we will to exert any of our active powers, there must be some conception of what we will do: There can be no desire nor aversion, love nor hatred, without some conception of the object: We cannot feel pain without conceiving it, though we can conceive it without feeling it (*EIP*, IV, I, p. 295-6).

Conception is a simple operation of mind which does not have a logical definition. However, as Reid claims, we do not have any problem to understand this term: "the word notion, being a word in common language, is well understood. All men mean by it, the conception, the apprehension, or thought which we have of any object of thought. A notion, therefore, is an act of the mind conceiving or thinking of some object" (*EIP*, II, XI, p. 154-5).

Reid has a theory of sensation and feeling that accounts for the sensible aspect of some operations of mind, such as, for instance, perception, taste and conscience. On the one hand, "sensation is a name given by Philosophers to an act of mind which may be distinguished from all others by this, that it hath no object distinct from the act itself" (*EIP*, I, I, p. 36). On the other hand, "the word *feeling* is used to signify the same thing as *sensation*, […]. And, in this sense, it has no object; the feeling and the thing felt are one and the same" (*EIP*, I, I, p. 38). Despite this approach between sensation and feeling, Reid states that there is a little difference, a distinction performed in the view of the objects to which they refer:

> Perhaps betwixt feeling, taken in this last sense, and sensation, there may be this small difference, that sensation is most commonly used to signify those feelings which we have by our external senses and bodily appetites, and all our bodily pains and pleasures. But there are *feelings* of a nobler nature accompanying our affections, our moral judgments, and our determinations in matters of taste, to which the word *sensation* is less properly applied (*EIP*, I, I, p. 38).

[28] Reid does not discuss the power of conception in the *Inquiry*, though he refers to it in a passage in which *simple apprehension* is explained as "[…] the bare conception of a thing without any belief about it […]" (*IHM*, II, IV, p. 29).

Moreover:

> As to the sensations and feelings that are agreeable or disagreeable, they differ much not only in degree, but in kind and in dignity. Some belong to the animal part of our nature, and are common to us with the brutes: Others belongs to the rational and moral part. The first are more properly called *sensations*, the last *feelings* (*EIP*, II, XVI, p. 198).

It is possible to understand the term *sensation* as referring to the animal side of human mind. Sensation refers to the information about the external objects received by senses, corporal appetites and pleasures and pains. It is possible to in turn understand the term *feeling* as referring to the sensible aspect of the powers of taste and conscience. In some passages, Reid employs the term *emotion* to refer to that sensible element of taste and conscience (like in *EIP*, VIII, I, p. 573, for instance).

Sensation and feeling are non-intentional acts of mind: they are powers which do not have an object distinct of themselves. Reid illustrates this by the example of the sensation of pain (*Of the sentiments of Bishop Berkeley*):

> Suppose I am pricked with a pin, I ask, Is the pain I feel, a sensation? Undoubtedly it is. There can be nothing that resembles pain in any inanimate being. But I ask again, Is the pin a sensation? To this question I find myself under a necessity of answering, That the pin is not a sensation, nor can have the least resemblance to any sensation. The pin has length and thickness, and figure and weight. A sensation can have none of those qualities. I am not more certain that the pain I feel is a sensation, than that the pin is not a sensation; yet the pin is an object of sense (*EIP*, II, XI, p. 157).

When the pain is felt, we are not able to distinguish it from the very disagreeable sentiment that is due to the contact with the object. Along with this pain, a conception of a pin is yielded, as well as a belief about the present existence of this object perceived. Both conception and belief, Reid argues, cannot be considered as elements of power of sensation. In fact, as it is discussed subsequently, conception and belief are elements of the perception, which is an act whose object (in this case, a pin) can be distinguished from the very operation of mind. In sensation, contrarily, there is no object distinct from the very operation. Both pain and sensation are the same thing, and they cannot be separated, not even by imagination.

The power of consciousness

In brief, *consciousness* is a mental power whose operations involve a conception of the very operations and emotions of mind and a belief about the present existence of these operations and emotions. Reid does not systematically consider the power of consciousness neither in the *Inquiry*[29] nor in the *Intellectual Powers*. In my view, the clearest observation about what is consciousness is presented in the chapter *The first principles of contingent truths*, Essay VI:

> Consciousness is an operation of the understanding of its own kind, and cannot be logically defined. The objects of it are our present pains, our pleasures, our hopes, our fears, our desires, our doubts, our thoughts of every kind; in a word, all the passions, and all the actions and operations of our own minds, while they are present. We may remember them when they are past; but we are conscious of them only while they are present (EIP, VI, IV, p. 471).

Human beings do not have any other power by means of which they would be able to know the operations and passions of their mind. For this reason, "[…] this consciousness is the evidence, the only evidence which we have or can have of their existence" (*EIP*, I, II, p. 41).

The reflection upon the operations of consciousness reveals, on the one hand, that it is a faculty that yields conceptions of the very operations and passions of mind, a conception of the present existence of them (*EIP*, I, I, p. 24) and, on the other hand, that its operations are accompanied by a belief about the existence of those operations and passions. Consciousness beliefs present two features: they are immediate and irresistible. They immediate appear in mind, that is, they are not a result of the power of reasoning. Besides, we are not able to avoid believing in the existence of the operations and passions of our minds when we are conscious of them. Consciousness beliefs appear naturally in our minds and we do not have choice about to believe or not to believe in the existence of what we are conscious, once "the constitution of our nature forces this belief upon us irresistibly" (*EIP*, VI, VII, p. 515).

The power of memory

[29] Reid refers to consciousness on some passages, for instance, when he observers that Descartes would have assumed the judgments of consciousness as first principle of knowledge (*IHM*, I, III, p. 17)

Reid presents his theory of memory in Essay III of the *Intellectual Powers*[30]. In brief, *memory* is a mental power whose operations involve a conception of a past event and a belief about the past existence of this event. Reid notes:

> It is by memory that we have an immediate knowledge of things past: The senses give us information of things only as they exist in the present moment; and this information, if it were not preserved by memory, would vanish instantly, and leave us as ignorant as if it had never been (*EIP*, III, I, p. 253).

Thus, memory is the mental power of preserving the remembrance of the objects perceived by senses and the objects of consciousness (operations and passions of mind) of which the mind have been conscious.

Reflection reveals, firstly, that memory has an object. It is necessary to distinguish, Reid argues, the remembered thing, the conception of the past object, from the very remembrance of it, that is, the operation of mind by means of which the past thing is retaken by mind (*EIP*, III, I, p. 253). The object of memory, differently from the objects of consciousness and perception, is an object of past (*EIP*, III, I, p. 254). There is a temporal distinction among the objects of memory, consciousness and perception. The present existence cannot be object of memory, such as the past existence cannot be the object of consciousness and perception: "our first acquaintance with any object of thought cannot be by remembrance. Memory can only produce a continuance or renewal of a former acquaintance with the thing remembered" (*EIP*, III, I, p. 254-5). Secondly, reflection reveals that memory is a faculty whose operations are accompanied by belief: "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, p. 254). Although it is possible to doubt one or another of our memory beliefs, in virtue of their lack of clarity, we do not generally question them. Generally, we trust memory as a certain source of knowledge of the past:

> Perhaps in infancy, or in a disorder of mind, things remembered may be counfounded with those which are merely imagined; but in mature years, and in a sound state of mind, every man feels that he must believe what he distinctly remembers, though he can give no other reason of his belief, but that he remembers the thing distinctly;

[30] Reid does not treat the power of consciousness in the *Inquiry*, although he refers to it in some passages, for instance, when he states that memory is a principle of belief (*IHM*, II, III, p. 29).

> whereas, when he merely imagines a thing ever so distinctly, he has no belief of it upon that account (*EIP*, III, I, p. 254).

Like the beliefs of consciousness, memory beliefs are irresistible, in such a way that human beings *feel that they must believe* what is dictated by memory.

The power of perception

The power of perception is systematically treated in both the *Inquiry*–in which Reid considers in details the powers of smelling, tasting, hearing, touch and seeing–and the *Intellectual Powers*–mainly in Essay II. In brief, *perception* is a mental power whose operations involve a conception of an object and a belief about the present existence of it. Differently of what occurs in the operations of consciousness and memory, perception is accompanied by a sensation, which operates as a sign of the sensible qualities of the external objects.

I open a brief parenthesis to point a question that has been received much attention of the commentators. Indeed, there is a long bibliography about how to understand the relation between perception, sensation and the external objects in Reid's philosophy. In general, Reid's theory of perception is understood as a sort *direct realism*. I explain: according to this line of interpretation, Reid would claim that bodies and their qualities would exist independently of the mind which perceives them–this is the realist assumption of his theory. Moreover, Reid would claim that bodies and qualities would be directly perceived by the mind, that is, without the interposition of any mediator element–this is the direct element of his theory. The external objects and their qualities would be the immediate objects of the power of perception, in a way that mind could directly apprehend the external objects. This is the general interpretation of Reid's theory of perception. Phillip Cummins (1974), Norton Nelkin (1989), Rebecca Copenhaver (2004)[31] and James Van Cleve (2006) follow more or less this line of interpretation. Some authors disagree with them, however. For instance, there is a line of interpretation which denies the possibility of Reid's being a direct realist: he would be a sort of indirect realist (representationalist). Vere Chappel (1989) seems to follow this view in his interpretation, as well as Todd Buras (2002). John Immerwahr (1978) presents an interpretation which involves both direct and indirect possibilities: Reid

[31] Copenhaver adds that, although direct, Reid's realism would be mediated (COPENHAVER, 2004, p. 69-73).

would have been an indirect realist in the *Inquiry* and a direct realist in the *Intellectual Powers*. I do not intend to treat Reid's understanding of sensation as a sign of the external objects, the relation between sensation and perception and the status of Reid's realism–direct or indirect? I proceed in this manner not by considering the problem of Reid's realism insignificant, but because this would imply a great deviation from the main purpose of this section, to understand how Reid explains our perceptual beliefs. For this reason, I would like to pass directly to the question of understanding the distinction between sensation and perception.

The operations of the external senses provide the mind with sensations and perceptions of the objects of the external world. Reid calls attention to the necessity of distinguishing these two operations, although both of them are constituents of the process by means of which the mind knows the material world. In the *Inquiry*, this distinction is based upon the discussion of two propositions, *I feel a pain* and *I see a tree*[32]. In the *Intellectual Powers*, Reid's paradigmatic example refers to the smelling of a rose. I present the latter:

> The agreeable odour I feel, considered by itself, without relation to any external object, is merely a sensation. It affects the mind in a certain way; and this affection of the mind may be conceived, without a thought of the rose, or any other object. This sensation can be nothing else than it is felt to be. Its very essence consists in being felt; and when it is not felt, it is not. There is no difference between the sensation and the feeling of it; they are one and the same thing (*EIP*, II, XVI, p. 194).

The sensation of the smelling of a rose is only a feeling that affects the mind when one smells it. There is no object distinct of sensation when the rose affects the mind, so that this sensation is only an agreeable mental feeling. In the perception of the rose, otherwise, there is an object distinct from the very mental operation:

> Perception has always an external object; and the object of my perception, in this case, is that quality in the rose which I discern by the sense of smell. Observing that the agreeable sensation is raised when the rose is near, and ceases when it is removed, I am led, by my

[32] The grammar exam of those propositions reveals that both of them have the same structure: an active verb and an object. However, by considering the meaning of those two propositions, it is possible to see how they differ one from another. In the first one, *I feel a pain*, there is not a real distinction between the act of mind and its object–there is only a grammatical distinction. *To feel* and *pain*, indeed, are not actually different, though the grammatical structure of the proposition seems to imply this distinction. In other words, the sensation of pain is not distinct from the very pain that is felt. In the second proposition, there is a real distinction. *To see* and *tree*, indeed, are really different: the perception of the tree is distinct from the very object that is seen.

> nature, to conclude some quality to be in the rose, which is the cause of this sensation. This quality in the rose is the object perceived; and that act of my mind, by which I have the conviction and belief of this quality, is what in this case I call perception (*EIP*, II, XVI, p. 194).

Thus, the smell of a rose implies two distinct operations of mind. On the one hand, it means a sensation, which is in the mind of who feels it, on the other hand, it means a quality in the very external object which affects the mind. This quality, in turn, is the object of perception. The words that signify smellings, sounds and the several degrees of heat and cold, for instance, may suffer from this ambiguity: they signify the sensation as well as the quality perceived along that sensation. For the common affairs of live, this distinction is not necessary. Nevertheless, a philosopher who intends to carefully study the operations of mind, should have this distinction in sight.

The attentive and careful examination of the operations of perceptions reveals that perception has two different elements: "*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, p. 96). Indeed, immediacy is not an element of perception; it is a mark of the belief that follows the operations of perception. Conceptions may appear according to several different degrees of clarity and distinction (*EIP*, II, V, p. 96). Perceptual beliefs are yielded according to the degree of clarity and steadiness of conceptions: "[…] when the perception is in any degree clear and steady, there remains no doubt of its reality; and when the reality of the perception is ascertained, the existence of the object perceived can no longer be doubted" (*EIP*, II, V, p. 97). Moreover, this belief is irresistible when there is clarity and steadiness: "this is always the case when we are certain that we perceive it" (*EIP*, II, V, p. 97). One may doubt the existence of a tree when it is perceived from a distant point of view, when its conception is neither clear nor steady. However, when this conception is clear to the one who perceives it, the doubt disappears, giving place to an irresistibly certainty about the existence of the tree.

Reid underlines four features of that belief which accompanies the power of perception. Firstly, the belief present in perception is characterized by referring to the existence of an external object in the present moment: we believe the tree exists presently when we perceive it. Secondly, Reid notes the *universality* of humankind trust in the testimony of perception: the greatest part of humankind believes in the testimony of their senses. Thirdly, perceptual beliefs are characterized by being irresistible: we

cannot avoid believe in the existence of a tree when it is felt and clearly perceived. Fourthly, perceptual beliefs are immediate yielded in mind: we do not have to reason in order to believe in the existence of the perceived object. The conviction is its present existence is immediate and irresistible (*EIP*, II, V, p. 99).

Reid observes that human beings, in general, do not call into question the existence of the external objects when they are perceived. The greatest part of humankind, in the face of the vision of a tree, does not doubt its existence. The laws of all nations and the most solemn judgments, where the human life is at stake, are examples of how perceptual beliefs are unanimously accepted as a reliable source of knowledge for humankind. The most skeptical of the judges would not dare to call into question the testimony of a witness in virtue of doubting the reliability of the power of perception. Reid identifies only two sorts of individuals who doubt perception: *lunatics* and *philosophers*. The former are convinced of things that completely oppose what their senses dictate. In virtue of a mental disorder, some believe, for instance, that they are made of glass, living continually in terror of having their bones broken. Nevertheless, those cases are not significant to doubt the universality of the acceptance of the perceptual beliefs as true beliefs:

> All I have to say to this is, that our minds, in our present state, are, as well as our bodies, liable to strange disorders; and as we do not judge of the natural constitution of the body, from the disorders or diseases to which it is subject from accidents, so neither ought we to judge of the natural powers of the mind from its disorders, but from its sound state (EIP, II, V, p. 98).

Some philosophers, in turn, hold that senses may be fallacious, so that they would chose to deny the testimony of senses as a reliable source of knowledge. According to Reid, there is no greater absurd in philosophy[33].

The power of taste

[33] Reid claims: "It is one thing to profess a doctrine of this kind, another seriously to believe it, and to be governed by it in the conduct of life. It is evident, that a man who did not believe his senses could not keep out of harm's way an hour of his life; yet, in all the history of philosophy, we never read of any sceptic that ever stepped into fire or water because he did not believe his senses, or that showed in the conduct of life, less trust in his senses than other men have. This gives us just ground to apprehend, that philosophy was never able to conquer that natural belief which men have in their senses; and that all their subtitle reasoning against this belief were never able to persuade themselves" (*EIP*, II, V, p. 99).

Reid considers the power of taste and matters related to it on Essay VI–in the context of the discussion on the first principles of common sense)–and Essay VIII–entirely dedicated to the discussion–in the *Intellectual Powers*. In brief, *taste* is a power whose operations involve a conception of an aesthetic quality (on Reid's view, they are beauty, novelty and grandeur) and a belief about the existence of it in an object. Similar to perception, the operations of taste have a sensible element, agreeable or disagreeable feelings. Taste is the mental power related to the discernment and appreciation of beauties, natural or due to human art: "THAT power of the mind by which we are capable of discerning and relishing the beauties of Nature, and whatever is excellent in the fine arts, is called *taste*" (*EIP*, VIII, I, p. 573). Reid indicates a metaphor which explains the reason this power is called *taste*:

> The external sense of taste, by which we distinguish and relish the various kinds of food, has given occasion to a metaphorical application of its name to this internal power of the mind, by which we perceive what is beautiful, and what is deformed or defective in the various objects that we contemplate (*EIP*, VIII, I, p. 573).

Reid recurrently appeals to a comparison between internal taste and the powers of the external senses, in particular, the power of the external taste. For instance, he appeals to it in order to think the purposes of internal taste. Such as the powers of the external senses are able to distinguish the several qualities in the material objects, taste distinguishes that beauty in the objects which awakes our pleasure in their contemplation[34]. Reid also employs this approach to discuss the diversity of qualities that our internal taste is able to recognize[35].

When discussing taste, Reid has in sight two different aspects of aesthetic experience of human beings. On the one hand, he intends to discuss the *metaphysical thesis* about the real existence of aesthetic qualities in objects. Beauty could not be only reduced to an agreeable feeling in the mind of who perceives it–like some modern authors have tried to do, according to him. It is necessary to distinguish, in the

[34] Reid claims: Our internal taste ought to be accounted most just and perfect, when we are pleased with things that are most excellent in their kind, and displeased with the contrary. The intention of Nature is no less evident in this internal taste than in the external. Every excellence has a real beauty and charm that makes it an agreeable object to those who have the faculty of discerning its beauty; and this faculty is what we call a good taste (*EIP*, VIII, I, p. 575-6).

[35] Reid claims: "all the objects of our internal taste are either beautiful, or disagreeable, or indifferent; yet of beauty there is a great diversity, not only of degree, but of kind: The beauty of a demonstration, the beauty of a poem, the beauty of a palace, the beauty of a piece of music, the beauty of a fine woman, and many more that might be named, are different kinds of beauty; and we have no names to distinguish them but the names of the different objects to which they belong" (*EIP*, VIII, I, p. 575).

operations of taste, between the mental feeling occasioned by the contemplation of beauty and the real quality in the very external object:

> When a beautiful object is before us, we may distinguish the agreeable emotion it produces in us, from the quality of the object which causes that emotion. When I hear an air in music that pleases me, I say, it is fine, it is excellent. This excellence is not in me; it is in the music. But the pleasure it gives is not in the music; it is in me (*EIP*, VIII, I, p. 573-4).

In many cases, it is possible that one is unable to explain what in a piece of music, for instance, pleases her taste, like she may not be able to explain what pleases her external taste in the degustation of a good wine. However, in both cases, Reid holds, it is true that there are real qualities in the objects that please the mind and a feeling / sensation occasioned in the mind[36].

With the purposes of this section in mind, I would like to focus on the second of Reid's thesis, namely, the *psychological thesis* about the existence of two elements in perception of beauty. The reflection about the operations of taste reveals that when the mind perceives the beauty, there are both an agreeable feeling and a belief about the existence of an aesthetic quality in the contemplated object:

> All the objects we call beautiful agree in two things, which seem to concur in our sense of beauty. *First*, When they are perceived, or even imagined, they produce a certain agreeable emotion or feeling in the mind; and *secondly*, This agreeable emotion is accompanied with an opinion or belief of their having some perfection or excellence belonging to them (*EIP*, VIII, IV, p. 592).

On the one hand, Reid notes about the first element of the perception of beauty or sense of beauty[37]: "our judgment of beauty is not indeed a dry and unaffecting judgment, like

[36]Reid's objectivist thesis attracts the attention of many commentators. Reid holds that aesthetic qualities (beauty and grandeur) are real *excellences* which exist in objects independently of the feeling produced in mind. One difficulty commentators have identified concerns the comparison Reid makes between the aesthetic qualities and the primary / secondary qualities: "in objects that please the taste, we always judge that there is real excellence, some superiority to those that do not please. In some cases, that superior excellence is distinctly perceived, and can be pointed out; in other cases, we have only a general notion of some excellence which we cannot describe. Beauties of the former kind may be compared to the primary qualities perceived by the external senses; those of the latter kind, to the secondary" (*EIP*, VIII, I, p. 578). Theodore Gracyk (1987), for instance, calls into question the success of Reid's defense of the objective of beauty (and grandeur). On his view, that comparison between beauty and the primary / secondary qualities would make the objectivity thesis impossible. Copenhaver (2015) also examine Reid's observations on the aesthetics qualities. On her view, contrary to Gracyk, it would be possible to explain that approach in a way which shows that Reid's view on the aesthetics qualities are not subjectivist.

[37] Laurent Jaffro (2015) calls attention to a terminological question about Reid's employment of the expression *sense of beauty*, such as in the passage quoted above: "we might be tempted to call 'sense of beauty' or 'taste' the whole. We would then say that taste has two ingredients [a feeling and a judgment].

that of a mathematical or metaphysical truth. By the constitution of our nature, it is accompanied with an agreeable feeling or emotion, for which we have no other name but the sense of beauty" (*EIP*, VIII, I, p. 578). This feeling–or emotion–is characterized as follows:

> The emotion produced by beautiful objects is gay and pleasant. It sweetens and humanizes the temper, is friendly to every benevolent affection, and tends to allay sullen and angry passions. It enlivens the mind, and disposes it to other agreeable emotions, such as those of love, hope, and joy. It gives a value to the object, abstracted from its utility (*EIP*, VIII, IV, p. 592).

Reid strongly criticizes a tendency of modern authors of attempting to explain perception (of the external sense and taste as well) by means of the sensible element, sensation or feeling. Doing this, those authors deny the existence of something in the object that corresponds to those sensations and feelings in the mind[38]. The perception of beauty cannot be only explained by a feeling or emotion present in the mind. The sense of beauty gives us a belief about the existence of a real excellence in the object:

> Besides the agreeable emotion which beautiful objects produce in the mind of the spectator, they produce also an opinion or judgment of some perfection or excellence in the object. This I take to be a second ingredient in our sense of beauty, though it seems not to be admitted by modern Philosophers (*EIP*, VIII, IV, p. 593).

On the other hand, Reid notes about the second element of the perception of beauty–in the light of a comparison between taste and the powers of external senses:

Indeed, Reid occasionally uses the term 'taste' to designate the whole process. […]. But it also happens that this use of the terms 'taste' or 'sense of beauty' is restricted to feeling and pleasure: […]. In that case the sense of beauty and the judgment of beauty are two ingredients of the 'perception of the beauty. To perceive that *x* is beautiful consists in jointly feeling pleasure upon the consideration of *x* and judging that *x* is beautiful (JAFFRO, 2015, p. 162). I would not say that perception of beauty is constituted by a sense of beauty and a judgment about the existence of beauty in object, such as in the second case presented by Jaffro. We should focus on how Reid understands the notion of *sense*: sense, according to him, signifies not only a source of notions (for instance, the notions of the external qualities perceived by external senses or the notions of right and wrong in the actions perceived by conscience or moral sense) but also it means a source of judgments (for instance, judgments about the existence of certain qualities in the objects perceived by the external senses or judgments about the rightness and wrongness of certain actions perceived by conscience or moral sense)[37]. Therefore, *perception of beauty* and *sense of beauty* may be understood as interchangeable expressions, such as I understand Reid's use of the expression sense of beauty.

[38]Reid indeed claims: "according to those Philosophers, there is no heat in the fire, no taste in a sapid body; the taste and the heat being only in the person that feels them" (*EIP*, VIII, I, p. 574). The thesis whereby aesthetic qualities and secondary qualities are only feelings and sensations in the mind, without any objective existence in the objects, is wrong: "I had occasion to show, that there is no solid foundation for it when applied to the secondary qualities of body; and the same arguments show equally, that it has no solid foundation when applied to the beauty of objects, or to any of those qualities that are perceived by a good taste" (*EIP*, VIII, I, p. 574).

> I had occasion to show, when treating of judgment, that it is implied in every perception of our external senses. There is an immediate conviction and belief of the existence of the quality perceived, whether it be colour, or sound, or figure; and the same thing holds in the perception of beauty or deformity (*EIP*, VIII, I, p. 577).

Reid discovers that

> When a man pronounces a poem or a palace to be beautiful, he affirms something of that poem or that place; and every affirmation or denial expresses judgment. For we cannot better define judgment than by saying that it is an affirmation or denial of one thing concerning another (*EIP*, VIII, I, p. 577).

The power of conscience

In brief, conscience is the power whose operations involve a conception about the moral rightness and wrongness of an action, an agreeable / disagreeable feeling, a benevolent / malevolent affection toward the agent whose action is contemplated and a judgment or belief that action is right or wrong[39].

According to Reid, there are not only right and wrong conduct but human beings are also endowed with a faculty that makes them able to distinguish virtuous and vicious conduct. Like in speculative matters, human beings may diverge in their opinions about what is true and false, about what is morally right and wrong, what they ought and what they ought not to do. Nevertheless, the moral notions of right and wrong would be useless if human beings should not be able to apply them to the world, to real actions, determining, in this way, what conducts are right and what are wrong[40]. In the history of philosophy, there are different ways of explaining this power of distinguishing the right and wrong conduct:

> Some Philosophers, with whom I agree, ascribe this to an original power or faculty in man, which they call the *moral sense*, the *moral*

[39] In my view, the power of conscience may be understood in two different but related contexts in the *Active Powers*. On the one hand, Reid considers conscience in the context of the discussion on the principles of human action, that is, in the context of the account for how human beings may be guided by moral obligation. He argues that, among the several principles of action, there is one principle that leads our conduct conforming moral notions. On the other hand, Reid considers conscience in the context of the discussion on the source of the moral approval and disapproval, on the processes involved in the operations of conscience and how human beings know their duty. I follow both contexts in this brief presentation.

[40] Reid claims: "and this variety is as easily accounted for, from the common causes of error, in the one case as in the other; so that it is not more evident, that there is a real distinction between true and false, in matters of speculation, than that there is a real distinction between right and wrong in human conduct" (*EAP*, III, III, V, p. 171).

> *faculty*, *conscience*. Others thinks, that our moral sentiments may be accounted for without supposing any original sense or faculty appropriated to that purpose, and go into very different systems to account for them (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 174-6).

Reid agrees with some of those authors: there is indeed an original power by means of which we are able to recognize our moral obligation, called *moral sense*, *moral faculty* or *conscience*[41].

The observation of the operations of conscience reveals that its judgements are accompanied by sensible element: an agreeable or disagreeable feeling and a benevolent or malevolent affection toward the agent whose action is judge of:

> It was observed, that every human action, considered in a moral view, appears to us good, or bad, or indifferent. When we judge the action to be indifferent, neither good nor bad, though this be a moral judgment, it produces no *affection* nor *feeling*, any more than our judgments in speculative matters.
> But we approve of good actions, and disapprove of bad; and this approbation and disapprobation, when we analyse it, appears to include, not only moral judgment of the action, but some *affection*, favourable or unfavourable, towards the agent, and some feeling in ourselves (*EAP*, III, III, VII, p.180, emphasis added).

A conscience which remains in silence is not affected neither by feeling nor affection. Otherwise, when it judges an action in the light of our moral notions, those two sensible elements appears in mind: "there is no affection that is not accompanied with some agreeable or uneasy emotion. It has often been observed, that all the benevolent affections give pleasure, and the contrary ones pain, in one degree or another" (*EAP*, III,

[41] Authors like Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), and Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), have called it *moral sense*. On Reid's view, this is due to an analogy with the external senses. That analogy should be considered in a proper perspective, once it could guide us to some mistakes about conscience. If the term *moral sense* seems to have a negative connotation, this is due to the way philosophers have tried to degrade the external senses in the course of the history of philosophy, by refusing to attribute them all the operations they actually perform: "they [the external senses] are represented as powers by which we have sensations and ideas, not as powers by which we judge. This notion of sense I take to be very lame, and to contradict what nature and accurate reflection teach concerning them" (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 175). The powers of the external senses are not only the source of the notions of the objects and their qualities, but they are also the source of our judgments about the external world: "by my ear, I not only have the idea of sounds, loud and soft, acute and grave, but I immediately perceive and judge this sound to be loud, that to be soft, this to be acute, that to be grave. Two or more synchronous sounds I perceive to be concordant, others to be discordant" (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 176). Just as Reid claims, those are the natural judgments of the external senses, the immediate testimonies of the very original constitution of mind about the external world. If the notion of *external senses* has this sense, the analogy between them and the moral faculty is correct. Consequently, conscience may be adequately called *moral sense*: "that, as by them [the external senses] we have not only the original conceptions of the various qualities of bodies, but the original judgments that this body has such a quality, that such another; so by our moral faculty, we have both the original conceptions of right and wrong in conduct, of merit and demerit, and the original judgments that this conduct is right, that is wrong; that this character has worth, that, demerit" (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 176).

III, VII, p. 183). The feelings which accompany the operations of taste and conscience are similar:

> When we contemplate a noble character, though but in ancient history, or even in fiction; like a beautiful object, it gives a lively and pleasant emotion to the spirits. It warms the heart, and invigorates the whole frame. Like the beams of the sun, it enlivens the face of nature, and diffuses heat and light all around (*EAP*, III, III, VII, p. 183).

Conscience is indeed one of the powers that composes the original constitution of mind, like consciousness, memory, perception and taste. Conscience beliefs constitute, for this reason, the common sense of humanity, like consciousness beliefs, memory beliefs, etc. On the following passage, Reid observes that the disagreements about first principles in moral matters should be solved by means of an *appeal to common sense*:

> When men differ about deductions of reasoning, the appeal must be to the rules of reasoning, which have been very unanimously fixed from the days of Aristotle. But when they differ about a first principle, the appeal is made to another tribunal; to that of *common sense* (*EAP*, V, I, p. 270, emphasis added).

In the *Active Powers*, this is the only passage in which Reid refers to common sense in the context of the discussion on the foundation of moral knowledge. It is worth to note that he usually refers, in moral matters, not to common sense but to the faculties of human beings *that are grown up to years of understanding and reflection*. In the context the discussion on the universality of conscience, Reid claims, for instance:

> The universality of this principle in men *that are grown up to years of understanding and reflection*, is evident. The words that express it, the names of the virtues which it commands, and of the vices which it forbids, the "ought" and "ought not" which express its dictates, make an essential part of every language. The natural affections of respect to worthy characters, of resentment of injuries, of gratitude for favours, of indignation against the worthless, are parts of the human constitution which suppose a right and wrong in conduct (*EAP*, III, III, V, p. 170-1, emphasis added).

Ahead in the text, when considering some philosophical views on the source of judgments about right and wrong conduct, Reid states:

> I am not, at present, to take any notice of those systems, because the opinion first mentioned seems to me to be the truth, to wit, That, by an original power of the mind, when *we come to years of understanding and reflection*, we not only have the notions of right and wrong in

> conduct, but perceive certain things to be right, and others to be wrong (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 175, emphasis added).

This way of expressing seems to be due to Reid's view on the *development* of conscience. Our moral judgments–those judgments which human beings should assume as first principles–depend greatly on the maturity of conscience, its development to the *years of understanding and reflection*. As seen before, Reid's foundationalist view suggests that "all our reasonings in morals, […], must be *grounded upon the dictates of our moral faculty, as first principles*" (*EAP*, III, III, VIII, p. 195, emphasis added). However, it is important to note, the first principles of morals are the natural judgments of a moral faculty which has developed, by instruction and example, to its *maturity*. Reid observes that conscience is not an immutable power of mind. The moral faculty, such as many of the other powers of mind, may develop throughout our lives, so that its full exertion depends greatly on how it is cultivated and exercised. Observation seems to reveal that, in childhood, we have only those faculties which are common to human beings and non-human animals, like, for instance, the powers of the external senses. Children seem not to be able to reason abstractly, and neither they seem to be able to distinguish right and wrong conduct. Reasoning and conscience depend on their appropriate cultivation. The progress of both presents resemblances:

> It is so with the power of reasoning, which all acknowledge to be one of the most eminent natural faculties of man. It appears not in infancy. It springs up, by insensible degrees, as we grow to maturity. But its strength and vigour depends so much upon its being duly cultivated and exercised, that we see many individuals, may many nations, in which it is hardly to be perceived (*EAP*, III, III, VIII, p. 187).

In the initial stages of life, the power of reasoning, which allows us to distinguish the truth from the falsehood in speculative matters, is not so strong and vigorous as it would be when we reach its maturity. About conscience: "in like manner, our moral discernment of what we ought, and what we ought not to do, *is not so strong and vigorous by nature*, as to secure us from very gross mistakes with regard to our duty" (*EAP*, III, III, VIII, p. 187). It is a matter of strength and vigor. Conscience is an original power of mind, however, conscience needs an appropriate cultivation to be fully exerted. Education is only one of the ways by means of which this power may develop to its maturity. The "seeds" have been originally planted in the mind, from its birth, so that their germination depends greatly on the appropriate cultivation. Like the power of walking / running / leaping, the power of conscience is original in mind:

> There is a strong analogy between the progress of the body form infancy to maturity, and the progress of all the powers of the mind. This progression in both is the *work of nature*, and in both may be greatly aided by *proper education*. It is natural to a man to be able to walk or to run or leap; but if his limbs had been kept in fetters from his birth, he would have none of those powers. It is no less natural to a man trained in society, and accustomed to judge of his own actions and those of other men, to perceive the right and a wrong, an honourable and a base, in human conduct; and to such a man, I think the principles of morals I have above mentioned will appear self-evident (*EAP*, V, I, p. 277, emphasis added).

This passage reinforces Reid's view that moral judgments are naturally results of the original constitution of mind, of a faculty of distinguishing the right and wrong conduct. Proper education adds in the development of this original power, but it does in no way give us our first principles of morals. Education does not give us conscience, but conscience may lie dormant without the appropriate cultivation: "the most knowing derive the greatest part of their knowledge, even in things obvious, from instruction and information, and from being taught to exercise their natural faculties, which, without instruction, would *lie dormant*" (*EAP*, V, II, p. 279, emphasis added). In moral matters, such as in many other aspects of our mental life, we need to be instructed:

> We must not therefore think, because man has the natural power of discerning what is right and what is wrong, that he has no need of instruction; that this power has no need of cultivation and improvement; that he may safely rely upon the suggestions of his mind, or upon opinions he has got, he knows not how (*EAP*, III, III, VIII, p. 188).

It is worth to note the analogy between the knowledge of truth, in speculative matters, and the knowledge of the moral right and wrong:

> What should we think of the man who, because he has the power by nature of distinguishing what is true from what is false, should conclude that he has no need to be taught mathematics, or natural philosophy, or other sciences? It is by the natural power of human understanding that every thing in those sciences has been discovered, and that the truths they contain are discerned. But the understanding left to itself, without the aid of instruction, training, habit, and exercise, would make very small progress, as every one sees, in persons uninstructed in those matters (*EAP*, III, III, VIII, p. 188).

Even though the principles of mathematics and natural philosophy may be evident to us, they may not be recognized by those whose mental powers have not reached, by an appropriate cultivation, that mature state of mind. Reid argues: not all human beings are able to immediately recognize the right and wrong conduct, not all human beings share

the same judgments about their duties. In other words, not all human beings are able to recognize a first principle of morals.

Besides instruction, a mature conscience depends greatly on exercise: "he must be very ignorant of human nature, who does not perceive that the seed of virtue in the mind of man, like that of a tender plant in an unkindly soil, requires care and culture in the first period of life, as well as our own *exertion* when we come to maturity" (*EAP*, V, II, p. 280, emphasis added). And in addition:

> Judgment, even in things self-evident, requires a clear, distinct and steady conception of the things about which we judge. Our conceptions are at first obscure and wavering. The habit of attending to them is necessary to make them distinct and steady; and this habit requires an *exertion of mind* to which many of our animal principles are unfriendly (*EAP*, V, II, p. 279, emphasis added).

An instructed and exercised conscience is the source of our first principles of morals. An undeveloped conscience, instead:

> The bulk of mankind have but little of this culture in the proper season; and what they have is often unskillfully applied; by which means bad habits gather strength, and false notions of pleasure, of honour, and of interest, occupy the mind. They give little attention to what is right and honest. Conscience is seldom consulted, and so little exercised, that its decisions are weak and wavering (*EAP*, V, II, p. 280).

On Reid's view, therefore, the disagreements about the first principles of morals are solved by an appealing to common sense, to the set of beliefs of a conscience of human beings of understanding, that is, who dispose of a mature conscience. A system of morals is based upon the first principles of common sense, but they are first principles of a mature mind.

Other sources of common sense beliefs

It is not an easy task to trace back all common sense beliefs to the operations of one or another of those discussed powers, consciousness, memory, sensation / feeling, perception, taste and conscience. Firstly, I would like to call attention to the fact that there are beliefs that seem to proceed not from the operations of one specific power, but from the exertion of all those powers, such as, for instance, our beliefs about the existence of a mind. Reid claims indeed:

> It appears then to be a undeniable fact, that from thought or sensation, all mankind, constantly and invariably, from the first dawning of reflection, do infer a power or faculty of thinking, and a permanent being or mind to which that faculty belongs; and that we as invariably ascribe all the various kinds of sensation and thought we are conscious of, to one individual mind or self (*IHM*, II, VII, p. 37).

Based upon this passage[42], we see that the belief in the existence of mind is produced from the exertions of our powers of thinking–in this passage, the powers which does not involve sensible elements, consciousness, memory, and reasoning, for instance–and feeling–in this passage, the powers which involve sensible elements, perception, taste and even conscience. To think and to feel make us believe the existence of our own minds. The same is claimed about the belief on continuity of the self, our personal identity[43]:

> From this it is evident, that we must have the conviction of our own continued existence and identity, as soon as we are capable of thinking [the powers of understanding] or doing any thing [the powers of will], on account of what we have thought or done, or suffered before; that is, as soon as we are reasonable creatures (*EIP*, III, p. 263).

We know we are ourselves over time from the exertion of our intellectual and active powers.

Secondly, I call attention to the other mental sources of common sense beliefs. As Reid states, our causal beliefs, for instance, are result of the perceptions of the changes in nature. The original constitution of mind suggests us that those changes must have a cause: "by a like natural principle, it is, that a beginning of existence, or any

[42] This passage deserves some considerations, though. Firstly, we should not understand the expression "from the first dawning of reflection" as it was acquired by reflection. I claim, instead, that Reid means that this belief appears "from the first dawning of consciousness", that is, from the first moments we are conscious of ourselves. Secondly, the expression "do infer a power" seems to imply that this belief would come from a process of reasoning. This is not in accordance with Reid's intentions, however. We may understand this expression as meaning "we are (naturally) led to". The belief in the existence of mind is a natural belief, that is, it is immediate conviction suggested by the original constitution of mind, by the operations of the powers available to human beings. The following passage seems to confirm this: "either those inferences which we draw from our sensations, namely the existence of a mind, and of powers or faculties belonging to it, are prejudices of philosophy or education, mere fictions of the mind, which a wise man should throw off as he does the belief of fairies; or they are judgments of nature, judgments not got by comparing ideas, and perceiving agreements and disagreements, but *immediately inspired by our constitution*" (*IHM*, II, VIII, p. 37, emphasis added).

[43] Certainly memory plays an important role in the production of this belief: "this [our personal identity] we know immediately, and not by reasoning. It seems, indeed, *to be a part of the testimony of memory*" (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 476, emphasis added). But this belief is not entirely due to operations of memory: "[…] it is not my remembering any action of mine that makes me to be the person who did it. This remembrance makes me to know assuredly that I did it; but I might have done it, though I did not remember it. That relation to me, which is expressed by saying that I did it, would be the same, though I had not the least remembrance of it" (*EIP*, III, p. 265). Memory is the evidence we have our personal identities, however, the operations of memory cannot produce it by itself, without the operations of the others powers of mind.

change in nature, suggest to us the notion of a cause, and compels our belief of its existence" (*IHM*, II, VIII, p. 38). We are naturally led to believe that the changes we see in nature have a cause. Our beliefs in the testimonies of other people, in turn, can be explained by the exertion of two different mental powers. On the one hand: "the first of these principles is, a propensity to speak truth, and to use the signs of language, so as to convey our real sentiments" (*IHM*, VI, XXIV, p. 193). On the other hand: "another original principle implanted in us by the Supreme Being, is a disposition to confide in the veracity of others, and to believe what they tell us" (*IHM*, VI, XXIV, p. 194). The former is called *principle of veracity*, the latter, *principle of credulity*. There is also a mental power that leads us to believe that some signs–for instance, the features of the countenance, sounds of the voice, and the gestures of the body–indicate the thoughts and the dispositions of the mind: "nature seems to have given to men a faculty or sense, by which this connection [between those signs and the things signified] is perceived" (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 486). These beliefs come from the exertion of this natural power: "and here it deserves our notice, that although it required much study and practice in the pantomimes to excel in their art; yet it required neither study nor practice in the spectators to understand them. It was a natural language, and therefore understood by all men, […]" (*EIP*, VI, V, 487).

Thirdly, a brief clarification: in this exposition, I do not consider the operations of the powers of reasoning and abstraction. Indeed, the beliefs that are due to them cannot be understood as first principles of knowledge such as Reid understands them. Reid himself does not enumerate reasoning and abstraction beliefs among those beliefs that should be assumed as first principles of knowledge. It is possible to explain it by the fact that the beliefs due to both powers do not have some of the marks which mainly characterize foundational common sense beliefs, such as, for instance, immediacy. Reasoning and abstraction beliefs are results of mental processes (the act of passing from one judgment to another and the act of dividing things in species and classes, for instance), and, for this reason, they are not immediate beliefs.

2.3) Reid on the knowledge of mankind

I dedicate this section to discuss Reid's view on the knowledge of mankind. Firstly, I present Reid's understanding on the notion of *knowledge of mankind*, underlining the difference between the source of the first principles of philosophy of

mind and morals, common sense, and the source of the first principles of politics, knowledge of mankind. Secondly, I present Reid's theory of the principles of human actions, the principles which motivate human conduct. The knowledge of the principles of action is an important part of the knowledge upon which political knowledge is based.

2.3.1) Reid's notion of *knowledge of mankind*

In the *Active Powers*, Reid observes two difficulties in the project of laying down a system of morals:

> I shall only farther observe, with regard to systems of morals, that they have been made more voluminous, and more intricate, partly by mixing political questions with morals, which I think improper, because they belong to different science, and are grounded on different principles; partly by making what is commonly, but I think improperly, called the *Theory of Morals*, a part of the system (*EAP*, V, II, p. 282).

I call attention to the first of these problems pointed by Reid. On the one hand, he acknowledges that morals and politics are different branches of knowledge. The first principles of morals are common sense principles, principles of the original constitution of mind dictated by conscience. They refer to human action when it is governed by the moral obligation, oriented by virtue. In contrast to morals, the first principles of politics, are not due to the original constitution of mind, to conscience or any particular faculty of mind. A sign of this is the fact that Reid excludes the science of politics from the ambit of the branches of knowledge that are based upon the beliefs of conscience:

> All our reasonings in morals, in natural jurisprudence, in the law of nations, as well as our reasonings about the duties of natural religion, and about the moral government of the Deity, must be grounded upon the dictates of our moral faculty, as first principles (*EAP*, III, III, VIII, p. 195).

On Reid's view, the first principles of politics come from another source: their origin is the *knowledge of mankind*. He is clear about this in the *Lecture on* Politics:

> It is easy to shew that the first Principles of Politicks, upon which all Political Reasoning is grounded, must be taken from the Knowledge of Mankind. By the Knowledge of Mankind I mean not the Knowledge of the peculiar temper and talents of individuals but *the Knowledge of the temper and Disposition, the Principles of Action*

> *and general tenor of Conduct that is common to the whole Species* (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 27, emphasis added).

What is a first principle of politics? The answer is also presented in the *Lectures on Politics*: "the Principles of Political reasoning must be the Active Principles of Human Nature, the Principles according to which the Governed commonly Act not those according to which they ought to Act" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 23). In the light of those two passages, it is possible to see that knowledge of mankind is the knowledge of the temper and disposition that is common to human beings, the knowledge of the general principles of action which motivate the conduct of human beings united into a political society. It allows us to know how individuals will act in certain circumstances, what actions may be expected when certain motives incite their minds.

In order to understand Reid's notion of *knowledge of mankind*, it is important to appeal to the *Active Powers*. The best indication of what Reid understands by it appears in the following passage:

> The science of politics borrows its principles from *what we know by experience* of the character and conduct of man. We consider not what he ought to be, but what he is, and thence conclude what part he will act in different situations and circumstances. From such principles we reason concerning the causes and effects of different forms of government, laws, customs, and manners. If man were either a more perfect or a more imperfect, a better or a worse creature than he is, politics would be a different science from what it is (*EAP*, III, III, p. 179, emphasis added).

The experience of the character and the conduct of human beings, according to Reid, is the source from which philosophers should borrow the first principles of politics. This source of first principles has other names:

> There is a branch of knowledge much valued, and very justly, which we call knowledge of the world, knowledge of mankind, knowledge of human nature. This, I think, consists in knowing from what principles men generally act; and *it is commonly the fruit of natural sagacity joined with experience* (*EAP*, III, I, I, p. 75, emphasis added).

As I understand it, knowledge of mankind is not given by the original constitution of human mind. In other words, the first principles of politics are not found in the common sense of humankind–at least, common sense understood as the set of beliefs due to the original constitution of human mind, as what is dictated by the powers of mind. The first principles of politics we find in the knowledge of mankind, of the world or of human nature are due to a mixture of *sagacity* and *experience*. That is, they are not the

immediate and irresistible judgments of the original constitution of mind shared by the greatest part of humankind, such as, for instance, beliefs on the existence of the external objects (perception), on the beauty or deformity of an object (taste) or on the right or wrong of an action (conscience).

As both passages quoted above show, an important element of the beliefs which constitute the foundation of political science is experience: the political scientist should combine her sagacity with her experience of living among human beings in societies to be able to identify the principles which generally motivate human actions. To know how human beings may act when placed in certain circumstances depend on the attentive observation of the conduct of the individuals. I call attention to this point, the role of experience in the discovery of the first principles of politics, a point which reinforces my view that political knowledge, differently from philosophy of mind and morals, are not based upon common sense. Experience indeed plays this important epistemological role in matters of politics: the first principles of politics are due to it. In matters of common sense, contrarily, experience cannot operate in the same way: common sense principles are not acquired by experience. I quote a passage of the *Intellectual Powers* in which Reid is clear about this point. In the context of the discussion on the reliability of the power of memory, Reid states about the role of experience:

> Perhaps it may be said, that the experience we have had of the fidelity of memory is a good reason for relying upon its testimony. I deny not that this may be a reason for those who have had this experience, and who reflects upon it. But I believe there are few who ever thought of this reason, or who found any need of it. It must be some very rare occasion that leads a man to have recourse to it; and in those who have done so, the testimony of memory was believed before the experience of its fidelity, and that belief could not be caused by the experience which came after it (*EIP*, III, II, p. 255).

This particular common sense belief about the reliability of memory is not due to experience. Reid explicitly excludes the possibility of experience as a source of common sense beliefs. In the field of politics, however, experience is the very source of the judgments about the general conduct of human beings united into a political society: experience gives the first principles of our political knowledge. Haakonseen and Wood, in the introduction of *Thomas Reid on society and politics*, do not discuss the question of knowing if the first principles of politics constitute the common sense of humankind.

However, they make an important claim which befit with my claim that common sense is not the foundation of the science of politics:

> These principles are assumptions about the general features of human nature and human interaction without which it is impossible to recognize life-forms as human. Reid lists a dozen such principles in his lectures, but makes it quite clear that the list is not exhaustive. The principles are *common empirical observations* about humanity and the field is open to discovery and revision in the light of experience (HAAKONSSEN & WOOD, 2015, p. xliv).

First principles of politics are *common empirical observations* on the conduct of human beings. Moreover, experience is not only the source of first principles but it can also correct them, since they are susceptible to revision as soon as the political scientist has new experiences on the actions of human beings.

It is also important to note that experience is not enough to make us able to discover the first principles of politics. The person who intends to be a political scientist should be a philosopher of mind as well. It is possible to see this in the light of Reid's distinction between two degrees of knowledge of mankind. On the one hand, there is that degree of knowledge which is proper to a common individual who lives in a political society:

> A man of sagacity, who has had occasion to deal in interesting matters, with a great variety of persons of different age, sex, rank and profession, learns to judge what may be expected from men in given circumstances; and how they may be most effectually induced to act the part which he desires (*EAP*, III, I, I, p. 75).

On the other hand, there is a degree of knowledge that is proper to a scientist. On Reid's view, the political scientist should go beyond the common individual who has a vast experience in the social life. She should perform a more rigorous work on the discovery and classification of the principles which motivate human actions:

> The man of the world conjectures, perhaps with great probability, how a man will act in certain given circumstances; and this is all he wants to know. To enter into a detail of the various principles which influence the actions of men, to give them distinct names, to define them, and to ascertain their different provinces, is the business of a philosopher, and not of a man of the world (*EAP*, III, I, I, p. 75-6).

The political scientist should rigorously and attentively investigate the principles of human action, to distinguish and to define them, giving them names that are proper to them.

The identification of the first principles of politics depend on the sagacity and the experience of the political scientist. Moreover, it depends on the philosophical investigation of the principles which motivate human conduct. I believe this last point also helps to corroborate my view that the first principles of politics cannot come from common sense. I explain. In Chapter 1, I have presented Reid's distinction between theory of morals–the investigation of the powers of mind involved in moral approval and disapproval, the investigation of the mental phenomena related to the moral appreciation of human conduct–and system of morals. More important in this case: a theory of morals could not help us in the discovery of the first principles of morals, since they are the judgments and beliefs due to the original constitution of mind: "so a man may have a very clear and comprehensive knowledge of what is right and what is wrong in human conduct, who never studied the structure of our moral powers" (*EAP*, V, II, p. 283). The moral philosopher does not have to engage with the philosophical investigation of the powers of mind in order to discover the first principles of morals. That is, there is no room for a psychology of conscience in a system of morals. In politics, contrarily, we see that, according to Reid, the psychology of the principles of action is an important aspect of the task of discovering the first principles of political knowledge. Political scientist should go beyond the experience of living among human beings, they should investigate the principles of human action in order to be able to discover the first principles of politics. According to him, the purposes of the science of politics "[…] is to shew how great bodies of Men will act in the various Situations in which they are placed & how they may be placed in such Situations as to lead them or the greater part of them to act the part which it is intended they should act" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 32). However, why should the political scientist investigate the principles of the individual conduct of each one of us? The following analogy helps us to understand this point:

> Every Political Body may be conceived as a vast Machine made up of a great Number of Parts. The motions of the Whole are made up of the Motions of the several Parts, and the motion of each Part must depend upon the powers that operate upon that part and put it in motion. So that it is impossible to know scientifically the Effects that will be produced by the whole Machine without knowing the parts of which it is compounded and the powers that actuate those parts, for the Effect of the whole is an aggregate or composition of the Effects of the several Parts (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 27).

Reid reveals that in order to systematically know the effects which may be produced by a huge machine, it is necessary to know the parts which make it and the powers that lead it to operate. The same would be true of the political body: to know how the body of individuals will act depends on the knowledge of how each individual will act when she is in certain circumstances:

> Each of whom has his particular Principles of Activity in himself, his fears, his hopes, his desires, his passions, his Reason, his Conscience. These principles in every individual influence him to a certain course of Action or operation. And the operations of the Several Individuals make up the Operation of the Whole Political Body. We cannot therefore know how Political Bodies will act, what Effects they will produce in given Circumstances, but by knowing how individuals of Mankind act in the various Circumstances in which they may be placed (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 27).

I finish this section by discussing some questions about the view that politics is not based upon the beliefs of the common sense of humankind. Besides all I have said in favor of this view, I believe that the fact that Reid does not use the expression *common sense* throughout the *Lectures on Politics* is another strong sign of this possibility. Indeed, there is no reference to common sense in his manuscripts on political matters. In contexts in which Reid discusses the foundations of political knowledge, he refers to the knowledge of mankind as its foundation. It seems clear to me that politics depends in some sense upon common sense beliefs. In order to talk about politics, it is necessary to suppose the existence of the objects of the external world; the existence of other human beings; that there is intelligence in the people with whom we talk. All of these beliefs are due to the original constitution of mind upon which politics, as well as philosophy of mind and morals are based. However, the first principles of politics could not be understood as common sense beliefs in the strict sense of the term, since they are not the immediate and irresistible beliefs due to the original constitution of mind.

It could be suggested that the meaning I attribute to the term *common sense* is too much restricted. Maybe with a little effort, I could extend this meaning in a way that knowledge of mankind could be understood as common sense, or, at least, as a *second level* of common sense. I do not disagree with this possibility. Throughout our lives, indeed, we naturally make many judgments about how human beings may act when placed in some circumstances, and I believe Reid would hardly deny that these judgments are part of the common sense of humankind. However, I would like to insist

in the view that politics is not based directly upon common sense in the strict sense, as the results of the original constitution of mind. In matters of politics, our beliefs lose their feature of being *original*: they are not originally dictated by the powers of mind. As seen above, experience plays an important epistemological role-I would say the main role–in the production of the first principles of politics: the political scientist should have the experience of living among human beings in a political society to be able to recognize the first principles of politics. Moreover, these first principles are mainly based upon our *own experience* of living in society. Our very private experience of the world leads us to some beliefs about how human beings may act when united into a political society. This experience, of course, is conditioned by many particular circumstances. For instance, we have our own way of seeing society which may be greatly determined by our relationships. We may focus our attention in cases in which self-interest prevails over the cases in which there are not self-interest involved, concluding that human beings are more selfish than they really are. And this conclusion could be wrong. What I want to claim is that it seems to me that we would be closer to error in political matters than in the other branches of knowledge which are based upon the original constitution of mind.

When Reid introduces the empirical aspect of the first principles of political knowledge, the original aspect which characterizes the first principles of common sense is lost. Without the self-evident feature of the first principles–the immediacy and irresistible feature of our common sense beliefs, human beings would be more inclined to false beliefs. Any belief based upon our experience could be assumed as common sense belief, if it is assumed that the first principles of politics are first principles of common sense; any general appreciation of how human beings live in society could be called common sense. In short, I claim that to suppose that knowledge of mankind / experience could count as common sense speaks against common sense, since, after all, we may be wrong in political matters in a way that it is not possible when we deal with common sense. Experience would make common sense more fallible than it really is. The political scientist could have made a wrong observation of society and, therefore, she could propose a wrong first principle. In common sense matters, however, this is not the case. Common sense is what is originally dictated by human mind. As I discuss later, the possibility of correcting the first principles of politics by new experiences not being applied in the common sense field–according to Reid, our common sense beliefs could be corrected only in the hypothetical case we dispose of a new set of faculties in

the light of which we could judge the old ones. To bring knowledge of mankind to the field of common sense–at least common sense as the original constitution of mind–is to lessen the force of common sense as a reliable source of knowledge.

2.3.2) Reid's psychology of the principles of human action

The political scientist should initially know the principles which motivate human actions, once from them she is able to know the movement of the political bodies, of the whole set of individuals in a civil society. To understand the principles of action it is important to understand not only how the single individual will act when placed in certain circumstances, but also to be able to yield those beliefs–the first principles about the general conduct of human beings when united into a political society–which should be assumed as first principles of the science of politics. Reid's investigation of the principles of action presented in the *Active Powers* is a study of "the principles of action and general tenor of conduct that is common to the whole species", a study of "the principles according to which the governed commonly act not those according to which they ought to act". That is, the investigation of principles of action is that second sort of knowledge of mankind, that degree of knowledge of the philosopher that should "enter into a detail of the various principles which influence the actions of men, to give them distinct names, to define them, and to ascertain their different provinces".

I discuss in this subsection how Reid understands and describes the principles of human action. I focus on his psychology of the principles which motivates the conduct of each individual in particular, the mechanical, animal and rational principles of action. This passage is really clear about Reid' understanding of *principle of action*:

> By *principles* of action, I understand every thing that incites us to act. If there were no incitements to action, active power would be given us in vain. Having motive to direct our active exertions, the mind would, in all cases, be in a state of perfect indifference, to do this or that, or nothing at all. The active power would either not be exerted at all, or its exertions would be perfectly unmeaning and frivolous, neither wise nor foolish, neither good nor bad. To every action that is of the smallest importance, there must be some incitement, some motive, some reason (*EAP*, III, I, I, p. 74-5).

A principle of action is the motive which incites human being to act. If there were no such principles of action, Reid argues, there would be no regularity in human conduct: we could expect any action in any circumstance, or even no action when we expect one.

Even the most meaningless action is performed by some principle of action in human mind.

Philosophers have two ways to know these principles of action: the *observation of the conduct of other human beings* and the *reflection on the principles which motivate their own conducts*. Both present difficulties: "there is much uncertainty in the former, and much difficulty in the latter" (*EAP*, III, I, I, p. 76). Firstly, there is a huge variety of principles of action in human mind, so that it is impossible to classify and to define each one of them (*EAP*, III, I, I, p. 76). Secondly, one action may result from different principles of action and the same principle of action may motivate different actions (*EAP*, III, I, I, p. 76). Thirdly, there are occasions in which we do not know which principle guide our own conduct. To be able to know the principles which motivate our own conduct, it is necessary an uncommon degree of attention:

> A man may, no doubt, know with certainty the principles from which he himself acts, because he is conscious of them. But this knowledge requires an attentive reflection upon the operations of his own mind, which is very rarely to be found. It is perhaps more easy to find a man who has formed a just notion of the character of man in general, or of those of his familiar acquaintance, than one who has a just notion of his own character (*EAP*, III, I, I, p. 76-7).

It is necessary to be very accurate and impartial in the investigation of the principles which motivate our own conduct. Fourthly, the investigation of the principles of action faces the problem of the huge variety of names authors have given to them throughout the history of philosophy: "the names we give to the various principles of action, have so little precision, even in the best and purest writers in every language, that, on this account, there is no small difficulty in giving them names, and arranging them properly" (*EAP*, III, I, I, p. 77). In virtue of these difficulties, Reid establishes his aims: "[I] shall endeavour to class the various principles of human action as distinctly as I am able, and to point out their specific differences; giving them such names as may deviate from the common use of the words as little as possible" (*EAP*, III, I, I, p. 78).

Reid's general view on the principles of action

The following table summarizes Reid's theory of the principles of action:

Principles of action	Attention, will and deliberation	Judgment and reason	Social / selfish principles
Mechanical			
Animal	X		
Rational	X	X	X

There are three great classes of principles of action. Firstly, there are *mechanical principles* of action, which are *instinct* and *habit*. What mainly characterizes those principles of action is the fact that they do not require attention, will or deliberation to motivate human action. Secondly, there are *animal principles* of action, which are *appetites*, *desires* and *benevolent* / *malevolent affections*. They are principles common to human beings and non-human animals and depend on attention, deliberation and will to motivate our actions. Thirdly, there are the *rational principles* of action, which are the *regard to the good for us upon the whole* (the sense of interest) and the *regard to duty* (conscience). The actions they yield depend on attention, will and deliberation and they depend specially on the operations of judgment and reason to be performed. Only adult human beings endowed with a mature and healthy mind may be guided by the rational principles of action. Moreover, they are what make human beings able to be moral and political governed. Despite all those principles having social implications, only rational principles of action can be understood as *social* or *selfish principles of action*, on Reid's view. Social principles of action are principles which motivate actions which have the good of other human beings in sight–they imply concern for the good of others. Selfish principles of action, contrarily, are principles which motivate actions which have only self-love in sight–they imply the concern for our own good only.

The mechanical principles of action: instinct and habit

According to Reid, there are two mechanical principles of action in human mind, *instinct* and *habit*. Both of them do not depend on the operations of judgment or reasoning. They do not depend on the development of the powers of mind–until their maturity–to incite us to act. He defines the former as follows: "by instinct, I mean a natural blind impulse to certain actions, without having any end in view, without deliberation, and very often without any conception of what we do" (*EAP*, III, I, II, p.

78). The cry of a baby is an example of action due to instinct. It is an action which instinctively appears as a response to an unpleasant sensation occasioned, for instance, by hunger, thirst or fatigue. In this instinctive action, there is no attention, deliberation or will: it is an involuntary action due to the need of food, water or rest. Reid claims about the second sort of mechanical principle of action: "HABIT differs from instinct, not in its nature, but in its origin; the latter being natural, the former acquired. Both operate without will or intention, without thought, and therefore may be called *mechanical principles*" (*EAP*, III, I, III, p. 88). When compared to instinct, habit may be understood as a kind of an *acquired blind impulse* to act, an action that does not depend on attention, deliberation or will. In common language, *habit* may be understood as a *facility* to do something, a facility acquired by repeating some action. In Reid's theory of the principles of action, however, its meaning is restricted:

> I take the word in a less extensive sense, when I consider habits as principles of action. I conceive it to be a part of our constitution, that what we have been accustomed to do, we acquire, not only a facility, but a proneness to do on like occasions; so that it requires a particular will and effort to forbear it, but to do it, requires very often no will at all (*EAP*, III, I, III, p. 89).

In brief, habit, as a principle of action, is an inclination or impulse to perform an action independently of our attention, will and deliberation.

From the social perspective, Reid does not consider instincts and habits as social–when they imply concern for the good of others–or selfish principles of action–when they imply the concern for our own good only. However, in my view, it is not possible to deny that they seem to have social implications. I have in sight the actions motivated by habit: bad habits may be harmful from the point of view of its social implications. Indeed, there is a first principle of politics which have this principle of action in sight: "few Men will do the most Atrocious Acts of Wickedness even upon a Strong Temptation till they have been long hardned by vicious habits" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 23). For that reason, I suppose that habit, as principle of conduct, matters for the political scientist.

The animal principles of action: appetite, desire and affections

According to Reid, there are three animal principles of action in human mind, *appetites*, *desires* and *affections*. What characterizes these three sorts of animal

principles of action is the fact that they "they are such as operate upon the will and intention, but do not suppose any exercise of judgment or reason; and are most of them to be found in some brute-animals, as well as in man" (*EAP* III, II, I, p. 92). Firstly, there are three appetites which may be observed more frequently in human beings, namely, *hunger*, *thirst* and *luxury*. They have two distinctive features:

> *First*, Every appetite is accompanied with an uneasy sensation proper to it, which is strong or weak, in proportion to the desire we have of the object. *Secondly*, Appetites are not constant, but periodical, being sated by their objects for a time, and returning after certain periods. Such is the nature of those principles of action, to which I beg leave, in this Essay, to appropriate the name of *appetites* (*EAP*, III, II, I, p. 92).

In the appetite, there is an uneasy sensation which affects the individual and a desire for having an object–food or water, for instance. Appetites have at least two functions in human mind, to preserve the individual (hungry and thirsty) and the continuity of the species (luxury) (*EAP*, III, II, I, p. 93). Reason–before that period of life in which the powers of mind reach their maturity–would not be able to supply us with the actions we need to survive and continue our species (*EAP*, III, II, I, p. 93-4). When appreciated from a moral perspective, the actions motivated by appetites can be neither virtuous nor vicious (*EAP*, III, II, I, p. 94-5). The point is that, while the actions motivated by hunger, thirst or luxury do not contradict any moral principle–the sense of duty, for instance, they are not morally good or bad (*EAP*, III, II, I, p. 97). The power of *self-government*, contrarily, may be object of our moral appreciation (*EAP*, III, II, I, p. 98). Human beings should govern ourselves in every case in which our actions motivated by appetites may contradict a moral principle (*EAP*, III, II, I, p. 98).

Secondly, Reid conceives three sorts of desires: *the desires of power*, *of esteem* and *of knowledge*. According to him, "they are distinguished from appetites by this: That there is not an uneasy sensation proper to each, and always accompany it; and that they are not periodical, but constant, not being sated with their objects for a time, as appetites are" (*EAP*, III, II, II, p. 99). The desires of power and esteem are common to human beings and non-human animals. The desire of knowledge, however, is presented only in human beings (*EAP*, III, II, II, p.100). In a moral perspective, the actions due to those desires are not, for themselves, virtuous or vicious:

> The natural desires I have mentioned are, in themselves, neither virtuous nor vicious. They are part of our constitution, and ought to be

> regulated and restrained, when they stand in competition with more important principles. But to eradicate them if it were possible (and I believe it is not) would only be like cutting off a leg or an arm, that is, making ourselves other creatures than GOD has made us (*EAP*, III, II, II, p. 101).

Since they are parts of the original constitution of mind, it is impossible to completely eliminate those desires in our minds. Human beings should instead try to control them. Such as in the case of appetites, our actions motivated by desires should not contradict a moral principle:

> The pursuits of power, of fame, and of knowledge, require a self-command no less than virtue does. In our behavior towards our fellow-creatures, they generally lead to that very conduct which virtue requires. I say *generally,* for this, no doubt, admits of exceptions, especially in the case of ambition, or the desire of power (*EAP*, III, II, II, p. 102).

There are cases in which to act in accordance with desires may lead human beings to virtuously act. They make those individuals who act without any regard to virtue able to live in society:

> To these natural desires, common to good and to bad men, it is owing, that a man, who has little or no regard to virtue, may notwithstanding be a good member of society. It is true, indeed, that perfect virtue, joined with perfect knowledge, would make both our appetites and desires unnecessary incumbrances of our nature; but as human knowledge and human virtue are both very imperfect, these appetites and desires are necessary supplements to our imperfections (*EAP*, III, II, II, p. 102).

Desires are really important to the maintenance of society, mainly the desire of esteem:

> Society, among men, could not subsist without a certain degree of that regularity of conduct which virtue prescribes. To this regularity of conduct, men who have no virtue are induced by a regard to character, sometimes by a regard to interest.
> Even in those who are not destitute of virtue, a regard to character is often an useful auxiliary to it, when both principles concur in their direction (*EAP*, III, II, II, p. 102).

Thirdly, there the animal principles of benevolent and malevolent affections. Reid explains the notion of *affection* as a principle of action by the observation of the specificity of its object when compared to the objects of appetites and desires:

> These principles we have already considered; and, we may observe, that all of them have things, not persons, for their object. […] But there are various principles of action in man, which have persons for

> their immediate object, and imply, in their very nature, our being well or ill affected to some person, or, at least, to some animated being. Such principles I shall call by the general name of *affections*; whether they dispose us to do good or hurt the others (*EAP*, III, II, III, p. 107).

Affections have living beings as objects. Our mind is affected in a way that we desire the good or the evil of other living being.

Benevolent affections are characterized by them being accompanied by an agreeable feeling: "we may therefore lay it down as a principle, that all benevolent affections are, in their nature, agreeable; and that, next to a good conscience, to which they are always friendly, and never can be adverse, they make the capital part of human happiness" (*EAP*, III, II, III, p. 109). Moreover, they are accompanied by a desire for the good and the happiness of other living beings: "another ingredient essential to every benevolent affection, and from which it takes the name, is a desire of the good and happiness of the object" (*EAP*, III, II, III, p. 109). Reid considers the *parental affection* (*EAP*, III, II, IV, p. 111-4); the *affection of gratitude for benefactors* (*EAP*, III, II, IV, p. 114-5); the *affection of pity and compassion towards the distressed* (*EAP*, III, II, IV, p. 116-7); the *affection of esteem of the wise and the good* (*EAP*, III, II, IV, p. 117); the *affection of friendship* (*EAP*, III, II, IV, p. 117-8); the *affection of the passion of love between the sexes* (*EAP*, III, II, IV, p. 118-9); and the *affection to any community to which we belong* (*EAP*, III, II, IV, p. 119). Malevolent affections, in turn, are characterized by them being accompanied by a disagreeable feeling and by a desire for the evil of other living beings. Reid considers two malevolent affections as principles of action, *emulation* and *resentment*. He explains what he understands by the first malevolent principles of conduct: "by emulation, I mean, a desire of superiority to our rivals in any pursuit, accompanied with an uneasiness at being surpassed" (*EAP*, III, II, V, p. 124). And about the second malevolent principle of action: "nature dispose us, when we are hurt, to resist and retaliate. Beside the bodily pain occasioned by the hurt, the mind is ruffled, and a desire raised to retaliate upon the author of the hurt or injury. This, in general, is what we call *anger* or *resentment*" (*EAP*, III, II, V, p. 127).

Reid does not see animal principles of action as social or selfish principles. From the perspective of society, hunger, thirst and luxury cannot be understood either as social or selfish principles of conduct:

> Appetites, considered in themselves, are neither social principles of action, nor selfish. They cannot be called social, because they imply no concern for the good of others. Nor can they justly be called

> selfish, though they be commonly referred to that class. An appetite draws us to a certain object, without regard to its being good for us, or ill. There is no self-love implied in it any more than benevolence. We see, that, in many cases, appetite may lead a man to what he knows will be to his hurt. To call this acting from self-love, is to pervert the meaning of words. It is evident, that, in every case of this kind, self-love is sacrificed to appetite (*EAP*, III, II, I, p. 95).

Reid holds the same about the desires of power, esteem and knowledge, despite the obvious social consequences of actions which are motivated by them:

> The natural desires I have been considering, though they cannot be called *social* principles of action in the common sense of that word, since it is not their object to procure any good or benefit to others, yet they have such a relation to society, as to shew most evidently the intention of nature to be, that man should live in society (*EAP*, III, II, II, p. 105).

Benevolent and malevolent affections are not social / selfish principles of action in the strict sense of these terms as well:

> They neither imply any good nor ill affection towards any other person, nor even towards ourselves. They cannot therefore, with property, be called either *selfish* or *social*. But there are various principles of action in man, which have persons for their immediate object, and imply, in their very nature, our being well or ill affected to some person, or, at least, to some animated being (*EAP*, III, II, III, p. 107).

However, many benevolent actions have good social consequences[44]. As Reid understands them, benevolent principles of action play an important role in the preservation of the human societies[45]. Even actions due to emulation[46] and resentment[47]

[44] Reid claims: "we cannot live without the society of men; and it would be impossible to live in society, if men were not disposed to do much of that good to men, and but little of that hurt, which it is in their power to do.
But how shall this end, so necessary to the existence of human society, and consequently to the existence of the human species, be accomplished?
If we judge from analogy, we must conclude, that in this, as in other parts of our conduct, our rational principles are aided by principles of an inferior order, similar to those by which many brute animals live in society with their species; and that by means of such principles, that degree of regularity is observed, which we find in all societies of men, whether wise or foolish, virtuous or vicious" (*EAP*, III, II, III, p. 111).

[45] Reid claims: "[...], that the natural benevolent affections furnish the most irresistible proof, that the Author of our nature intended that we should live in society, and do good to our fellow-men as we have opportunity; since this great and important part of the human constitution has a manifest relation to society, and can have no exercise nor use in a solitary state" (*EAP*, III, II, IV, p. 121).

[46] Reid claims: "we have not sufficient *data* for a comparison of the good and bad effects which this principle actually produces in society; but there is ground to think of this, as of other natural principles, that the good overbalances the ill. As far as it is under the dominion of reason and virtue, its effects are always good; when left to be guided by passion and folly, they are often very bad" (*EAP*, III, II, V, p. 125).

may have good social implications. For these reasons, it matters for political scientist to know the animal principles of action. Indeed, many first principles of politics refers to these animal principles. I point some examples: there are first principles with regard to how human beings may esteem knowledge and power: "men always esteem Virtue Wisdow & Power in others where they are not objects of Envy and desire to be possessed of them or to be thought to be possessed of them themselves" and "people will not long receive Laws from Governors unless they have an opinion that the Governors have superior Power Superior Wisdow & Virtue or Right to Govern" (*Lectures on Politics*, 20015, p. 23). There are first principles about what human beings may expect as responses for malevolent and benevolent actions: "men have always a Strong Resentment of Injuries and will resist them where it is in their Power & have commonly some gratitude for good Offices" (*Lectures on Politics*, 20015, p. 23).

The rational principles of action: the regard to the good for us upon the whole and the regard to duty

Above the mechanical and animal principles of conduct, Reid places the rational principles of action, the principles which should govern our conduct: "[…] a regard to them is, by our constitution, not only a principle of action, but a leading and *governing principle*, to which all our animal principles are subordinate, and to which they ought to be subject" (*EAP*, III, III, I, p. 153, emphasis added). According to him, reason has two main roles for human life. On the one hand, from the intellectual point of view, it is responsible for governing our beliefs and opinions, helping human beings to distinguish truth from error in speculative matters. On the other hand, from the point of view of the action, reason may be responsible for governing human conduct, pointing what is good and bad for each one is some circumstance. These are *speculative reason* and *practical reason*:

> To judge of what is true or false in speculative points, is the office of speculative reason; and to judge of what is good or ill for us upon the whole, is the office of practical reason. Of true and false there are no degrees; but of good and ill there are many degrees, and men are very

[47] Reid claims: "these I take to be parts of the human constitution, given us by our Maker for good ends, and, when properly directed and regulated, of excellent use. But, as their excess or abuse, to which human nature is very prone, is the source and spring of all the malevolence that is to be found among men, it is on that account I call them malevolent" (*EAP*, III, II, V, p. 124).

> apt to form erroneous opinions concerning them; misled by their passions, by the authority of the multitude, and by other causes (*EAP*, III, III, II, p. 157).

The two rational principles of action Reid intends to investigate are the *regard to the good for us upon the role*, that is, our *sense of interest*, the *regard to the duty*, that is, our conscience. They are true rational principles of action:

> When a man, on one occasion, consults his real happiness in things not inconsistent with his duty, though in opposition to the solicitation of appetite or passion; and when, on another occasion, without any selfish consideration, he does what is right and honourable, because it is so; in both these cases, he acts reasonably; every man approves of his conduct, and calls it reasonable, or according to reason (*EAP*, III, III, V, p. 173).

Moreover, the fact that human beings may be governed by laws and general rules is another sign of the existence of the rational principles of action. If our conduct was guided only by mechanical and animal principles of action, we could only be disciplined by means of training, by means of dressage, like non-human animals: "the subject of law must have the conception of a general rule of conduct, which, without some degree of reason, he cannot have. He must likewise have a sufficient inducement to obey the law, even when his strongest animal desires draw him the contrary way" (*EAP*, III, IIII, V, p. 168). Reid's argument continues:

> These are the only principles I am able to conceive, which can reasonably induce a man to regulate all his actions according to a certain general rule or law. They may therefore be justly called *rational* principles of action, since they can have no place but in a being endowed with reason, and since it is by them only, that man is capable either of political or of moral government (*EAP*, III, IIII, V, p. 168).

According to Reid, the notion of *our good for us upon the whole* is resulting of the rational operations of mind. This explains why the interest for our own good appears only in an advanced period of our lives (*EAP*, III, III, II, p. 154). As soon as the powers of mind begin their development, it appears in our minds a tendency to consider our past actions, as well as a tendency to become more interested by our future. The observations of the things of past, present and future yield the notion of what is good for us upon the whole (*EAP*, III, III, II, p. 155). This conception becomes the end of many of our actions. As a principle of action, the regard to the good for us upon the whole becomes a governing principle in human mind as soon as it appears:

> […] as soon as we have the conception of what is good or ill for us upon the whole, we are led, by our constitution, to seek the good and avoid the ill; and this becomes not only a principle of action, but a leading or governing principle, to which all our animal principles ought to be subordinate (*EAP*, III, III, II, p. 157).

Appetites, desires and affections become subordinates of this principle. Our conduct may be understood as reasonable and rational when we follow the good for us upon the whole:

> To prefer a greater good, though distant, to a less that is present; to choose a present evil, in order to avoid a greater evil, or to obtain a greater good, is, in the judgment of all men, wise and reasonable conduct; and, when a man acts contrary part, all men will acknowledge, that he acts foolishly and unreasonably (*EAP*, III, III, II, p. 156).

The actions guided by this rational principle of action guide us, directly or indirectly, to the practice of virtues[48] (*EAP*, III, III, III, p. 163-4). However, it is necessary to keep in mind that to act by interest is different from acting motivated by duty:

> Although these be really two distinct principles of action, it is very natural to comprehend them under one name, because both are leading principles, both suppose the use of reason, and, when rightly understood, both lead to the same course of life. They are like two fountains whose streams unite and run in the same channel (*EAP*, III, III, V, p. 173).

Despite the resemblance between those two rational principles, the results from the operation of the mature powers of mind, moral principles should not be reduced to principles of interest:

> Upon that supposition [that there is only one rational principle of conduct, interest], it would neither be a sufficiently plain rule of conduct, nor would it raise the human character to that degree of perfection of which it is capable, nor would it yield so much real

[48] Reid explains this point as follows: "It [the sense of interest] leads directly to the virtues of prudence, temperance and fortitude. And, when we consider ourselves as social creatures, whose happiness or misery is very much connected with that of our fellow-men; when we consider, that there are many benevolent affections planted in our constitution, whose exertions make a capital part of our good and enjoyment; from these considerations, this principle leads us also, though more indirectly, to the practice of justice, humanity, and all the social virtues (*EAP*, III, III, III, p. 163-4). On the one hand, the individual that acts in accordance with the principle of her good upon the whole acts prudently and temperately. On the other hand, her actions may be understood as virtue actions. This principle cannot produce by itself a benevolent affection in mind. However, since these benevolent affections are a fundamental part of the human happiness, the regard to the good upon the whole may lead us to cultivate and exercise of those affections. This way, the actions which aim the good of the other may be seen as actions that aim the own good.

> happiness as when it is joined with another rational principle of action, to wit, a disinterested regard to duty (*EAP*, III, III, IV, p. 164).

Human beings are able to act from the regard to their duties:

> Thus, I think, it appears, That although a regard to our good upon the whole, be a rational principle in man, yet, if it be supposed the only regulating principle of our conduct, it would be a more uncertain rule, it would give far less perfection to the human character, and far less happiness, than when joined with another rational principle, to wit, a regard to duty (*EAP*, III, III, IV, p. 168).

Duty, Reid argues, is the *immediate moral obligation*:

> This principle of honour, which is acknowledged by all men who pretend to character, is only another name for what we call a regard to duty, to rectitude, to property of conduct. It is a moral obligation which obliges a man to do certain things because they are right, and not to do other things because they are wrong (*EAP*, III, III, V, p. 170).

Moral obligation, moral principle, honour principles are the names of the sense of duty or rational principle of the regard to duty. It has more names: "men of rank call it *honour*, and too often confine it to certain virtues that are thought most essential to their rank. The vulgar call it *honesty, probity, virtue, conscience*. Philosophers have given it the names of *the moral sense, the moral faculty, rectitude*" (*EAP*, III, III, V, p. 170). To contradict our duty is not only irrational, such as to contradict our own interest. According to Reid, to neglect our duty is to contradict the virtue, it is immoral:

> I take it for granted, therefore, that every man of real honour feels an abhorrence of certain actions, because they are in themselves base, and feels an obligation to certain other actions, because they are in themselves what honour requires, and this, independently of any consideration of interest or reputation" (*EAP*, III, III, V, p. 170).

The observance of our duty is able to guide us to happiness:

> It ought farther to be considered, That although wise men have concluded that virtue is the only road to happiness, this conclusion is founded chiefly upon the natural respect men have for virtue, and the good or happiness that is intrinsic to it and arises from the love of it (*EAP*, III, III, IV, p. 167).

The sense of interest may guide us to the practice of virtues. However, human beings need another principle of action in order to be happy:

> The road of duty is so plain, that the man who seeks it, with an upright heart, cannot greatly err from it. But the road to happiness, if that be supposed the only end our nature leads us to pursue, would be found dark and intricate, full of snares and dangers, and therefore not to be trodden without fear, and care, and perplexity (*EAP*, III, III, IV, p. 167).

Differently from the mechanical and instinct principles of action, Reid understands interest and conscience as social / selfish principles of conduct. Many of the actions due to these rational principles of action have the good of other human beings in sight or motivate actions which have only self-love in sight. Rational principles of action matter for political scientists. Indeed, many first principles of politics have them in sight. For instance, "it may be therefore expected of the Generality of Men that they will do things contrary either to their real Interest or their Duty when they have Strong temptations" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 23). There is a first principle about the importance of the cultivation of the sense of interest and conscience: "it is good that Men be instructed in their Duty & Interest but this is not enough" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 32).

The theory of the principles of human action is an important part of that second degree of knowledge of mankind, proper to the political scientist. Reid distinguishes the several principles of action in human mind, classifies them and gives them names. In the light of those observations on the principles which motivate human actions that Reid arrive at his theory of the first principles of politics, the principles on the general conduct of human beings who live in a political society.

Conclusion

I have tried to show Reid's view on the sources of human knowledge. In the first section, I have discussed his considerations on the powers of judging and believing and the role of evidence in their operations. In the second section, I have discussed Reid's view on the common sense–as the original constitution of mind, what is immediately and irresistible dictated by the powers of mind. According to him, common sense beliefs should be assumed as basic / foundational beliefs upon which the superstructure of philosophy of mind and morals is based. In third section, I have presented Reid's understanding of the notion of *knowledge of mankind*, underlining the reasons that led me to suppose it different from common sense. The judgments and beliefs of the

political scientist are not result of the original constitution of common sense: they are due to a mixture of sagacity and experience and an attentive investigation of the principles of action in human mind.

CHAPTER 3) UNDERSTANDING REID'S VIEW ON THE FIRST PRINCIPLES

I consider, in the third chapter of this thesis, Reid's view on the first principles of knowledge. There are many points of his theory which, in my view, deserve a detailed consideration, mainly due to the difficulties of comprehending what Reid has in mind when he refers to the first principles of knowledge. In the first section, I present Reid's lists of first principles of knowledge. In the second section, I explain what the first principles of knowledge are on Reid' view–general propositions which express particular beliefs shared by the greatest part of humankind, in the case of the first principles of common sense, and particular beliefs due to the mixture of sagacity and experience, in the case of the first principles of knowledge of mankind. I also discuss Reid's view on the distinction between contingent and necessary truths, arguing that the principles of necessary branches of knowledge are results of a mind which developed to its maturity. Finally, in the last section, I present Reid's view on the means we have to identify first principles of knowledge in speculative, moral and political matters.

3.1) The first principles of knowledge

I present the lists of first principles Reid points in the *Intellectual Powers*, the *Active Powers* and the manuscripts of his lectures on politics. Reid does not present an ordered enumeration of the first principles of common sense in the *Inquiry* and for that reason I do not consider this work[49].

Of the philosophy of mind

[49] Nevertheless, in several passages of the *Inquiry*, Reid indicates some of those principles he sees as being first principles of common sense. On the following passage, for instance, Reid claims: "A mathematician cannot prove the truth of his axioms, nor can he prove any thing, unless he takes them for granted. We cannot prove the existence of our minds, nor even of our thoughts and sensations. A historian, or a witness, can prove nothing unless it is taken for granted, that the memory and senses may be trusted. A natural philosopher can prove nothing, unless it is taken for granted, that the course of nature is steady and uniform" (*IHM*, V, VII, p. 71-2).Reid refers to the first principle about the existence of mind (the second principle of contingent truths in the *Intellectual Powers*), about the existence of the operations of mind (the first principle of contingent truths in the *Intellectual Powers*), about the reliability of memory and senses (the third and fifth principles of contingent truths in the *Intellectual Powers*) and about the stability and uniformity of the course of nature (the twelfth principle of contingent truths in the *Intellectual Powers*).

In the *Intellectual Powers*, there are three lists of first principles of knowledge. In the first one, presented in Essay I, Reid enumerates the axioms or first principles of the philosophy of mind. There are eight first principles that led Reid's investigation of the mental phenomena:

1) "*First*, then, I shall take it for granted, that I *think*, that I *remember*, that I *reason*, and, in general, that I really perform all those operations of mind of which I am conscious" (*EIP*, I, II, p. 41);

2) "As by consciousness we know certainly the existence of our present thoughts and passions; so we know the past by remembrance" (*EIP*, I, II, p. 42);

3) "It is in our power, however, when we come to the years of understanding, to give attention to our own thoughts and passions, and the various operations of our minds. And when we make these the objects of our attention, either while they are present, or when they are recent and fresh in our memory, this act of mind is called *reflection*" (*EIP*, I, II, p. 42);

4) "I take it for granted that all the thoughts I am conscious of, or remember, are the thoughts of one and the same thinking principle, which I call *myself*, or my *mind*" (*EIP*, I, II, p. 42);

5) "I take it for granted that there are some things which cannot exist by themselves, but must be in something else to which they belong, as qualities or attributes" (*EIP*, I, II, p. 43);

6) "I take it for granted that, in most operations of the mind, there must be an object distinct from the operation itself" (*EIP*, I, II, p. 44);

7) "We ought likewise to take for granted, as first principles, things wherein we find an universal agreement, among the learned and unlearned, in the different nations and ages of the world" (*EIP*, I, II, p. 45);

8) "I need hardly say, that I shall also take for granted such facts as are attested to the conviction of all sober and reasonable men, either, by our senses, by memory, or by human testimony" (*EIP*, I, II, p. 46).

Of many contingent and necessary branches of knowledge

In Essay VI, Reid presents another two lists of first principles of knowledge. They are principles of contingent truths–for instance, natural philosophy and philosophy

of mind–and principles of necessary truths–for instance, mathematics and metaphysics. I consider the distinction between contingent and necessary truths ahead in the text[50]. For now, I only observe that, on Reid's view, a contingent truth "depends upon the power and will of that Being who made the sun and all the planets, and who gave them those motions that seemed best to him", while a necessary truth does not depend on anything else to be true (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 468) For instance, it is a contingent truth "that the sun is the centre, about which the earth, and the other planets of our system, perform their revolutions", while it is a necessary truth "that a cone is the third part of a cylinder of the same base and the same altitude". The first one is a mutable truth, in the sense that it is true now but, in the future, it can become false–if it will be the will of the Creator of the Universe (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 469).

Reid observes that the enumeration of the principles of contingent and necessary truths may seem redundant, deficient, only vulgar errors or truths which are not self-evident–that is, truths which are not first principles. Nevertheless, he claims:

> I shall rejoice to see an enumeration more perfect in any or in all of those respects; being persuaded, that the agreement of men of judgment and candour in first principles, would be of no less consequence to the advancement of knowledge in general, than the agreement of Mathematicians in the axioms of geometry has been to the advancement of that science (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 468).

The non-exhaustive list of contingent truths contains twelve principles of knowledge:

1) "*First*, then, I hold, as a first principle, the existence of everything of which I am conscious" (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 470);

2) "Another first principle, I think, is, That the thoughts of which I am conscious, are the thoughts of a being which I call *myself*, my *mind*, my *person*" (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 472);

3) "Another first principle I take to be, That those things did really happen which I distinctly remember" (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 474);

4) "Another first principle is our own personal identity and continued existence, as far back as we remember any thing distinctly" (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 476);

[50] See p. 127-132.

5) “Another first principle is, That those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be” (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 476);

6) “Another first principle, I think, is, That we have some degree of power over our actions, and the determinations of our will” (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 478);

7) “Another first principles is, That the natural faculties, by which we distinguish truth from error, are not fallacious” (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 480);

8) “Another first principle relating to existence, is, That there is life and intelligence in our fellow-men with whom we converse” (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 482);

9) “Another first principle I take to be, That certain features of the countenance, sounds of the voice, and gestures of the body, indicate certain thoughts and dispositions of mind” (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 484);

10) “Another first principle appears to me to be, That there is a certain regard due to human testimony in matters of fact, and even to human authority in matters of opinion” (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 487);

11) “There are many events depending upon the will of man, in which there is a self-evident probability, greater or less, according to circumstances” (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 488);

12) “The last principle of contingent truths I mention is, That, in the phenomena of nature, what is to be, will probably be like to what has been in similar circumstances” (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 489).

Reid divides the list of principles of necessary truths in six classes, according to the domains of knowledge they belong: *grammar*, *logic*, *mathematics*, *aesthetic*, *moral* and *metaphysic*.

1) Reid quickly considers the first principles of grammatical knowledge, limiting himself to present some of them, such as, for instance, “every adjective in a sentence must belong to some substantive expressed or understood” (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 491);

2) Reid quickly considers the first principles of logical knowledge, limiting himself to present some of them, such as, for example, “that every proposition is either true or false” (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 491);

3) Reid quickly considers the first principles of mathematical knowledge, presenting some of them, such as, for instance, “that two right lines can cut one another

in one point only" (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 491), and presenting a brief critique of Hume's opinion on the mathematical axioms (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 491-2).

4) According to Reid, there is no doubt that there are first principles of the aesthetic knowledge: "notwithstanding the variety found among men, in taste, there are, I apprehend, some common principles, even in matters of this kind" (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 492). He tries to approach two ambits that are connected by the first principles they shared: "the *fine arts* are very properly called the *arts of taste*, because the principles of both are the same; and in the fine arts, we find no less agreement among those who practice them than among other artists" (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 492). According to Reid, human beings would not be able to agree about the aesthetic qualities of an artistic work if they do not agree, first, about the first principles of taste: "Homer, and Virgil, and Shakespeare, and Milton, had the same taste; and all men who have been acquainted with their writings, and agree in the admiration of them, must have the same taste" (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 493).

5) Reid does not treat the first principles of moral in details in the *Intellectual Powers*, once they would be posteriorly considered in the *Active Powers*. As examples of first principles of this sort, Reid points out "that an unjust action has more demerit than an ungenerous one", "that no man ought to be blamed for what it was not in his power to hinder" and "that we ought not to do to others what we would think unjust or unfair to be done to us in like circumstances" (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 494).

6) Reid quickly considers the first principles of metaphysical knowledge, limiting himself to present some of them. Initially: "the *first* is, That the qualities which we perceive by our senses must have a subject, which we call body, and that the thoughts we are conscious of must have a subject, which we call mind" (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 495). On Reid's view, truths like "a figure cannot exist, unless there be something that is figured" are not less evident than those mathematical truths: "I not only perceive figure and motion, but I perceive them to be qualities: They have a necessary relation to something in which they exist as their subject" (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 495). Subsequently: "the *second* metaphysical principle I mention is, That whatever begins to exist, must have a cause which produced it" (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 497). The acceptance of this principle as a mere vulgar opinion, an opinion which human beings would assume without evidence "[…] would put an end to all philosophy, to all religion, to all reasoning that would carry us beyond the objects of sense, and to all prudence in the conduct of life" (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 497). Lastly: "the *last* metaphysical principle I mention, which is opposed by

the same author, is, That design and intelligence in the cause, may be inferred, with certainty, from marks or signs of it in the effect" (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 503). According to Reid, this principle is necessary in the conduct of ordinary life, such as, for instance, when one judges the character of another from her actions: the former judges that wise and intelligent actions (effects) are signs of wisdom and intelligence (cause) in the mind of the latter.

Of the system of morals

I present now the list of first principles of moral knowledge. In the *Active Powers*, Reid presents two non-exhaustive lists of such first principles. In the first list, he presents six first principles related to *virtue in general*:

1) "There are some things in human conduct, that merit approbation and praise; others that merit blame and punishment; and different degrees either of approbation or of blame, are due to different actions" (*EAP*, V, I, p. 271);

2) "What is in no degree voluntary, can neither deserve moral approbation nor blame" (*EAP*, V, I, p. 271);

3) "What is done from unavoidable necessity may be agreeable or disagreeable, useful or hurtful, but cannot be the object either of blame or of moral approbation" (*EAP*, V, I, p. 271);

4) "Men may be highly culpable in omitting what they ought to have done, as well as in doing what they ought not" (*EAP*, V, I, p. 271);

5) "We ought to use the best means we can to be well informed of our duty […]" (*EAP*, V, I, p. 271)

6) "It ought to be our most serious concern to do our duty as far as we know it, and to fortify our minds against every temptation to deviate from it" (*EAP*, V, I, p. 271).

The second list presents five principles related to *particular branches of virtue*:

1) "We ought to prefer a greater good, though more distant, to a less; and a less evil to a greater" (*EAP*, V, I, p. 272);

2) "As far as the intention of nature appears in the constitution of man, we ought to comply with that intention, and to act agreeably to it" (*EAP*, V, I, p. 273);

3) “No man is born for himself only. Every man, therefore, ought to consider himself as a member of the common society of mankind, and of those subordinate societies to which he belongs, such as family, friends, neighborhood, country, and to do as much good as he can, and as little hurt to the societies of which he is a part” (*EAP*, V, I, p. 274);

4) “In every case, we ought to act that part towards another, which we would judge to be right in him to act toward us, if we were in his circumstances and he in ours” (*EAP*, V, I, p. 274).

5) “To every man who believes the existence, the perfections, and the providence of GOD, the veneration and submission we owe to him is self-evident” (*EAP*, V, I, p. 276).

What do those natural judgments of conscience have that make them able to be first principles in morals?

> I call these *first principles*, because they appear to me to have in themselves an intuitive evidence which I cannot resist. I find I can express them in other words. I can illustrate them by examples and authorities, and perhaps can deduce one of them from another; but I am not able to deduce them from other principles that are more evident. And I find the best moral reasonings of authors I am acquainted with, ancient and modern, Heathen and Christian, to be grounded upon one or more of them (*EAP*, V, I, p. 276).

Theses self-evident principles are the intuitive judgments of a mature moral faculty. Therefore, they have the evidence of the original constitution of mind; they are first principles of common sense. Their evidence is given by nature: those judgments are the testimonies of the very faculty of judging about the right and wrong conduct.

Of the science of politics

Finally, I present the first principles of the science of politics. Reid claims about the nature of these first principles of politics:

> […] it is evident that the first Principles of Political Reasoning must in general be of this Kind, to wit, That such is the Nature of Mankind that men placed in such Circumstances will generally act in such a Manner. If any Principles of this kind can be ascertained from our knowledge of human Nature, or from Experience; Such Principles must be the foundation of all Political Reasoning. And the

> Conclusions that may justly be drawn from such Principles will make up the Science of Politicks (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 27).

A sagacious political scientist, experienced in the affairs of common life, is able to ascertain, from the knowledge she has of the conduct of other human beings who live together in some political society, some first principles about how human beings generally act when placed in certain circumstances. In other words, the political scientist, based upon the knowledge of mankind she has formed throughout her life, may identify some principles about what we can expect from human being when motivated by some circumstances.

In the *Lectures on Politics*, the first principles of political knowledge are enunciated twice. Indeed, Reid presents a list about general principles of human action in the introductory lecture of the course of 1765 and 1766, named *Principles of Politics*. In the 1765 lecture, Reid points out twelve principles upon which he holds the reasonings of the political scientists should be built (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 23-4):

1) “Men will generally be just honest & true where they have no Temptation to be otherwise”;

2) “Men have always a Strong Resentment of Injuries and will resist them where it is in their Power & have commonly some gratitude for good Offices”;

3) “Tho a cool Desire of Happiness & a regard to duty have some Influence on the actions of All men yet it does not appear that either of these are the Prevailing Principles in Most men”;

4) “It may be therefore expected of the Generality of Men that they will do things contrary either to their real Interest or their Duty when they have Strong temptations. Either knowingly or by imposing upon themselves”;

5) “Few Men will do the most Atrocious Acts of Wickedness even upon a Strong Temptation till they have been long hardned by vicious habits”;

6) “Men always esteem Virtue Wisdow & Power in others where they are not objects of Envy and desire to be possessed of them or to be thought to be possessed of them themselves”;

7) “Mens private Affections are commonly Stronger then their publick ones”;

8) “Mens Characters are formed mostly by Education Custom & Example”;

9) “In a Great Number of Men taken without Distinction there will always be found a few that are far Superior to the Rest in Wisdom or Virtue Power or all these”;

10) “People will not long receive Laws from Governors unless they have an opinion that the Governors have Superior Power, Superior Wisdom & Virtue or Right to Govern”;

11) “Like Effects may be expected from like Causes, and similar Conduct from persons or like Characters in like Circumstances”;

12) “In all great Bodies of Men who either meet together or can easily communicate their Sentiments to each other, the many will be led by a few, of Superior Parts, Superior Eloquence or Superior Character, & will imbibe their Sentiments Passions and Opinions”;

In the introductory lecture of 1765, Reid only presents those twelve first principles, without making any further comment about them. In the introductory lecture of 1766, contrarily, Reid considers them in more details. Unfortunately, the manuscript has not been totally preserved. Only the enumeration of five of those first principles have survived (the axioms from 5 to 8 have not been preserved). Here are the axioms (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 30-2):

1) “It may well be supposed that the generality of men will not do bad things without any temptation”;

2) “Personal Injuries have often occasioned Revolutions in States One of the chief Advantages of civil Government is that it puts the determination of differences among men in the laws and Judicatures and thereby greatly weakens the fury of Resentment and Revenge”;

3) “It is good that Men be instructed in their Duty & Interest but this is not enough”;

4) “The more a people are corrupted in their Morals the less are capable of freedom”;

9) “In all Governments a few govern the Many the greater part are led & there is perhaps not above one hundred part of the whole that can be said to direct and govern in matters that concern the whole Body, the Multitude are swayed by the Judgement of a few”;

The first axiom corresponds almost completely to the first principle of the list of 1765. The second axiom of this list, as well as the third and the fourth axioms, have not a correspondent first principle in the list of 1765. Lastly, the ninth axiom corresponds to the twelfth axiom of the list of 1765. Despite of the difference of the lists, Reid underlines in the lecture of 1766, that he does not intend to present an exhaustive enumeration of all the first principles or axioms on human action.

Reid does not deal directly with political matters In the *Intellectual Powers*. However, in two moments of that work, he presents some observations on the first principles of political knowledge. In Essay VI, in the context of the discussion on the eleventh principle of contingent truth, Reid lists three first principles of politics (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 488); in Essay VII, he repeats this list, but in the context of the discussion on the kinds of evidence (*EIP*, VII, III, p. 559)[51]. I present the first of this enumerations:

1) "It may always be expected, that they will regard their own interest and reputation, and that of their families and friends";

2) "[It may always be expected] that they will repel injuries, and have some sense of good offices";

3) "[It may always be expected] that they will have some regard to truth and justice, so far at least as not to swerve from them without temptation".

The first first principle does not find any correspondent in the lists of the *Lectures on Politics*. The second first principle corresponds to the second first principle of the list of 1765. The third first principle, in turn, corresponds to the first first principle of both lists of 1765 and 1766.

3.2) What is a first principles of knowledge?

Last section I present the first principles of knowledge enumerated by Reid. Now, I intend to discuss what those first principles of knowledge are. More specifically, the question I want to discuss concerns what Reid has in sight when he refers to the first principles, what he actually assume as first principles of speculative, moral and political

[51] Reid lists some of the first principles of politics: "we expect that men will take some care of themselves, of their family, friends, and reputation: That they will not injure others without some temptation: That they will have some gratitude for good offices, and some resentment of injuries" (*EIP*, VII, III, p. 559)

knowledge. I hold that Reid thinks of the particular judgments and beliefs which accompany the operations of those several powers of mind–in the case of the first principles of common sense–or the judgments and beliefs resulting from the sagacious observation of the conduct of human beings united into a political society–in the case of the first principles of politics. I explain this comprehension in the following subsections.

3.2.1) The first principles of speculative knowledge

Robert Stecker (1978) is the author who better expresses the problem I have in sight. According to him, there is a tension in Reid's texts. When he considers the power of perception and the beliefs which accompany its operations, for instance, he notes:

> Reid's terminology is somewhat misleading. Much, if not all, the knowledge yielded by the external senses, i.e., by observation, can hardly be called knowledge of principles; it is knowledge that particular objects exist and that they have certain properties (STECKER, 1978, p. 456).

The powers of the external senses only yield particular beliefs about the external world: "I see an oak" (I judge the oak I see exists), "I hear a song" (I judge the song I hear exists), "I taste this pie" (I judge the pie I taste exists), etc. However, Reid usually refers, when discussing the foundation of knowledge, to self-evident first principles, such as "that those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be". I put the problem as follows: how should we understand this tension between particular beliefs and general principles in Reid's theory of the first principles of common sense?

I try to answer: the first principles of knowledge that Reid enumerates, such as I understand them, are general propositions which express a set of particular judgments and beliefs resulting from the operations of the original constitution of mind–in the case of the first principles of philosophy of mind, morals and contingent and necessary truths. This view is inspired by James Van Cleve's (2003) interpretation of Reid's first principles. Indeed, the author proposes two distinct manner of formulating a first principle. He illustrates it in the light of the first principles about the existence of the objects of consciousness. In the two formulations below, Cp is an abbreviation of "to be conscious of p":

1A. It is a first principle that (p) (Cp->p).

1B. (p) (Cp-> is a first principle that *p*).

From these two manners of formulating the first principle, Van Cleve claims:

> Notice that what 1A specifies as a first principle is a principle of truth – a single principle laying down that all the deliverances of consciousness are true. By contrast, 1B is a principle laying down that each of the deliverances of consciousness is itself a first principle. Unlike 1A, which give us *one general* first principle, 1B give us *many particular* first principles (VAN CLEVE, 2003, p. 158).

Following Van Cleve, I hold that the first principles of common sense should be understood according to the formulation 1B.

I take, as an example, the fifth proposition of the principles of contingent truths, the one about the existence of the objects perceived by senses. There is a set of beliefs shared by the greatest part of humankind, with the exception of some lunatics (because of some disorder or disease that may have affected their minds) and some philosophers (who refuse them in virtue of a philosophical prejudice[52]), that indicates the real and present existence of the objects that are perceived by means of senses. These beliefs that accompany the operations of senses are due to a natural inclination of the mind that leads human beings to assent immediately and irresistibly to the existence of those objects when they are perceived. Observing the existence of this universal inclination in humankind, Reid lays down a first principle: "another first principle is, That those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be" (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 476).

In my view, it is clear that Reid employs the experimental method of reasoning in order to formulate those general principles. This is, after all, one of the main purposes of philosophy of mind: "and if ever our philosophy concerning the human mind is carried so far as to deserve the name of science, which ought never to be despaired of, it must be by observing facts, reducing them to general rules, and drawing conclusions from them" (*IHM*, V, III, p. 59). Resting on the observation and experimentation of mental phenomena–in this case, the way our beliefs about the existence of the objects of the external world are immediately and irresistibly yielded, Reid is able to formulate a general rule, a general principle about those many particular beliefs due to the powers of

[52] The hypothesis that states that the human mind knows the world by means of ideas is one of those prejudices.

mind[53]. Those general principles are self-evident propositions which state that each one of common sense beliefs may itself be assumed as a first principle of knowledge. Self-evident propositions are described as "[…] propositions which are no sooner understood than they are believed" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 452). In the case of the example, that general proposition can be understood as a *general* principle about a number of *particular* principles upon which the knowledge must be built and from which the philosophical reasonings must be drawn. Therefore, "[…] Reid's epistemological principles are not first principles themselves–that they *specify* first principles without *being* first principles" (VAN CLEVE, 2003, p. 157).

In favor of this interpretation of the first principles of knowledge, it is important to point this enlightening passage. According to Reid, in a passage in which he agrees with what Locke claims about the first principles, the truth of our particular beliefs is known sooner than the truth of our general principles:

> He [Locke] observes, that the particular propositions contained under a general axiom are no less self-evident than the general axiom, and that they are sooner known and understood. Thus it is as evident, that my hand is less than my body, as that a part is less than the whole; and I know the truth of the particular proposition, *sooner than that of the general* (*EIP*, VI, VII, p. 521, emphasis added).

We judge immediately and irresistibly that this general proposition, "those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be", is true. It is self-evident and we cannot avoid accepting it as a true proposition. Before we do it, however, we have judged the truth of our particular perceptual beliefs: "I see an oak" (I judge the oak I see exists), "I hear a song" (I judge the song I hear exists), "I taste this pie" (I judge the pie I taste exists).

[53] Reid holds that the method of the scientists should be mainly based upon observation and experimentation of the phenomena–natural, mental, moral, political phenomena. This way of proceeding, identical to that one carried out by some philosophers in the investigation of natural phenomena, is not restrict to scientists. Human beings, in their everyday occupations, actually proceed in a similar manner. According to Reid, this is due to the very constitution of human mind. People are naturally led through observation and experimentation in the affairs of their lives: "wise men now agree, or ought to agree in this, that there is but one way to the knowledge of nature's works; the way of observation and experiment. *By our constitution*, we have a strong propensity to trace particular facts and observations to general rules, and to apply such general rules to account for other effects, or to direct us in the production of them. This procedure of the understanding is *familiar to every human creature* in the common affairs of life, and it is the only one by which any real discovery in philosophy can be made" (*IHM*, I, I. p. 11-2, emphasis added). Human beings, proceeding by observation and experimentation of particular facts, in accordance with the original constitution of the human mind, have discovered, for instance, that cold freezes the water and that heat, on the contrary, evaporates it. Proceeding in this way, Newton has discovered the law of gravitation and the properties of light. Reid follows this natural inclination of mind in the formulation of the propositions which express the first principles of knowledge.

The criterion for choosing the first principles

It is necessary to explain how we would be able to know which of our particular beliefs should be assumed as first principles of knowledge. The question can be put as follows: do all particular beliefs are apt to play the role of basic beliefs in the superstructure of knowledge? Reid would answer no: not all of our beliefs could be assumed as first principles of knowledge? I hold that, for Reid, there is a criterion by means of which we can identify which beliefs we can assume as first principles. I base my supposition upon Reid's observations on the epistemological utility / dignity of propositions. About it, Reid claims: "I grant that there are innumerable self-evident propositions, which have neither *dignity nor utility*, and therefore deserve not the name of axioms, as that name is commonly understood to imply not only self-evidence, but some degree of dignity or utility" (*EIP*, VI, VII, p. 520-1, emphasis added). There is a *dignity / utility* criterion which helps us in the task of recognizing the first principles of knowledge. Reid notes that propositions like "a man is a man" and "a man is not a horse"–propositions which Locke calls *trifling propositions*–cannot be appropriately called *axioms*. Despite their self-evidence, Reid claims, it would be an abuse of the words to call them *knowledge*. Our particular beliefs may be expressed by propositions that are self-evident and, according to their utility, they can be assumed as first principles of knowledge. I believe this interpretation is compatible with all the passages in which Reid refers to the particular judgments of operations of the powers of mind. He has in sight the particular beliefs, but only the particular beliefs which have utility for the superstructure of knowledge.

To conclude, the first principles are general propositions (formulated from the observation of the operations of the mind) which subsume many particular beliefs (immediate and irresistible beliefs that are due to the powers of the original constitution of mind) under themselves. Each of common sense beliefs may play the role of basic / foundational belief in the building of knowledge, once it has dignity and utility. From the point of view of science, it seems that the belief about the existence of a tree before my eyes is not interesting; nevertheless, the belief that there is a moon in the sky (a perceptual particular belief) seems to be fundamental to the attempt of discovering its orbit around the Earth.

3.2.2) The first principles of moral knowledge

I discuss now how I understand the first principles of moral knowledge. Once again, I appeal to Stecker (1978) to illustrate the problem I have in sight. The question concerns to know what Reid has in sight when he refers to the first principles of moral knowledge, what he actually assumes as first principles of a system of morals. Sometimes, Reid talks in a way that makes us think that conscience yields judgments which could be understood as moral principles (general principles), the foundation from which moral propositions would be extracted, however, "sometimes, […], Reid talks as if propositions asserting a particular action to be right (wrong) or a particular person to be good (bad) are also yielded by the moral sense" (STECKER, 1978, p. 456). Thus, the problem may be put as follows: "Reid seems to vacillate between the view that the moral sense only yields moral principles properly so called and the view that it yields both principles [general] and other ethical propositions [particular]" (STECKER, 1978, p. 457). William Rowe (1991) notes the same tension in Reid's text:

> What is not quite so clear is whether Reid's theory is an *act*-deontological theory or a *rule*-deontological theory. According to the former, we directly intuit the rightness or wrongness (or indifference) of *particular actions* we consider doing. According to the latter, some general rules of conduct are directly apprehended by the mind and seen to be self-evident truths (the axioms of morality) (ROWE, 1991, p. 130).

Rowe completes:

> The general tenor of his discussion fits more easily into the rule-deontological model, for the first principles he cites seem to be general rules governing actions. On the other hand, in speaking of the moral sense (moral faculty, conscience), Reid stresses the analogy to our other senses, particularly the power of determining by sight various properties of objects. Perhaps, then, just as by sight we discern that a particular object is red, so by conscience we perceive that a particular action is right (ROWE, 1991, p. 130-1).

My solution to this problem of understanding Reid on the first principles of morals is the same that I have pointed above. On the one hand, conscience is able to immediately perceive the rightness or wrongness of an action. Our moral deliberations can be immediate in virtue of conscience that allows us to recognize an action as being virtuous or vicious. On the other hand, conscience may not be able to always do it. Sometimes, we cannot judge what to do to act in accordance with our moral obligation.

In these cases, the first principles of morals present in a system of morals may help us: it is possible to deduce our moral obligations from them. I hold that the first principles of morals may be understood as general (self-evident) propositions which express a set of particular (self-evident) judgments and beliefs which accompany the operations of the power of conscience. The greatest part of humankind share the immediate and irresistible belief that one is culpable of not doing what she should have done or that she is culpable of doing what she should not have done. We immediately and irresistibly disapprove the particular cases of omission as well as all the actions which go against moral obligation. Reid observes these common judgments and formulates a first principle of morals, the forth one of the principles of virtue in general list: "men may be highly culpable in omitting what they ought to have done, as well as in doing what they ought not". This is a self-evident proposition, described in the *Intellectual Powers* as "[…] propositions which are no sooner understood than they are believed" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 452). This way, this first principle of a system of morals may be understood as a *general principle* (a self-evident proposition) about a number of *particular* principles (self-evident beliefs) upon which the knowledge of our moral obligation should be built.

The knowledge of duty in the light of the first principles of morals

A second question may be formulated to understand Reid's first principles of moral knowledge. It can be put as follows: how can we know our duty from the first principles enumerated by Reid? Sabine Roser (2010) holds that the first principles pointed by Reid, especially, those principles related to virtue in general, are more principles of a moral ontology than principles of normative ethics (ROSER, 2010, p. 14). She adds:

> It might be noticed that the principles Reid mentions are very general. Reid does not discuss the typical duties that say that one ought not to lie, steal, and so on. The most likely explanation for this generality is that Reid thinks that the typical moral duties follow from the principles he mentions, more specifically, they might follow from the Golden Rule [the fourth first principles in Reid's list] (ROSER, 2010, p. 16).

Terence Cuneo (2014) notes the same difficulty about how human beings could be able to know their duties from those first principles, which is the purpose of a system of morals on Reid's view:

> The list is puzzling because it is difficult to see how the first principles of morals could guide ethical deliberation and action and all. For unlike Ross's [W. D. Ross, 1877 - 1971] prima facie duties, the first principles of morals are not substantive moral principles; with perhaps the exception of principle 5p, they do not identify descriptive features that make it the case that we have one or another obligation, the awareness of which could guide ethical deliberation and action (CUNEO, 2014, p. 105).

In some sense, those authors seem to be right, once it is hard to understand how we could be able to govern our moral deliberation and actions from first principles such as, for instance, the existence of a right and wrong in human action (the first principle pointed by Reid). Nevertheless, I hold that there is another first principle, besides the fourth (pointed by Roser) and fifth (pointed by Cuneo) principles related to virtue in particular, which may help us to know our duty. I have in sight the second principle of the list of principles of virtue in particular, "as far as the intention of nature appears in the constitution of man, we ought to comply with that intention, and to act agreeably to it". How may this principle guide us in moral deliberation and action? Reid himself answers:

> The intention of nature, in the various active principles of man, in the desires of power, of knowledge, and of esteem, in the affection to children, to near relations, and to the communities to which we belong, in gratitude, in compassion, and even in resentment and emulation, is very obvious, and has been pointed out in treating of those principles (*EAP*, V, I, p. 274).

The intention of nature may be observed in the animal principles of desire (power, knowledge and esteem) and in benevolent and malevolent affection with which human beings are endowed. Consequently, Reid presents, such as Cuneo demands, several substantive moral principles related to virtue in particular. For instance, if I may speculate: "it is a moral obligation to guide our conduct in order to favor the acquisition of power, knowledge and esteem"; "it is a moral obligation to guide our conduct in order to favor benevolent affection towards children"; etc. Moreover, if there is any difficulty with regard to knowing what actions may contribute to satisfy our desires of power, knowledge and esteem, what actions may contribute to favor our benevolent affection, Reid claims that human beings have ways to adequately measure (from the moral point of view) what actions should be performed. Human beings have not only a sense of duty but also a sense of interest (regard to *our good upon the whole*): "nor it is less evident, that reason and conscience are given us to regulate the inferior principles,

so that they may conspire, in a regular and consistent plan of life, in pursuit of some worthy end" (*EAP*, V, I, p. 274). Therefore, it could be added to the formulation of those substantive principles of conduct: "it is a moral obligation to guide our conduct in order to favor the acquisition of power, knowledge and esteem, provided that these actions do not counter our interest or our moral faculty"; "it is a moral obligation to guide our conduct in order to favor benevolent affection towards children, provided that these actions do not counter our interest or our moral faculty"; etc. To conclude: there are at least three first principles–the second, the fourth and the fifth principles related to virtue in particular–which may help us to know our duty.

The purposes of a system of morals

According to Reid, conscience can immediately perceive the right and wrong conduct:

> The first principles of morals, are the *immediate dictates* of the moral faculty. They shew us, not what man is, but what he ought to be. Whatever is *immediately perceived* to be just, honest, and honourable, in human conduct, carries moral obligation along with it, and the contrary carries demerit and blame; and, from those moral obligations that are *immediately perceived*, all other moral obligations must be deduced by reasoning (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 179, emphasis added).

This passage, in my view, is doubly important to understand Reid's view on conscience and its first principles. It shows us, firstly, that human beings are endowed with a faculty of immediately perceiving the rightness or wrongness of an action. Our moral deliberations can be immediate in virtue of conscience that allows us to recognize an action as being virtuous or vicious. Secondly, it shows us that this faculty may not be able to do it in all cases. Indeed, it is possible to be put in a position in which we cannot judge which is the right thing to do. In these cases, the first principles of morals present in a system of morals may help us: it is possible to deduce our moral obligations from them.

Reid has at least two arguments to justify his intention of laying down a *system of morals*. Firstly, a system of morals is important in that it may greatly contribute to the development of the moral faculty or conscience:

> I am far from thinking instruction in morals unnecessary. Men may, to the end of life, be ignorant of self-evident truths. They may, to the end

> of life, entertain gross absurdities. Experience shews that this happens often in matters that are indifferent. Much more may it happen in matters where interest, passion, prejudice and fashion, are so apt to pervert the judgment (*EAP*, V, II, p. 278).

On Reid's view, the development of conscience depends on instruction, information, observation of examples. In this context, a system of morals may be of great value:

> The most obvious truths are not perceived without some *ripeness of judgment*. For we see, that children may be made to believe any thing, though ever so absurd. Our judgment of things is ripened, not by time only, but chiefly by being exercised about things of the same or of a similar kind (*EAP*, V, II, p. 278-9, emphasis added).

Secondly, the observation of the world history shows how systems of morals have been able to help people to correct their moral notions and judgments. Reid indeed notes that ancient societies have kept many moral absurdities–with regard to our moral obligation to other people, to children, to servants, to foreigners and even to those who held different religious views. In these societies, systems of morals have helped people to correct their wrong moral judgments: "[...] I doubt not, but the attention given to moral truths, in such systems as we have mentioned, has contributed much to correct the error and prejudices of former ages, and may continue to have the same good effect in time to come" (*EAP*, V, II, p. 280). A child who grows up to adulthood out of a human society, without any contact with other human beings to instruct her, would not be able to reason. In the same way, she would not be able to perform correct moral judgments. Reason and conscience may remain dormant over life without proper instruction and the observation of examples. Attention, candor and a mind free of prejudices are indispensable to the development of those powers. The power of performing clear and impartial moral judgments depends greatly on development. Therefore, a system of morals may greatly help it:

> Although, therefore, to a ripe understanding, free from prejudice, and accustomed to judge of the morality of actions, most truths in morals will appear self-evident, it does not follow that moral instruction is unnecessary in the first part of life, or that it may not be very profitable in its more advanced period (*EAP*, V, II, p. 280).

3.2.3) The first principles of political knowledge

The first principles of politics listed by Reid, such as I understand them, are general propositions which express a set of particular judgments and beliefs resulting

from the sagacity and experience of the political scientist who studies the principles of action in human mind and observes the conduct of human beings united into a political society. I try to present an example of how Reid is able to ascertain those first principles of politics. Firstly, from the philosophical study of the principles of action in human mind, the political scientist discovers that there is a moral principle which generally motivates the actions of human beings endowed with a mature and healthy conscience. Secondly, in the light of the observation of the conduct of human beings in political society–the experience the political scientist has of how human beings act in general, Reid observes that the individuals act in accordance with that moral principle in the majority of cases, except when they have a strong temptation not to follow it. The individual who betrays a friend does it in virtue of some reason which motivates her to act contrarily to her duty–some strong passion may be affecting her, for instance. In the light of the observation of the regularity of this kind of behavior in human societies, Reid formulates a first principle of political knowledge: "men will generally be just honest & true where they have no Temptation to be otherwise", or "it may well be supposed that the generality of men will not do bad things without any temptation". Propositions like this, Reid argues, should be assumed as the first principles in politics.

The subsequently passage of the *Lectures on Politics* helps us understand the importance of the political knowledge on Reid's view:

> Knowledge in Politiks enables us to Judge whether such a particular form of Government is properly fitted and adapted to promote the happiness & preserve the Rights of the Subjects: Or whether on the contrary from the nature and constitution of the Government the subjects will frequently be oppressed, injured, and tyrannically used? Whether Political Body will be quiet & peaceable or on the contrary tumultuous and Seditious. Whether it will be strong to defend itself against foreign Ennemies, or feeble & easily subdued in War (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 26).

It is clear that, such as Reid understands it, the science of politics matters in virtue of its practical importance, that is, for the very exercise of the art of politics. The science of politics allows the politician to judge if certain form of constitution is effective to promote the good of the individuals of a certain society or, contrarily, if this constitution is not good to this end; to know that the end of a despotic form of government is not the good and happiness of the whole but the gratification of the despot (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 34); to know that the great end of a republican form of constitution is the good of the whole and the preservation of the civil liberty (*Lectures on Politics*,

2015, p. 46); to know that there is a principle of honour which guarantee the stability and duration of a monarch government (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 44).

To understand the importance of the science of politics for the exercise of politics as art, Reid proposes the following analogy. If we think a political body in the light of its resemblance with a human body, the science of politics to the politician corresponds to the science of medicine to the physician:

> Political Bodies as well as Natural Bodies of Man and Animals are liable both to internal Disorders and Diseases and to external hurts & injuries. It is by political Knowledge that the Governours of States are enabled to foresee those disorders that are incident to the political Body and to prevent them, or to discover their causes when they happen; & to apply proper remedies. Politicks has a like Relation to States & to Government as the Science of Medicine has to the human Body, and the Politician is the State Physician (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 26).

A political society may be affected by some internal diseases and it bay be affected by some external injuries. The science of politics allows the politician to foresee these possible harms in societies, making her able to prevent them. Political knowledge allows the politician to recognize how a sound and healthy society is built and it teaches her how to administer the appropriate medicines to an ill society. Moreover, the science of politics allows the politician to know if some sort of government is correctly established, if it is able to promote the good and happiness of the governed and if it is able to preserve their rights.

First principles of politics are probable, not demonstrative

Finally, I would consider the nature of the reasonings of the science of politics. According to how Reid understands the science of politics, political knowledge is only *probable*, not demonstrative: "and all that can be inferred from them [the first principles of politics] is That Politicks is founded chiefly on Probability and not on Demonstration. This is undoubtedly true" (*Lectures on politics*, 2015, p. 29). In the *Intellectual Powers* Reid claims the same–he briefly discusses the nature of the reasonings in politics. In Essay VII, Reid classifies the evidence of the first principles of politics as follows: "a forth kind of probable evidence [after presenting three other kinds of evidence], is that which we have of mens future actions and conduct, from the general principles of action in man, or from our knowledge of the individuals" (*EIP*,

VII, III, p. 559). He presents those three first principles of politics–presented in the last section–and claims:

> Such maxims with regard to human conduct are the foundation of all political reasoning, and of common prudence in the conduct of life. Hardly can a man form any project in public or in private life, which does not depend upon the conduct of other men, as well as his own, and which does not go upon the supposition that men will act such a part in such circumstances. *This evidence may be probable in a very high degree, but can never be demonstrative*. The best concerted project may fail, and wise counsels may be frustrated, because some individual acted a part which it would have been against all reason to expect (*EIP*, VII, III, p. 559, emphasis added).

We base both our actions in the common affairs of life and our reasonings in politics upon the supposition that there is certain regularity in the actions of human beings, that individuals, when placed in some circumstances, will act in some way and not another. Human beings should base their actions in common life upon the judgment that individuals have resentment of injuries and gratitude for good offices; a political scientist should base their reasoning upon the same judgement. In both contexts, in the common affairs of life and science, this principle has only probable evidence. It is a fact that sometimes human beings act contrary to what we expect they do. As discussed before, the conclusions and the first principles from which they are extracted have the same degree of evidence: the conclusions are demonstrative / necessary or probable / contingent according to the first principle upon which they are grounded. The first principles of politics have only probable evidence, never demonstrative. Political knowledge, therefore, is probable. It is possible to expect that human beings will act in some way when placed in certain circumstances, but it will never be necessary that they do. The contingency of human actions becomes an objection to which Reid has to deal with.

Reid's defense of the existence of the first principles of politics

It is possible to object the existence of knowledge in politics in the light of an objection about the existence of the first principles. If human beings are free to act as they will, why do philosophers are legitimated in supposing the existence of first principles about human actions, about how they possibly act when placed in certain circumstances? In the *Lectures on Politics*, the objection is summarized as follows:

> If men always acted according to the Strongest motive there is some foundation for human foresight of their Actions from the knowledge of their Situation and the Principles of their Nature. But if there is *no Necessary connexion* between Actions and the Motives of the Agent there is no foundation left for any human knowledge of the Actions of free Agents, how they will behave in given Situations, consequently no foundation for any political knowledge (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 28, emphasis added).

This objection states that the existence of first principles about human actions depends on the existence of a *necessary connection* between human actions and their motives. First principles on the general conduct of human beings, in this sense, would exist only in the case that the strongest motive always governs our actions. If there is no such necessary connection between motives and actions, there can be no political first principles and, consequently, political knowledge is impossible.

Here is Reid's reply to this objection. On the one hand, there is a thesis which denies the existence of any necessary connection between the actions and their motives, claiming that human beings are free to act whatever their motives are. The strongest motive does not always govern our conduct. This is Reid's own view on human liberty to act. On the other hand, there is another thesis which states the existence of a necessary connection between human actions and their motives. The strongest motive always governs our conduct. According to Reid, this is the *fatalist* thesis. Reid's point is that neither the first nor the second theses are sufficient to reply to that objection. An *uncertain element* is presented in both instances, even in the case of a necessary connection between actions and their strongest motives. Reid explains:

> This Objection if it had any force would leave no foundation for Political Knowledge to those who hold human Actions to be necessary any more than to those who hold them free. Because it must be acknowledge by those who hold the necessity of human Actions that the motives or Causes from which those Actions necessarily follow cannot be known to a Spectator, nay that they cannot be known to the Agent himself (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 28).

Both theses imply a certain degree of uncertainty with regard to human actions and their motives. In the case of the human liberty to act, the uncertainty is related to the fact that we are able to freely act independently of what the strongest motive is. In the case of the fatalist thesis, the uncertainty is related to the fact that there are occasions in which we cannot know what the strongest motive is. Experience shows us that the strong motive does not always lead us to perform the same action. For instance, a very resentful

person may not try to revenge on her aggressor. Reid claims that the fatalist is obliged to suppose, when facing this unquestionable fact attested by experience, the existence of *unknown motives* or *unknown causes* in each person–there is an unknown motive that leads her to not do anything to her aggressor. This unknown motive explains why she acts differently from what we expect. This is the weak point of the fatalist thesis: "upon the Supposition of Necessity the Action necessarily depends upon the Strongest motive, but there are motives so hidden & obscure that we cannot perceive them or have we any Standard by which we may judge of their Strength" (*Lectures on Politics,* 2015, p. 28). The fatalist thesis implies as much uncertainty–there are cases in which we are not able to know the strongest motive some–as the opposite thesis on the liberty of the human beings. Therefore, the supposition of a necessary connection between actions and their strongest motives is not enough to reply that objection. Despite this difficulty, Reid argues, philosophers should not deny the existence of such first principles.

There is more to say in favor of the existence of first principles about the conduct of human beings. Reid presents two arguments. Firstly, the very fact of the existence of political societies is a sign of the existence of some common principles of action in human mind. The existence of societies depends on the existence of a *common understanding* among human beings. This common understanding, in turn, explains certain regularity in human conduct. What kinds of conduct can we expect from human beings endowed with that common understanding?

> Thus we may rely upon it that a man of common Understanding will take some Care of himself, both to avoid what is hurtfull and to procure what is agreable and usefull, that he will take Care of his Children and have some Natural Affection to his Family and Friends and Acquaintance We may reckon upon it, that he will have some sense of good offices done him, and some resentment of Injuries That in proportion to his Strenght and Courage he will defend & his Rights, and repell Injuries (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 29).

It is true, for instance, that individuals do not always act in accordance with their obligation, that they do not always have gratitude for good offices and resentment for injuries. Despite the uncertainty in the knowledge of how they will act when placed in certain circumstances, all of us, the political scientist and the common individual, expect human beings will act in a certain way. Desires, malevolent and benevolent affections, interest and conscience make part of human constitution, are parts of the common understanding which all of us have, and make us able to expect some kind of conduct in certain circumstances. Society depends on this common understanding:

> One that has no degree of wisdom or prudence is an Idiot or Changeling. Some Such there are of the human Species but a political Society could not be formed of Such. Men must be supposed to have common understanding in order to form a Commonwealth. Now there are many things which we may rely upon with great Security notwithstanding their being free Agents (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 29, emphasis added).

Reid acknowledges the possibility that some individuals are born without common understanding. However, these cases are much rare, so that they cannot be considered when one intends to establish a science of politics:

> The common Principles of human Nature lead every Man good and bad to act such a part, in the common occurrences of Life. And a Man in whom these principles of Conduct did not exert their Force must be as great a prodigy as a Man born without hands or feet, which indeed has sometimes happned but is an Event so rare that in the course of human affairs we never think it deserves attention (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 30).

Reid briefly presents the argument about the existence of a common understanding among human beings in the *Intellectual Powers*. In Essay VI, he notes:

> If we had no confidence in our fellow men that they will act such a part in such circumstances, it would be impossible to live in society with them: For that which makes men capable of living in society, and uniting in a political body under government, is, that their actions will always be regulated in a great measure by the common principles of human nature (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 488).

In Essay VII, once again:

> Notwithstanding the folly and vice that is to be found among men, there is a certain degree of prudence and probity which we rely upon in every man that is not insane. If it were not so, no man would be safe in the company of another, and there could be no society among mankind (*EIP*, VII, III, p. 559).

The regularity of human behavior, explained by the existence of a common understanding among human beings, is real in that without it there would not be human societies.

Secondly, Reid presents an argument on the uniformity of the conduct of human being when united into a political society. Indeed, Reid holds that the reasonings on the probable conduct of a group of individuals are more likely to be successful than the reasonings about the conduct of a single individual singly considered: “the jarring Passions Interests and Views of individuals when mingled together make a Compound

whose Nature is more fixed and determined than that of the Ingredients of which it is made up" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 30). However, in the case of the conduct of a great body of human beings: "Wisdow and Folly, Reason and Passion Virtue and Vice blended together make a pretty *Uniform Character in great Bodies of Men* in all Ages and nations; where there is not an uncommon Degree of general Corruption on the one hand or of Virtue on the Other" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 30, emphasis added). In the light of this passage, we understand that, according to Reid, the uniformity of the conduct of the great bodies of human beings is shaken only by accidental cases, when, for instance, there is a very great deviation from the usual moral standard of humankind, whether on the negative side, that is, when there is an excess of vices or an excess of virtue. Except for those accidental cases, Reid claims: "it is from this Uniformity of Character in a Multitude of Men notwithstanding of the Diversity of the Individuals of which it is composed, that all General Principles in Politicks are derived" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 30).

3.3) The source of the principles of necessary truths

Reid establishes the distinction between *necessary* and *contingent truths* as follows:

> The truths that fall within the compass of human knowledge, whether they be self-evident, or deduced from those that are self-evident, may be reduced to two classes. They are either necessary and immutable truths, whose contrary is impossible, or they are contingent and mutable, depending upon some effect of will and power, which had beginning, and may have an end (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 468).

With this distinction in mind, Reid notes that there are two sorts of first principles of knowledge: some of them are necessary, while others are contingent. On the one hand, they are distinct principles of knowledge in that they are principles of mutable / immutable knowledge. On the other hand, they are distinct principles of knowledge in that they are principles of probable / demonstrable knowledge. Reid notes that the conclusions extracted by reasoning from first principles may be necessary or contingent according to the nature of the principle from which they are drawn: "on the one hand, I take it to be certain, that whatever can, by just reasoning, be inferred from a principle that is necessary, must be a necessary truth, and that no contingent truth can be inferred from principles that are necessary" (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 469). The conclusions and the first

principles from which they are extracted have the same degree of evidence, and the conclusions are necessary or contingent according to the principle upon which they are grounded. Once again, the existence of the Supreme Being is the only exception: it is a necessary truth deduced from the existence of the universe, from contingent and mutable existences (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 468-9). Demonstrative and probable knowledge, therefore, are based upon one or another sort of first principle:

> All reasoning must be grounded upon truths which are known without reasoning. In every branch of real knowledge there must be first principles whose truth is known intuitively, without reasoning, either probable or demonstrative. They are not grounded on reasoning, but all reasoning is grounded on them. It has been shown, that there are first principles of necessary truths, and first principles of contingent truths. Demonstrative reasoning is grounded upon the former, and probable reasoning upon the latter (*EIP*, VII, III, p. 556).

Therefore, speculative and political knowledge are contingent, while moral knowledge is necessary[54].

Now, I want to consider a third difference between the principles of contingent and necessary truths, a difference which concerns to the very source of both kinds of principles. Reid argues that the principles of contingent and necessary truths are both first principles of common sense. I understand common sense as the *original constitution of mind* or *what is dictated* by the original constitution of human mind. Therefore, to claim that the first principles of mathematics are common sense beliefs, in my view, is to claim that they are immediate and irresistible beliefs due to the original constitution of mind. I point two common sense principles, one contingent, another necessary, as examples:

[54] In fact, Reid does not seem to be right about the nature of the first principles of morals, if they are necessary or contingent principles of truth. This tension appears in *Intellectual Powers*, in the context of the discussion on Locke's thesis about the demonstrability of moral, in the chapter *Whether morality be capable of demonstration*, Essay VII. After presenting his definition of *moral proposition* (a proposition which affirm that a human being or a group of human beings have or does not have certain moral obligation), Reid claims: "They [human beings] are the creatures of GOD; their obligation results from the constitution which God hath given them, and the circumstances in which he hath placed them. That an individual hath such a constitution, and is placed in such circumstances, is not an abstract and necessary, but a contingent truth. It is a matter of fact, and therefore not capable of demonstrative evidence, which belongs only to necessary truths (*EIP*, VII, II, p. 551). Terence Cuneo observes about this point: "In the passage just cited, Reid maintains against Locke that the principles of morality are not necessary but contingent. Just several chapters before his engagement with Locke, however, Reid identifies a domain of propositions that he calls the principles of common sense, dividing them into the contingent and the necessary. In the category of the necessary, he places the first principles of morals" (CUNEO, 2014, p. 104). Is there in fact a problem of conciliation between what Reid says in Essay VI (the first principles of morals are necessary) and what he claims in Essay VII (moral propositions are contingent)? I have to confess that I do not have an answer to this question.

"That those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be";

"That two right lines can cut one another in one point only".

Both of them have the same origin: the original constitution of mind, according to Reid. They are immediate and irresistible beliefs of common sense. But I like to say more about the principles of necessary truths.

In my view, there is a great difference between the contingent and necessary truths, as first principles of common sense, which Reid does not consider systematically. The principles of necessary truths, such as I understand them, are immediate and irresistible beliefs due to a mature mind, a mind whose powers have been developed to their maturity. According to Reid, the operations of the powers of mind depend greatly upon their appropriate cultivation, that is, instruction, exercise, good habits may contribute to their development to maturity:

> The faculties of man unfold themselves in a certain order, appointed by the great Creator. In their gradual progress, they may be greatly assisted or retarded, improved or corrupted, by education, instruction, example, exercise, and by the society and conversation of men, which, like soil and culture in plants, may produce great changes to the better or to the worse (*EAP*, III, III, VIII, p. 187).

It is possible that non-mature minds are not able to recognize the first principles of necessary truths; it is possible that the first principles of mathematics, morals and aesthetics are not self-evident for those whose mind has never developed.

I appeal to three examples in order to explain this view. Firstly, as pointed in the *Active Powers*, Reid observes that human beings are not able to recognize the axioms of mathematics until the *maturity of their understanding*:

> The evidence of mathematical axioms is not discerned till men come to a certain *degree of maturity of understanding* [emphasis added]. A boy must have formed the general conception of *quantity*, and of *more* and *less* and *equal*, of *sum* and *difference*; and he must have been accustomed to judge of these relations in matters of common life, before he can perceive the evidence of the mathematical axiom, that equal quantities, added to equal quantities, make equal sums (*EAP*, V, I, p. 276-7).

The judgement about the truth of a mathematical axiom depends on the maturity of the powers of mind. A child is not able to immediately and irresistibly believe in the truth of the proposition "that two right lines can cut one another in one point only" until the development of her faculties. This belief, although self-evident, cannot be accepted by a human being whose mind has not been appropriated cultivated.

Secondly, still in the *Active Powers*, Reid argues the same about our moral beliefs. The judgments assumed as first principles depend greatly on the maturity of conscience, on its development to the *years of understanding and reflection*:

> In like manner, our moral judgment, or conscience, *grows to maturity* from an imperceptible seed, planted by our Creator. When we are capable of contemplating the actions of other men, or of reflecting upon our own calmly and dispassionately, we begin to perceive in them the qualities of honest and dishonest, of honourable and base, of right and wrong, and to feel the sentiments of moral approbation and disapprobation (*EAP*, V, I, p. 277, emphasis added).

As I have discussed above, our moral judgments depend greatly on the maturity of conscience, on its development to the *years of understanding and reflection*. A child is not able to immediately and irresistibly accept the truth of the proposition "There are some things in human conduct, that merit approbation and praise; others that merit blame and punishment" until the maturity of her conscience.

Thirdly, according to Reid, even our aesthetical knowledge depends on the development of the power of taste. Reid's psychology of taste, presented in the *Intellectual Powers*, asserts the existence of two levels of aesthetic judgments: on the one hand, mind has an *acquired taste*–acquired by habits and fashion, on the other hand, it has a *natural* taste. Our natural taste is formed by both *instinctive judgments* and *rational judgments*: "our determinations with regard to the beauty of objects, may, I think, be distinguished into two kinds; the first we may call *instinctive*, the other *rational*" (*EIP*, VIII, IV, p. 596, emphasis added). Reid notes that a painter or sculptor is able to perceive more beauty in a picture or sculpture than a common person and that a person who knows in more details the structure, the mutual relations and the laws which govern the nature, is more capable of perceiving the beauty of the objects of nature than the ignorant (*EIP*, VIII, IV, p. 595). The painter and that instructed person rationally judge about the existence of beauty in arts and in the nature, the ignorant instead, instinctively judges about it. In other words, people endowed with a mature mind are able to rationally judge in aesthetical matters. Rational judgments are those

judgments yielded in the occasions when the mind is able to identify the aesthetical quality or excellence which makes the object beauty. And more important to this discussion: Reid is clear in claiming that the first principles of aesthetics are the rational judgments of taste. Truth and falsehood can be only thought in the field of the rational judgments of taste, according to him:

> But that taste which we may call rational, is that part of our constitution by which we are made to receive pleasure from the contemplation of what we conceive to be excellent in its kind, the pleasure being annexed to this judgment, and regulated by it. This taste may be true or false, according as it is founded on a true or false judgment. And if it may be true or false, it must have *first principles* (*EIP*, VI, VI, p. 494, emphasis added).

Such as the power of recognizing the truth of a self-evident axiom in mathematics and the power of judging about the right and wrong in actions, Reid holds that the power of judging the beauty depends greatly on its development. The first principles of aesthetics should be the judgments of a mature taste, that is, of a developed mind, for instance, the minds of a painter or an instructed person.

These passages give me the textual ground to think there is another distinction between principles of contingent and necessary truth. The distinction is not only based upon the idea that they are principles of mutable / immutable knowledge, of probable / necessary knowledge. They are also distinct in that the principles of necessary truths are due to the original constitution of a *mature mind*. They depend on the development of the powers of mind until its maturity. Our grammatical, logical, mathematical, aesthetical, moral and metaphysical knowledge are based upon mature common sense, the original constitution of a mind whose powers were developed by instruction, exercise and good habits.

I think it is worth to open a parenthesis and finish this section by considering the name of the first principles of knowledge on Reid's view. In the *Intellectual Powers*, Reid calls attention to the term *axiom* and how it may be employed to signify not only the principles of necessary truth, but also the principles of contingent truths. The evidence of the powers of mind–consciousness, memory, perception, etc.–and the evidence of the axioms are not of the same sort, once the former relates to contingent and the latter relates to necessary truths:

> I would observe, that the word *axiom* is taken by Philosophers in such a sense, as that the existence of the objects of sense cannot, with

> property, be called an axiom. They give the name of axiom only to self-evident truths that are necessary, and are not limited to time and place, but true at all times, and in all places. The truths attested by our senses are not of this kind; they are contingent, and limited to time and place (*EIP*, II, XX, p. 231).

For this reason, the term *axiom* is generally employed to signify propositions such as, for instance, "one is the half of two". Reid claims about it: "we perceive, by attending to the proposition itself, that it cannot be true; and therefore it is called an eternal, necessary and immutable truth" (*EIP*, II, XX, p. 231). The evidence of the power of perception and the evidence of the axioms are not of the same sort. The power of perception yields beliefs about real existence, so that perception is a source of contingent truths, not necessary ones. However, Reid acknowledges that the term *axiom* is pertinent, in some cases, to signify contingent truths:

> If the word axiom be put to signify every truth which is known immediately, without being deduced from any antecedent truth, then the existence of the objects of sense may be called an axiom. For my senses give me as immediate conviction of what they testify, as my understanding gives of what is commonly called an axiom (*EIP*, II, XX, p. 231).

The existence of the object of the external world is an axiom in the sense that perception of those objects makes us to immediately believe in the reality of those objects. The existence of the operations of mind and the existence of the past indicated by memory are axioms in the same sense: both powers lead the mind immediately to the belief about those existences.

3.4) The means to identify the first principles of knowledge

This section is dedicated to Reid's observations on the means human beings dispose to identify the first principles of philosophy of mind, morals and politics.

3.4.1) How to recognize a first principle of speculative knowledge?

On Reid's view, the source of the endless debates in philosophy is mainly due to the difficulty of laying down what the first principles upon which the investigation should be based are. Reid illustrates the gravity of this problem by the following example:

> Suppose that, from a thing having begun to exist, one man infers that it must have had a cause; another man does not admit the inference. Here it is evident, that the first takes it for a self-evident principle, that every thing which begins to exist must have a cause. The other does not allow this to be self-evident (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 458).

The history of philosophy reveals some examples of disagreement among authors on first principles. For instance, what a philosopher assumes as a self-evident principle of knowledge, another strives to prove true by reasoning, while a third one denies it is actually a true principle:

> Thus, before the time of Descartes, it was taken for a first principle, that there is a sun and a moon, an earth and sea, which really exist, whether we think of them or not. Descartes thought that the existence of those things ought to be proved by argument; and in this he has been followed by Malebranche, Arnauld, and Locke. They have all labored to prove, by very weak reasoning, the existence of external objects of sense; and Berkeley and Hume, sensible of the weakness of their arguments, have been led to deny their existence altogether (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 453-4).

The ancients have proposed too many first principles, so that "perhaps the abuse of them in that ancient system may have brought them into discredit in modern times" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 454). Otherwise, Descartes has only chosen one principle, "[…] expressed in one word, *cogito*, a sufficient foundation for his whole system, and asked no more" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 454). Reid acknowledges that not all authors are willing to agree with regard to the first principles he points out: "it is likewise a question of some moment, whether the differences among men about first principles can be brought to any issue" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 454)? Reid points out the means which are available to human beings to identify what the true first principles of knowledge are.

The necessity of a certain disposition of mind

Firstly, according to Reid, philosophers should maintain certain disposition of mind in the search for the first principles of knowledge: "nature hath not left us destitute of means whereby the *candid* and *honest* part of mankind may be brought to unanimity when they happen to differ about first principles" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 459, emphasis added). In some sense, to agree about the first principles is a matter of *disposition of mind*. Reid notes that when there is no agreement about them:

> A man of *candour* and *humility* will, in such a case, very naturally suspect his own judgment, so far as to be desirous to enter into a serious examination, even of what he has long held as a first principle. He will think it not impossible, that although his heart be upright, his judgment may have been perverted, by education, by authority, by party zeal, or by some other of the common causes of error, from the influence of which neither parts nor integrity exempt the human understanding (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 460, emphasis added).

Nature has offered some ways to recognize the first principles of common sense, however, these ways are only available for those who have that disposition of mind: "in such a state of mind, so amiable, and so becoming every good man, has Nature left him destitute of any rational means by which he may be enabled, either to correct his judgment if it be wrong, or to confirm it if it be right" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 460). *Candor* and *humility* are indispensable if we intend to recognize the first principles and agree about them. This state of mind also depends on not being influenced by any prejudice. Indeed, Reid claims about how noxious a prejudice may be when we are engaged in the task of discovering the first principles:

> To judge of first principles, requires *no more than a sound mind free from prejudice, and a distinct conception of the question*. The learned and the unlearned, the Philosopher and the day-labourer, are upon a level, and will pass the same judgment, when they are not misled by some bias, or taught to renounce their understanding from some mistaken religious principle (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 461, emphasis added).

The philosopher and the common person, the learned and the unlearned, all of us are apt to judge about a first principle when we are not influenced by any prejudice. For instance, a prejudice as the ideal hypothesis has prevented modern philosophers of accepting the existence of the objects of external world as a first principle of common sense[55].

The marks of the first principles of common sense

[55] Reid announces the danger of this prejudice in the first pages of the *Inquiry*: "the hypothesis I mean is, That nothing is perceived but what is in the mind which perceives it: That we do not really perceive things that are external, but only certain images and pictures of them imprinted upon the mind, which are called *impressions* and *ideas*" (*IHM*, *Dedication*, p. 04). And: "so that, upon this hypothesis, the whole universe about me, bodies and spirits, sun, moon, stars, and earth, friends and relations, all things without exception, which I imagined to have a permanent existence, whether I thought of them or not, vanish at once" (*IHM*, *Dedication*, p. 04-5).

Secondly, philosophers should be attempt to the marks of our first principles in order to recognize them. On this topic, Reid puts the following question: “is there no mark or criterion, whereby first principles that are truly such, may be distinguished from those that assume the character without a just title” (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 454)? The first principles of common sense are characterized by being immediate and irresistible (1), by their impossibility of being proven by reasoning (2), by being universally accepted among human beings (3), by the absurdity of the opinions which oppose them (4), by appearing before experience and reasoning (5) and by being necessary to our preservation (6). Subsequently, I present those distinctive marks in more details:

1) *Immediate and irresistible conviction*: one of the marks which characterize beliefs assumed as first principles of common sense is their immediacy and irresistibility. On the one hand, those beliefs are immediate by virtue of not being result of reasoning and, on the other hand, they are irresistible because human beings cannot deny assent to them. For instance: great part of humankind assents immediately and irresistibly to the existence of the operations of the mind when they are conscious of them; great part of human beings judges immediately and irresistibly that the objects that are perceived by the external senses are real. The immediacy and irresistibility of common sense beliefs are such that, just as Reid claims, we are under the necessity of assenting to them. Philosophical reasonings could not be sufficient to prove the truth of those immediate and irresistible beliefs, nevertheless, they are not sufficient to destroy their immediacy and irresistibility:

> And for first principles no other reason can be given but this, that, by the constitution of our nature, we are *under a necessity of assenting to them*. Such principles are part of our constitution, no less than the power of thinking: reason can neither make nor destroy them; nor can it do any thing without them: it is like telescope, which may help a man to see farther, who hath eyes; but without eyes, a telescope shews nothing at all (*IHM*, V, VII, p. 71, emphasis added).

For instance, in the context of the discussion on the first principle of consciousness, Reid notes:

> But irresistible conviction he has of the reality of those operations is not the effect of reasoning; it is immediate and intuitive. The existence therefore of those passions and operations of our minds, of which we are conscious, is a first principle, which Nature requires us to believe upon her authority (EIP, VI, V, p. 470).

In a similar way, he observes, about the marks of the perceptual beliefs:

> I observed, […], That this conviction is not only irresistible, but it is immediate; that is, it is not by a train of reasoning and argumentation that we come to be convinced of the existence of what we perceive; we ask no argument for the existence of the object, but that we perceive it; perception commands our belief upon its own authority, and disdains to rest its authority upon any reasoning whatsoever (*EIP*, II, V, p. 99).

2) *A first principle of common sense cannot be proven*: the impossibility of being proven is another mark of a first principle. The first principles from which the reasonings should be extracted cannot be proven by the very reasonings, be demonstrative (reasonings about necessary truths) or probable (reasonings about contingent truths):

> It is a common observation, that it is unreasonable to require demonstration for things which do not admit of it. It is no less unreasonable to require reasoning of any kind for things which are known without reasoning. All reasoning must be grounded upon truths which are known without reasoning. In every branch of real knowledge there must be first principles whose truth is known intuitively, without reasoning, either probable or demonstrative. They are not grounded on reasoning, but all reasoning is grounded on them (*EIP*, VII, III, p. 556).

Reid observes for instance, in the context of the discussion on the first principle about consciousness: "if I am asked to *prove* that I cannot be deceived by consciousness; to *prove* that it is not a fallacious sense; I can find *no proof*. I cannot find any antecedent truth from which it is deduced, or upon which its evidence depends" (EIP, VI, V, p. 470, emphasis added). In the same way, when discussing the first principle about memory, he notes: "this has one of the surest marks of a first principle; for no man ever pretend to *prove* it, and yet no man in his wits call it in question" (EIP, VI, V, p. 474, emphasis added).

3) *The first principles of common sense are universal among human beings*: the fact that the judgments and beliefs are accepted by the greatest part of humankind endowed with common sense and free from prejudices is a mark of a first principle of knowledge: "[…] I conceive, that the consent of ages and nations, of the learned and unlearned, ought to have great authority with regard to first principles, where every man is a competent judge" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 464). And also: "when we find a general agreement among men, in principles that concern human life, this must have great

authority with every sober mind that loves truth" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 464). Reid observes for instance, in the context of the discussion on the first principle about the existence of the mind:

> And that Nature has dictates the same *to all men*, appears from the structure of all languages: For in all languages men have expressed thinking, reasoning, willing, loving, hating, by personal verbs, which from their nature requires a person who thinks, reasons, wills, loves, or hates (EIP, VI, V, p. 473, emphasis added).

4) *To deny a first principle of common sense is absurd*: nature has endowed human beings with a particular emotion which may help them to identify the opinions which oppose their common sense:

> […] we may observe, that opinions which contradict first principles are distinguished from other errors by this; that they are not only false, but absurd: And, to discountenance absurdity, Nature hath given us a particular emotion, to wit, that of ridicule, which seems intended for this very purpose of putting out of countenance what is absurd, either in opinion or practice (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 462).

On Reid's view, the emotion raised by something that is ridicule is an effective way to avoid assuming false first principles in philosophical investigation. He acknowledges that there are some obstacle which may prevent the appearance of this emotion, for instance, the novelty of an opinion, the gravity and solemnity according to which it may be presented and even when an opinion has been kept for a long period of time. Except in those cases, however, we are not able to maintain a ridicule opinion for a considerable time without feeling how ridiculous it is. The very constitution of mind keeps us away from false first principles, approaching us to the true ones: "thus I conceive, that first principles, which are really the dictates of common sense, and *directly opposed to absurdities* in opinion, will always, from the constitution of human nature, support themselves, and gain rather than lose ground among mankind" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 463, emphasis added).

In the context of the discussion on the first principle about consciousness, for instance, Reid observes: "if any man could be found so frantic as to deny that he thinks, while he is conscious of it; I may wonder, I may laugh, or I may pity him, but I cannot reason the matter with him" (EIP, VI, V, p. 470). In a similar way, when he discusses the first principle about memory, Reid presents a singular example: a lawyer who pretends to defend her client by means of an objection about the reliability of the power

of remembering of the witness. Once no one has been able to prove that memory is not fallacious, her client should be cleared of the crime. It is characteristic of a first principle that its denial is an absurd, such as in the case of the lawyer who intends to deny the reliability of the power of remembering:

> I believe we may take it for granted, that this argument from learned counsel would have no other effect upon the judge or jury, than to convince them that he was disordered in his judgment. […]. And for what reason? For no other reason, surely, but because it is absurd (EIP, VI, V, p. 475).

5) *The first principles are previous to experience and reasoning*: those judgments and beliefs assumed as first principles have the mark of appearing in mind before the experience and the development of the capacity of reasoning: "[…] opinions that appear so early in the minds of men, that they cannot be the effect of education, or of false reasoning, have a good claim to be considered as first principle" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 467).

In the context of the discussion on the ninth principle of contingent truths, for instance, Reid observes that those beliefs–we yield beliefs about the internal dispositions of mind by means of the observation of some external signs, such as, for instance, countenance, gestures and the tone of voice–cannot be derived from experience:

> The only question is, whether we understand the signification of those signs, by the constitution of our nature, […], or whether we gradually learn the signification of such signs from experience, as we learn that smoke is a sign of fire, or that the freezing of water is a sign of cold? I take the first to be the truth (EIP, VI, V, p. 484).

Children are born knowing those signs: an angry tone of voice is able to frighten them, as well as a sullen face: "who has not observed, that children, very early, are able to distinguish what is said to them in jest from what is said in earnest, by the tone of the voice, and the features of the face? They judge by this natural signs, even when they seem to contradict the artificial" (EIP, VI, V, p. 485). Moreover: "when we see the sign, and see the thing signified always conjoined with it, experience may be the instructor, and teach us how that sign is to be interpreted. But how shall experience instruct us when we see the sign only, when the thing signified is invisible" (EIP, VI, V, p. 485)? In that case, the signified thing is the thought and passions of someone's mind and, for this reason, they are invisible: "[...] their connection with any sensible sign cannot be

first discovered by experience; there must be some earlier source of this knowledge" (EIP, VI, V, p. 486). And: "the power of natural signs, to signify the sentiments and passions of the mind, is seen in the signs of dumb persons, who can make themselves to be understood in a considerable degree, even by those who are wholly unexperienced in that language" (EIP, VI, V, p. 486). Reid concludes:

> For these reasons, I conceive, it must be granted, not only that there is a connection established by Nature between certain signs in the countenance, voice, and gesture, and the thoughts and passions of the mind; but also, that, by our constitution, we understand the meaning of those signs, and from the sign conclude the existence of the thing signified (EIP, VI, V, p. 487).

A first principle cannot be a result of reasoning as well. In the context of the discussion on the eighth principle of contingent truths, about the existence of life and intelligence in the people with whom we talk, for instance, Reid observes: "as soon as children are capable of asking a question, or of answering a question, as soon as they shew the signs of love, of resentment, or of any other affection, they must be convinced, that those with whom they have this intercourse are intelligent beings" (EIP, VI, V, p. 482). It is clear that a child is able to recognize life and intelligence in those that are around her before she is able to reason:

> It can by signs ask and refuse, threaten and supplicate. It clings to its nurse in danger, enters into her grief and joy, is happy in her soothing and caresses, and unhappy in her displeasure: That these things cannot be without a conviction in the child that the nurse is an intelligent being, I think must be granted (EIP, VI, V, p. 482).

The very power of reasoning could not be developed without the belief in the existence of life and intelligence in those with whom we deal:

> The knowledge of the last is absolutely necessary to our receiving of any improvement by means of instruction and example; and, without these means of improvement, there is no ground to think that we should ever be able to acquire the use of our reasoning power. This knowledge, therefore, must be antecedent of reasoning, and therefore must be a first principle (EIP, VI, V, p. 484).

6) *The first principles are necessary for our preservation*: finally, it is a mark of first principles of common sense that it is necessary for humankind preservation:

> […] when an opinion is *so necessary in the conduct of life*, that without the belief of it, a man must be led into a thousand absurdities in practice, such an opinion, when we can give no other reason for it,

> may safely be taken for a first principle" (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 467, emphasis added).

In Essay I, Reid observes about a person with a mature mind and who intends to investigate the mental phenomena:

> He must have formed various opinions and principles by which he conducts himself in the affairs of life. Of those principles, some are common to all men, being evident in themselves, and *so necessary in the conduct of life*, that a man cannot live and act according to the rules of common prudence without them (*EIP*, I, II, p. 39, emphasis added).

In the context of the discussion on the tenth principle of contingent truths, about the probability of certain actions in certain circumstances, he also observes:

> Before we are capable of reasoning about testimony or authority, there are many things which it concerns us to know, for which we can have no other evidence. The wised Author of nature hath planted in the human mind a propensity to rely upon this evidence before we can give a reason for doing so. This, indeed, puts our judgment almost entirely in the power of those who are about us, in the first period of life; but *this is necessary both to our preservation and to our improvement* (EIP, VI, V, p. 487, emphasis added).

To sum up, as Reid states, philosophers should maintain a candid and humble mental disposition in order to recognize what the true first principles of knowledge are. A mind free of prejudices is a necessary condition to make us able to perform this task. Moreover, they present some marks by means of which we are able to identify them. The first principles of common sense, the first principles of many branches of knowledge are the immediate and irresistible beliefs, those beliefs which appear before experience and reasoning and are universally accepted among us as true beliefs. Any opinion that intends to oppose them is seen as absurd, we feel they are ridiculous. Although many philosophers have tried to prove their truth by reasoning, the first principles of common sense are characterized as not being susceptible of proof.

3.4.2) How to recognize a first principle of morals?

Reid deals with the problem of how to recognize the true first principles of morals, once considered the huge diversity of opinions in moral matters. On the one hand, it is necessary a certain maturity and disposition of mind, on the other hand, the

first principles of a system of morals present some marks by means of which we can identify them.

The necessity of a certain maturity and disposition of mind

Reid observes the fact that human beings diverge in their judgments about what is right and wrong, virtuous and vicious, what is a moral obligation and what is not. He explains these disagreements by two arguments. Firstly, not all human beings are endowed with a mature conscience which makes them able to recognize the self-evident principles of morals. Secondly, Reid argues that beyond the maturity of conscience, the appeal to conscience in moral matters should be done in an appropriate moment. Conscience should be consulted in a moment of serenity of mind, when we are able to keep our impartiality:

> […] he that will judge of the first principles of morals, must consult his conscience, or moral faculty, when he is *calm* and *dispassionate*, *unbiased by interest*, *affection*, or *fashion*.
> As we rely upon the clear and distinct testimony of our eyes, concerning the colours and figures of the bodies about us, we have the same reason to rely with security upon the clear and unbiased testimony of our conscience, with regard to what we ought and ought not to do. In many cases, moral worth and demerit are discerned no less clearly by the last of those natural faculties, than figure and colour by the first (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 179, emphasis added).

In order to find a true first principle, it is necessary some impartiality and disinterest when observing the mind and the judgments due to conscience. The first principles should be considered in the *correct perspective*, in speculative and moral matters:

> It may be observed, That there are truths, both speculative and moral, which a man left to himself would never discover; yet, when they are fairly before him, he owns and adopts them, not barely upon the authority of his teacher, but upon their own intrinsic evidence, and perhaps wonders that he could be so blind as not to see them before (*EAP*, III, III, VIII, p. 188-9).

Such as in the discussion on speculative matters, in which the mind is more inclined to truth than falsehood, our mind is naturally more inclined to the true principles than the false ones:

> Truth has an affinity with the human understanding, which error hath not. And right principles of conduct have an affinity with a candid mind, which wrong principles have not. When they are set before it in

> a just light, a well disposed mind recognizes this affinity, feels their authority, and perceives them to be genuine (*EAP*, III, III, VIII, p. 189).

Although Reid does not enunciate it as a first principle of morals, he seems to consider it as a foundational principle. According to him, it is even self-evident that human beings should judge in that appropriate moment:

> It is not want of judgment, but want of candour and impartiality, that hinders men from discerning what they owe to others […] It is the want of candour that makes men use one measure for the duty they owe to others, and another measure for the duty that others owe to them in like circumstances. *That men ought to judge with candours, as in all other cases, so especially in what concerns their moral conduct, is surely self-evident to every intelligent being* (*EAP*, V, I, p. 274-5, emphasis added).

Therefore, the judgments of conscience about the right and wrong conduct, when considered by a mind, impartial and disinterested, which has reached maturity, are real first principles of common sense.

The marks of a first principle of morals

The first principles of morals are characterized by being immediate and irresistible (1), by their impossibility of being proven by reasoning (2), by being universally accepted among human beings (3) and by the absurdity of the opinions which opposes to them (4). As seen before, there is a sense in which they depend on experience: conscience is an original power of mind, however, conscience needs an appropriate cultivation to be fully exerted, it depends on education and exercise. The first principles of morals are the judgments of a mature conscience. Subsequently, I present those distinctive marks which characterize the beliefs assumed as first principles of knowledge in more details:

1) *Immediate and irresistible conviction*: by conscience, human beings are able to immediately perceive the right and wrong conduct:

> The first principles of morals, are the *immediate dictates* of the moral faculty. They shew us, not what man is, but what he ought to be. Whatever is *immediately perceived* to be just, honest, and honourable, in human conduct, carries moral obligation along with it, and the contrary carries demerit and blame; and, from those moral obligations

> that are *immediately perceived*, all other moral obligations must be deduced by reasoning (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 179, emphasis added).

Moreover, our self-evident moral beliefs are characterized by their irresistibility:

> Every man in his senses believes in his eyes, his ears, and his other senses. He believes his consciousness with respect to his own thoughts and purposes, his memory, with regard to what is past, his understanding, with regard to abstract relations of things, and his taste, with regard to what is elegant and beautiful. And he has *the same necessity of believing* the clear and unbiased dictates of his conscience, with regard to what is honourable and what is base (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 180, emphasis added).

For this reason, none philosophical argument, though well developed, is able to dissuade us of accepting the testimony of conscience when dealing with moral matters. Philosophy cannot destroy the evidence of the original constitution of mind:

> These determinations appear to me to have intuitive evidence, no less than that of mathematical axioms. A man who is come to year of understanding, and who has exercised his faculties in judging of right and wrong, sees their truth as he sees day-light. Metaphysical arguments brought against them have the same effect as when brought against the evidence of sense; they may puzzle and confound, but they do not convince (*EAP*, V, IV, p. 293).

2) *A first principle of morals cannot be proven*: it is impossible to prove by reasoning the truth of a first principle of conscience:

> What I would here observe is, That as first principles differ from deductions of reasoning in the nature of their evidence, and must be tried by a different standard when they are called in question, it is of importance to know to which of these two classes a truth which we would examine belongs. When they are not distinguished, men are apt to demand proof of every thing they think fit to deny: And when we attempt to prove by direct argument, what is really self-evident, the reasoning will always be inconclusive (*EAP*, V, I, p. 270).

The immediate testimony of conscience about the right and wrong does not need proof. It is immediate and irresistible. For this reason, none reasoning could help to clear its truth. Otherwise, a philosopher who tries to prove its truth ends up obscuring its evidence: “for it will either take for granted the thing to be proved, or something not more evident; and so, instead of giving strength to the conclusion, will rather tempt those to doubt of it, who never did so before” (*EAP*, V, I, p. 270). Philosophical reasonings cannot contribute to reveal the truth of a first principle of morals:

> In all rational belief[56], the thing believed is either itself a first principle, or it is by just reasoning deduced from first principles. When men differ about deductions of reasoning, the appeal must be to the rules of reasoning, which have been very unanimously fixed from the days of Aristotle. But when they differ about a first principle, the appeal is made to another tribunal; to that of common sense (*EAP*, V, I, p. 270).

The reasoning of philosophers cannot help us in the apprehension of the truth of a judgment of conscience. There is a set of beliefs that constitutes the foundation of the system of morals and a set of beliefs that constitutes the superstructure of a system of morals. In other words, there are truths immediately attested by conscience and there are truths which derive their evidence from those immediate truths. The evidence of their truths is different: one of them is an immediate result of the original constitution of mind, the other, in turn, is extracted by reasonings from the former.

3) *The first principles of morals are universal among human beings*: Reid notes the diversity of opinions, among human beings, about the extension of the duty, about what we consider as a moral obligation and what we do not consider as a duty. Nevertheless, despite this diversity, he also observes that there is something constant in this notion which allows us to say that it is the *same* to every human being:

> From the varieties of education, of fashion, of prejudices, and of habits, men may differ much in opinion with regard to the extent of his principles, and of what it commands and forbids; but the notion of it, as far as it is carried, is the *same* in all. It is that which gives a man real worth, and is the object of moral approbation (*EAP*, III, III, V, p. 170, emphasis added).

Thus, it is possible to claim that the notion of duty is universal in human nature, as a part of the very original constitution of mind. As Reid states, the observation of the terms employed in common language and the observation of the affections that naturally appears in mind that contemplates an action governed by the duty are able to reveal the universality of that notion:

> The universality of this principle in men that are grown up to years of understanding and reflection, is evident. The words that express it, the names of the virtues which it commands, and of the vices which it forbids, the *ought* and *ought not*, which express its dictates make an essential part of every language. The natural affections of respect to worthy characters, of resentment of injuries, of gratitude for favours, of indignation against the worthless, are part of the human constitution

[56] By *rational belief*, Reid has in sigh not beliefs acquired by reasons, but beliefs which we can maintain legitimately.

> which suppose a right and wrong in conduct. Many transactions that are found necessary in the rudest societies go upon the same supposition. In all testimony, in all promises, and in all contracts, there is necessarily implied a moral obligation on one party, and a trust in the other, grounded upon this obligation (*EAP*, III, III, V, p. 170-1).

People express themselves by means of this notion, people feel certain affections when contemplating an action performed according to duty.

4) *To deny a first principle of common sense is absurd*: as seen before, human beings are endowed with an emotion that helps them to avoid assuming false first principles, the emotion of ridicule. We feel the emotion of ridicule when an opinion which opposes common sense is presented to us. That is what we feel in the face of the opinion that a person could be responsible for an involuntary action. This opinion indeed opposes a common sense principle, "what is in no degree voluntary, can neither deserve moral approbation nor blame". Reid claims about it: "[…] but every man that is accountable must have more or less of it [the power to act]. For, to call a person to account, to approve or disapprove of his conduct, who had no power to do good or ill, is absurd" (*EAP*, I, VII, p. 39).

To sum up, only a mature conscience (developed by education and exercise), consulted when our minds are serene (when we are able to keep our impartiality), is able to identify the true first principles of morals. Moreover, it is important to know the marks by means of which we are able to identify them. The first principles of morals are the immediate and irresistible beliefs, those beliefs which are universally accepted among us as true beliefs about the right and wrong conduct. Any opinion that intends to oppose them is seen as absurd, we feel they are ridiculous. Although many philosophers have tried to prove their truth by reasoning, they are characterized as not being susceptible to proof.

3.4.3) How to recognize a first principle of political knowledge?

I have already discussed, in the chapters and sections above, what is necessary, according to Reid, to identify the first principles in politics, "the knowledge of the temper and disposition, the principles of action and general tenor of conduct that is common to the whole species". First principles of politics, Reid argues, are due to the

sagacity and experience of the political scientist who lives among human beings united into a political society. In order to discover them, a sagacious human being should have "occasion to deal in interesting matters, with a great variety of persons of different age, sex, rank and profession, learns to judge what may be expected from men in given circumstances; and how they may be most effectually induced to act the part which he desires" (*EAP*, III, I, I, p. 75). In other words, it is necessary to live among human beings in a civil society. First principles of politics are common empirical observations on how human beings generally act and for that reason the experience of living among them is an essential element of the task of discovering the principles of political knowledge. Moreover, a political scientist should go beyond these social experiences: she should "[…] enter into a detail of the various principles which influence the actions of men, to give them distinct names, to define them, and to ascertain their different provinces, is the business of a philosopher, and not of a man of the world" (*EAP*, III, I, I, p. 75-6). In other words, it is necessary to philosophically investigate the mental phenomena which explain human conduct. It is necessary to know the principles of action, to know what generally govern human conduct.

Reid significantly shows that the first principles of politics do not concern to all human beings. They do not concern to every human being who lives in a political society. In the *Lectures on Politics*, Reid argues, on the one hand, that the first principles of politics concern to adult human beings endowed with a developed mind and, on the other hand, that they do not concern perfectly vicious or perfectly virtuous human beings.

The first principles and, consequently, the very science of politics, presupposes human beings endowed with a certain degree of understanding, in particular, that degree of understanding found in human beings who reach the maturity with regard to the powers of their minds. According to Reid, the science of politics does not include the general conduct of children or of adults affected by some disorder in their minds. Children, as Reid understands them, are not subject to political government, once they are governed by their parents and preceptors, before they reach the age of being their own guides. Similarly, those adults who by virtue of some deficiency have not fully developed their intellectual capacities are not included in the reasonings of the political scientist. Like children, those are under the care of other adults, so that they cannot be politically governed: "thus we see that when we reason in Politicks about the Actions of

Men, we do not include Children or Idiots in the Number on account of their defect of Understanding" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 33).

Moreover, the first principles and, consequently, the very science of politics concern the conduct of human beings that, on the one hand, are not totally corrupted nor, on the other hand, are completely virtuous. In order to discuss this topic, Reid presents a classification of human beings according to their predominant character from the moral point of view. Reid claims on the first sort:

> There are some individuals of Mankind so very profligate and abandoned as to break through all the restraints which either their own interest or that of their families and friends or a regard to reputation lay upon them. There can be no Reasoning about the Actions of such profligates, nor any dependence upon them that they will act by the Rules of common prudence & decency. It is so to be hoped that those of this character are so few in comparison, that they may be altogether overlooked in political Reasoning (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 33).

There is no political society formed by individuals of this sort, that is, destituted of any inclination to virtue and completely disposed to vice. On the second sort of individuals: "[…] it is to be hoped that in all great bodies of Men there are to be found some Persons of such perfect Virtue and Integrity that they have no need of the restraints of human laws and government" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 33). Like the number of individuals completely destituted of virtue, the number of these perfectly virtuous individuals is small. Actually, "if any Society of Men were so happy as to be made up of persons of this Character, it might be without Laws and Government, or all kinds of Government would be alike & have the same Effect" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 33). The science of politics does not concern the perfectly vicious or virtuous individuals. Indeed, it deals with human beings who are between those two moral extremes: "there remains a third Class which comprehends the great bulk of Mankind and of every Political Society. And it is to them onely that the Maxims of Politicks can properly be applied, because upon them and their Conduct all political Events must depend" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 33). The science of politics is fundamentally developed upon first principles on the individuals that make up the majority of political societies, about human beings who are neither completely vicious nor perfectly virtuous: "they are neither so abandoned as the first class, nor so much to be trusted as the second, they fill up all the interval between the two, and are such as we may reasonably expect men to be, of whose characters we have no particular knowledge" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 34). Reid concludes: "and you will easily perceive that the Axioms or Principles I

have mentioned are applicable to persons of such a middle Character which will always be found to make up the great body of every political Society" (*Lectures on Politics*, 2015, p. 34).

Conclusion

I have tried to show my understanding of what the first principles of knowledge are in Reid's philosophy. In the first section, I presented Reid's first principles of speculative, moral and political knowledge. In the second section, I have discussed my understanding of the first principles as general propositions which express particular beliefs of common sense or of knowledge of mankind. In the third section, I have also discussed Reid's distinction between contingent and necessary truths, in order to show why the principles of necessary truths may be understood as results of a mature mind, of a mind whose powers have developed by exercise and instruction. In the last section, I have presented Reid's view on how to identify the first principles of philosophy of mind, morals and politics.

CHAPTER 4) REID ON THE TRUTH OF THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF COMMON SENSE

I dedicate the fourth chapter of this thesis to discuss common sense in particular. I have in sight a specific problem of Reid's theory of the first principles of common sense, namely, the problem of understanding how he argues in favor of the truth of those first principles. In the first section, I try to formulate more clearly what is (are) the problem (problems) to which I refer. I present some of the commentators' solutions to it, trying to reveal why some of them fail to solve the proposed problem. In the second section, I present my own solution, explaining why I believe Reid has a strong argument (or arguments) in favor of the truth of the first principles of common sense. In the third section, I discuss the moderate character of Reid's foundationalism–a moderated commitment that is based upon his view on the fallibility of the powers of mind and his confessed incapacity of replying to the radical sort of skepticism.

4.1) Understanding the problem of Reid's defense of the first principles of common sense

4.1.1) Reid against skepticism

Behind the purpose of investigating the human mind, Reid is motivated by the project of fighting the skeptical positions of some authors of the 17th / 18th centuries. This motivation is already announced in the *Dedication* of the *Inquiry*, in a passage in which Reid calls attention to what, on his view, are the noxious consequences implied by a skeptical position:

> [...] I am persuaded, that absolute scepticism is not more destructive of the faith of a Christian, than of the science of a philosopher, and of the prudence of a man of common understanding. I am persuaded, that the unjust *live by faith* as well as the *just*; that, if all belief could be laid aside, piety, patriotism, friendship, parental affection, and private virtue, would appear as ridiculous as knight-errantry; and that the pursuits of pleasure, of ambition, and of avarice, must be grounded upon belief, as well as those that are honourable and virtuous (*IHM*, *Dedication*, p. 04).

To properly answer skepticism is to preserve the possibilities of knowledge, morals and even religion, as Reid states.

A quick consideration of the history of philosophy in the 17th / 18th centuries is enough to understand the disturbing state of philosophy of mind, mainly due to the skeptical conclusions proposed by some authors: "THAT our philosophy concerning mind and its faculties, is but in a very low state, may be reasonably conjectured, even by those who never have narrowly examined it" (*IHM*, I, III, p. 16). Later, in the *Intellecutal Powers*, Reid reasserts his critique view about philosophy of mind condition: "[…] there is no branch of knowledge in which the ingenious and speculative have fallen into so great errors, and even absurdities" (*EIP*, *Preface*, p. 12-3). Reid considers Descartes' philosophy, the author who has doubted the existence of the objects of external world and his own existence in investigating human mind. From the existence of his thought, he would supposedly have discovered the existence of a thinking substance to which his thoughts refer. Despite all his efforts, Descartes has left open some important questions at the end of his investigation:

> But supposing it proved, that my thought and my consciousness must have a subject, and consequently that I exist, how do I know that all that train and succession of thoughts which I remember, belong to one subject, and that the I of this moment, is the very person I of yesterday, and of time past (*IHM*, I, III. p. 17)?

Locke had attempted to solve the problem of personal identity, however, his investigation did not achieve success: "so that Locke's principle must be, that identity consists in remembrance; and consequently a man must lose his personal identity with regard to every thing he forgets" (*IHM*, I, III. p. 17). Malebranche, as much as Descartes and Locke, has attempted to prove the existence of objects of the external world, also without success:

> Descartes, Malebranche, and Locke, have all employed their genius and skill, to prove the existence of the material world; and with very bad success. [...] They apply to philosohy to furnish them with resons for the belief of those things which all mankind have believed, without being able to give any reason for it. And surely one would expected, that, in matters of such importance, the proof would not be difficult: but it is the most difficult thing in the world (*IHM*, I, III. p. 17-8).

Those authors had raised questions that they could not satisfactorily answer, despite all their efforts. According to Reid, nevertheless, philosophy of mind has achieved its most obscure condition with Berkeley's and Hume's systems. Despite Reid's admiration for those authors, he acknowledges that their systems have brought many absurd consequences to the philosophical investigation of mind:

> The first was no friend to scepticism, but had that warm concern for religious and moral principles which became his order: yet the result of his inquiry was, a serious conviction, that there is no such thing as a material world; nothing in nature but spirits and ideas; and that the belief of material substances, and of abstract ideas, are the chief causes of all our errors in philosophy, and of all infidelity and heresy in religion (*IHM*, I, V. p. 19).

About the author of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, in turn:

> The second proceeds upon the same principles, but carries them to their full length; and as the Bishop undid the whole material world, this author, upon the same grounds, undoes the world of spirits, and leaves nothing in nature but ideas and impressions, without any subject on which they may be impressed (*IHM*, I, V. p. 20).

I try to clarify what sort of skepticism Reid has in mind when he intends to defend the first principles of common sense. I begin by presenting Jaffro's (2006) brief but very enlightening observation about the prominence of the skeptical position at the end of the 17th century and beginning of the 18th century–the position which Reid intends to combat:

> Pour comprendre plus sérieusement la situation propre à la pensée britannique à l'issue du XVIIe siècle, il faut déterminer la répresentation que cette pensée se fait de ce qui est dominant dans la philosophie et plus généralement dans la vie intellectuelle. Cette représentation est d'abord le constat d'une catastrophe : le scepticisme domine la scène intellectuelle et pourrait ruiner les principes les mieux établis de la morale, de la religion, de la société, de la science et de la philosophie. Quel est l'ouvrage qui dresse le bilan encyclopédique de la philosophie moderne ? C'est le *Dictionnaire* de Bayle. Quelle la présentation donne-t-du savoir le plus élaboré ? Celle d'un triomphe du scepticisme sur tous les fornts : qu's'agisse de la croyance religieuse, de la perception sensible ou de la conduite de la vie, les intellectuels diffusent des conceptions pernicieuses, selon lesquelles la vie ordinaire est une existence sous le régime, non seulement du préjugé, mais de l'illusion (JAFFRO, 2006, p. 20).

Jaffro show us that philosophy goes through a period of a *skeptical crisis* in that time. In my view, Jaffro's description is very consistent with what Reid states in the *Dedication* of the *Inquiry* I have quoted above. Skepticism places science, religion and morals at risk. According to how Reid understands it, skepticism brings the most noxious consequences to philosophy and common life: it prevents us of keeping any belief, whatever it is. Jaffro also notes: "bref, la situation intellectuelle n'est pas caractérisée seulement par la diffusion des idées sceptiques, mais surtout par une profonde

contamination de la philosophie la mieux intentionnée" (JAFFRO, 2006, p. 21). In other words, even those authors who do not have skeptical intentions–like Locke and Berkeley on Reid's view–have not been able to escape the skeptical conclusions. Reid himself is clear about this point:

> Descartes no sooner began to dig in this mine, than scepticism was ready to break in upon him. He did what he could to shut it out. Malebranche and Locke, who dug deeper, found the difficulty of keeping out this enemy still to increase; but they labored honestly in the design. Then Berkeley, who carried on the work, despairing of securing all, bethought himself of an expedient: By giving up the material world, which he thought might be spared without loss, and even with advantage, he hoped by an impregnable partition to secure the world of spirits. But, alas! The *Treatise of human nature* wantonly sapped the foundation of this partition, and drowned all in one universal deluge (*IHM*, I, VII. p. 23).

The reading of Hume's *Treatise*–the most eminent skeptic on Reid's view–and the skeptical position resulting from the Humian investigation has decisively determined the direction of Reid's philosophy[57]. As Reid understands it, the *Treatise* presents a skeptical system which does not allow the establishing of any foundation for common sense beliefs shared by us.

Here I present a brief clarification: Reid combats at least two sorts of skepticism. Firstly, he intends to reply to the *ideal system skepticism*. Such as Reid understands it, the ideal system has a close relation to skepticism:

> These facts, which are undeniable, do indeed give reason to apprehend, that Descartes's system of the human understanding, which I shall beg leave to call "the ideal system", and which with some improvements made by later writers, is now generally received, hath some original defect; that *this skepticism is inlaid in it, and reared along with it*; and therefore, that we must lay it open to the foundation, and examine the materials, before we can expect to raise any solid and useful fabric of knowledge on this subject (*IHM*, I, VII. p. 23, emphasis added).

The ideal system is based upon the hypothesis that ideas are the only immediate objects of the operations of mind[58]. Reid understands that the skeptical conclusions of the ideal

[57] The third chapter of his biography, by Alexander Fraser (1898), is mainly dedicated to the impact Hume's philosophy has caused on Reid's intellectual life and how it has motivated his philosophical investigations (FRASER, 1898, p. 30-42).

[58] This passage summarizes Reid's understanding on the ideal hypothesis: "Philosophers indeed tell me, that the immediate object of my memory and imagination in this case, is not the past sensation, but an idea of it, an image, phantasm, or species of the odour I smelled: that this idea now exists in my mind, or in my sensorium; and the mind contemplating this present idea, finds it a representation of what is past, or

system are necessary consequences of this ideal hypothesis. Hume would have been the first author who took this hypothesis to its final consequences:

> The modern scepticism, I mean that of Mr. Hume, is built upon principles which were very generally maintained by Philosophers, though they did not see that they led to skepticism. Mr. Hume, by tracing, with great acuteness and ingenuity, the consequences of principles commonly received, has shewn that *they overturn all knowledge, and at last overturn themselves*, and leave the mind in perfect suspense (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 461-2, emphasis added).

The *Treatise* presents, as Reid sees it, a skeptical system which does not allow the establishment of any sort of knowledge. Humian system is the most radical skeptical system, so that there is no room for anything else except the existence of the ideas:

> Ideas seem to have something in their nature unfriendly to other existences. They were first introduced into philosophy, in the humble character of images or representatives of things; and in this character they seemed not only to be inoffensive, but to serve admirably well for explaining the operations of the understanding. But since men began to reason clearly and distinctly about them, they have by degrees supplanted their constituents, and undermined the existence of every thing but themselves (*IHM*, II, VI. p. 33-4).

Hume's conclusions are not consequences of any mistake in his reasonings. On the contrary, Hume presents conclusions correctly deduced from the ideal hypothesis. The acceptance of the ideal hypothesis has as consequence the denial of all the knowledge. In this sense, to reply to the skepticism of the ideal system is to attack the foundation of the ideal system, the ideal hypothesis. I ask permission to not consider Reid's critique of the ideal system[59].

I would like to focus on the second sort of skepticism Reid intends to reply: the *skepticism about the epistemic reliability of the faculties of mind*. In short, this is that sort of skepticism which put into question common sense beliefs in virtue of a doubt

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of what may exist; and accordingly calls it memory, or imagination. This is the doctrine of the ideal philosophy" (*IHM*, II, III. p. 28).

[59] In brief, Reid tries to show that the authors of the ideal system have never presented any evidence of the existence of their principles, that is, they have never proven the existence of the ideas. For that reason, the ideal hypothesis would be a simple fiction of the mind of those authors. In the *Inquiry*, Reid claims: "we shall afterwards examine this system of ideas, and endeavour to make it appear, that no solid proof has ever been advanced of the existence of ideas; that they are a mere fiction and hypothesis, contrived to solve the phenomena of the human understanding; that they do not at all answer this end; and that this hypothesis of ideas or images of things in the mind, or in the sensorium, is the parent of those many paradoxes so shocking to common sense, and of that scepticism, which disgrace our philosophy of the mind, and have brought upon it the ridicule and contempt of sensible men" (*IHM*, II, III. p. 28). In the *Intellectual Powers*, Reid discusses in more details why the ideal hypothesis should be eliminated from philosophy. In order to do this, he presents five reflections on the common theory of ideas (*EIP*, II, XIV, p. 171-87).

about the reliability of the faculties of mind to which they are due. For instance, a skeptic of this sort could argue that, if it is not possible to prove the reliability of the powers of senses, we could not be legitimated in assuming our natural beliefs about the external world as true beliefs. Here, I think of that sort of skepticism Descartes has raised about the senses in the end of the first meditation of his *Méditations Métaphysiques* (1641):

> Je supposerai donc qu'il y a, non point un vrai Dieu, qui est la souveraine source de vérité, mais un certain mauvais génie, non moins rusé et trompeur que puissant, qui a employé toute son industrie à me tromper. Je penserai que le ciel, l'air, la terre, les couleurs, les figures, les sons et toutes les choses extériures que nous voyons, ne sont que des illusions et tromperies, dont il se sert pour surprendre, ma crédulité. Je me considérerai moi-même comme n'ayant point de mains, point d'yeux, point de chair, point de sang, comme n'ayant aucun sens, mais croyant faussement avoir toutes ces choses (DESCARTES, 1992, 67-9).

Descartes puts into question the reliability of the senses and the beliefs due to them. Moreover, he has cast doubts even upon the operations of reason and their beliefs. In the light of the argument of a deceiver God, Descartes has indeed claimed:

> Et même, comme je juge quelquefois que les autres se méprennent, même dans les choses qu'ils pensent savoir avec le plus de certitude, il se peut faire qu'il ait voulu que je me trompe toutes les fois que je fais l'addition de deux et de trois, ou que je nombre les côtés d'un carré, ou que je juge de quelque chose encore plus facile, si l'on se peut imaginer rien de plus facile que cela (DESCARTES, 1992, p. 65)

I also appeal to Ralph Cudworth's (1617-1688) to illustrate the sort of skepticism I suppose Reid intends to reply. In *A treatise concerning eternal and immutable morality* (1731), the author considers the opinion that nothing can be proven as *absolutely true*– an opinion that, according to him, has received much support in his time. If we suppose that the powers of mind have been *correctly* created, we would be authorized to claim at most that our beliefs are merely *hypothetically true*:

> For if we cannot otherwise possibly be certain of the truth of any thing, but only *ex hypothesi* that our faculties are rightly made, of which none can have certain assurance but only he that made them, then all created minds whatsoever must of necessity be condemned of eternal *scepsis.* Neither ought they ever to assent to any thing as certainly true, since all their truth and knowledge as such is but relative to their faculties arbitrarily made, that may possibly be false, and their clearest apprehensions nothing but perceptual delusions (CUDWORTH, 1996, p. 137-8).

The skeptical consequences of this opinion are clear:

> Wherefore according to this doctrine, we having no absolute certainty of the first principles of all our knowledge, as that *quod cogitat, est* [whatever thinks, is], *Aequalia addita aequalibus efficient aequalia* [equals added to equals make equals], *Omnis numerus est vel par vel impar* [every number is either even or odd]. We can neither be sure of any mathematical or metaphysical truth, nor of the existence of God, nor of ourselves (CUDWORTH, 1996, p. 138).

In the light of that supposition, a doubt about the reliability of the powers of mind, every single belief becomes doubtful. This view described by Cudworth implies the sort of skepticism Reid seems to have in sight: the truth of our beliefs–be they about the existence of the external world, about the existence of ourselves or about mathematical truths–would not be guarantee if there is no proof of the reliability of the powers to they are due.

I maintain the distinction between two sorts of skepticism in mind in the coming sections. This is important to avoid the mistake of supposing that the reply to the first sort of skepticism, the skepticism of the ideal system, is sufficient to reply to that second sort of skepticism and, consequently, guarantee the truth of the first principles of common sense. This seems to be the consequence of Paul Vernier (1976) interpretation. Indeed, the author argues that Reid justifies the first principles by objecting the ideal hypothesis, that is, by arguing that the skeptics would not have good reasons to doubt those beliefs if their opinions were based upon the supposition that ideas are the immediate objects of mind. According to Vernier's Reid, the skepticism on common sense beliefs would fail in that the principle of the ideal system is false. To reply to the skepticism would be a matter of objecting the principle upon which the ideal system is based:

> Hume's skepticism, which he acknowledges to be the motivating force behind his philosophic efforts, was in his view the most persuasive statement of skepticism. […] But Hume's was impressive because it was premised on principles of philosophy that were almost unquestioned from the time of Descartes, and because he considered Hume's deductions from these principles to be unanswerable. For this reason, he set about to prove that Hume's skeptical premises which he found in the theory of ideas, are mistaken. By this means, he believed he could undermine Humean skepticism (VERNIER, 1976, p.20).

Based upon that distinction between two sorts of skepticism, it is clear that to put into question the ideal hypothesis is not enough to guarantee the truth of the first principles

of common sense: Reid has more to say about how we are legitimate in assuming them as true beliefs. To attack the principle of the ideal system is not an adequate reply to that second sort of skepticism. It is still necessary to reply to that skeptic who doubts the reliability of the powers of mind. Skeptics can also demand for the justification of common sense beliefs. Such as T. J. Sutton (1989) correctly claims: "the sceptic's challenge turns on the notion of justification. Without an adequate justification, the argument runs, we have no right to claim knowledge or even regard our belief as rational. Justification is a concept rooted deep in the skeptical tradition" (1989, p. 162). Despite of the attack to ideal hypothesis, the skeptic may continue to ask: what does justify our common sense beliefs? Why do we have reasons to judge them true beliefs? And from the perspective of a foundationalist theory of epistemic justification: what is the *epistemic property* which makes them true beliefs?

4.1.2) Psychology and epistemology confusion

I have explained why Reid has to defend his first principles if he wants to reply to that sort of skepticism which put into question the reliability of the powers of mind. Now I consider the opinion that Reid supposedly appeals to the psychological characteristics of common sense beliefs, the first principles of common sense, to claim that they are true beliefs. Indeed, the emphasis he gives to the natural aspect of those common sense beliefs may lead us to think that, according to him, natural beliefs would be *epistemically justified* in virtue of their being results of the original constitution of mind. This interpretation could be summarized as follows: common sense beliefs are immediate and irresistible–self-evident–beliefs, we are not able to avoid accepting them as true beliefs and, for this reason, they ought to be true beliefs. According to this line of interpretation, all Reid would have to say in favor of the truth of common sense beliefs is that they are natural and shared by the greatest part of humankind.

I confess that some passages may actually suggest this view. In the *Inquiry*, in one of many passages in which this point is stressed, Reid claims: "and for first principles *no other reason* can be given but this, that, by the constitution of our nature, we are under a necessity of assenting to them" (*IHM*, V, VII, p. 71, emphasis added). We see the same point underlined in the *Intellectual Powers* and in the *Active Powers*. In the former work, Reid claims about the beliefs of the power of perception: "and the constitution of our power of perception *determines us* to hold the existence of what we

distinctly perceive as a first principle, from which other truths may be deduced, but it is deduced from none" (*EIP*, II, V, p. 100, emphasis added). In the latter work, he states about our moral beliefs:

> Every man in his senses believes in his eyes, his ears, and his other senses. He believes his consciousness with respect to his own thoughts and purposes, his memory, with regard to what is past, his understanding, with regard to abstract relations of things, and his taste, with regard to what is elegant and beautiful. And he has *the same necessity of believing* the clear and unbiased dictates of his conscience, with regard to what is honourable and what is base (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 180, emphasis added).

In brief, according to what we read in those passages, it is possible to suppose that Reid claims that we are legitimated in assuming common sense beliefs as true beliefs in that they are natural, in that we could not avoid accepting them in the common affairs of life.

We would be tempted to think that, for Reid, the inevitability of common sense beliefs would be the only significant philosophical response to the skeptic who intends to put common sense beliefs into question. In the *Inquiry*, for instance, he ironically writes about Hume, the author who has not been able to avoid the belief in the existence of other people–the readers of his book, despite of all his skeptical efforts:

> The day-labourer toils at his work, in the belief that he shall receive his wages at night; and if he had not this belief, he would not toil. We may venture to say, that even the author of this skeptical system, wrote it in the belief that it should be read and regarded. I hope he wrote it in the belief also, that it would be useful to mankind: and perhaps it may prove so at last (*IHM*, *Dedication*, p. 04).

In the *Intellectual Powers*, when discussing Hume's skepticism, he criticizes, once again, the author's incapacity of avoiding common sense beliefs in the affairs of common life:

> This, indeed, has always been the fate of the few that have professed scepticism, that, when they have done what they can to discredit their senses, they find themselves, after all, under a necessity of trusting them. Mr. Hume has been so candid as to acknowledge this; and, it is no less true of those who have not shown the same candour: For I never heard that any sceptic runs his head against a post, or stept into a kennel, because he did not believe his eyes (*EIP*, I, II, p. 46).

Could this natural aspect of common sense beliefs be a sufficient reason to accept all of them as true beliefs? Does this argument satisfactorily reply to the skeptic?

It is necessary to open a parenthesis to consider an important aspect of Reid's view on the truth of the first principles of common sense. He does not intend to prove their truth. Reid claims: this is not only impossible but it is also unnecessary. He takes a step further when he argues that the very attempt to prove a first principle could be noxious to his philosophical investigation. As the history of philosophy shows, according to him, the attempts of proving a first principle have always brought negative results to philosophical inquiry. Reid illustrates this dangerous possibility by the example of the many philosophical attempts to prove the existence of the external world:

> Very ingenious men, such as Descartes, Malebranche, Arnauld, Locke, and many others, have lost much labour, by not distinguishing things which require proof, from things which, though they may admit of illustration, yet being self-evident, do not admit of proof. When men attempt to deduce such self-evident principles from others more evident, they always fall into inconclusive reasoning: And the consequence of this has been, that others, such as Berkeley and Hume, finding the arguments brought to prove such first principles to be weak and inconclusive, have been tempted first to doubt of them, and afterwards to deny them (*EIP*, I, II, p. 41).

Here how pernicious this intention may be: one of the roots of the modern skepticism is the very method adopted by many authors–according to Reid, Descartes would have be the first one to do it–of requiring proof of everything. The requirement to prove every principle has led modern authors to adopt a skeptical position, since it is impossible to prove the truth of the first principles. Reid argues, nevertheless, that the skeptical consequences of this requirement are not legitimate:

> [...] I cannot help thinking, that all who have followed Descartes method, of requiring proof by argument of every thing except the existence of their own thoughts, have escaped the abyss of skepticism by the help of weak reasoning and strong faith more than by any other means. And they seem to me to act more consistently who having rejected the first principles on which belief must be grounded, have no belief, than they, who, like the others, rejecting first principles, must yet have a system of belief, without any solid foundation on which it may stand (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 518).

Reid acknowledges that it is necessary to distinguish between the things whose truth depends on proof and the things whose truth does not depend on it. Common sense beliefs, the first principles of common sense, are things of the second sort: they cannot be proven by reasoning, once they are self-evident beliefs, immediately and irresistibly beliefs assumed by the greatest part of humankind as true beliefs.

It should be acknowledged that this argument does not seem to be enough to justify, from an epistemic point of view, common sense beliefs. A skeptic may actually acknowledge everything Reid says in favor of their truth. She may acknowledge that they are immediate and irresistible, that she is not able to deny her assent to them, that they are part of the original constitution of mind and that the greatest part of humankind assumes them as true beliefs. Hume, for instance, is one of the authors who would be prompt to accept all Reid claims. Indeed, he observes how his skepticism can be mitigated by the strength of his nature:

> Shou'd it here be ask'd me, whether I sincerely assent to this [skeptical] argument which I seem to take such pains to inculcate, and whether I be really one of those sceptics, who hold that all is uncertain, and that our judgment is not in *any* thing possest of *any* measures of truth and falsehood; I shou'd reply, that this question is entirely superfluous, and that neither I, nor any other person was ever sincerely and constantly of that opinion. Nature, by an absolute and uncontroulable necessity has determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel; […] (HUME, 2009, p. 123).

In the conclusion of Book I of the *Treatise*, Hume observes, once again, how nature impels him to accept those natural beliefs which reason–philosophy–impels him to deny:

> Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses, which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hour's amusement, I wou'd return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther (HUME, 2009, p. 175).

Hume could agree with Reid on this point: nature leads us to immediately and irresistibly accept our beliefs as true beliefs. However, the skeptic may continue to ask: are they really true beliefs? Are we justified in assuming them as true beliefs?

The simple description of the psychological marks of the common sense beliefs would not be sufficient to guarantee their truth. To claim that certain belief is true as far as it is immediate and irresistibly would not answer the epistemic question of explaining why this belief is true, why we are justified in assuming it as knowledge. To claim that certain belief is immediate and irresistible would not fulfil the skeptical demand for its truth. I appeal to the commentators in order to explain more clearly the problem I have

in mind. Henry Sidgwick (1895), for instance, underlines the necessity of a clear distinction between two aspects of Reid's theory of common sense beliefs: "it is necessary, in any careful estimate of his work, to distinguish the process of *psychological distinction* and analysis through which the fundamental beliefs of Common Sense are ascertained, from the arguments by which their *validity is justified*" (SIDGWICK, 1895, p. 153, emphasis added). Paul Vernier (1976) states the same point:

> As can be immediately recognized, this characterization calls attention to a psychological response to a proposition and does not entail its *objective warrant*. A basic question about Reid's theory of foundations is whether he took self-evidence to be the ground for epistemic warrant of foundational propositions, or whether he considered this to be a characteristic by which such a proposition can be recognized (VERNIER, 1976, p. 15, emphasis added).

William Alston (1985) considers the problem in the light of the perceptual belief case, *I*:

> What can we infer about the nature of reality from our innate cognitive tendencies? Might we not be innately programmed to produce falsehoods, or at least beliefs that are not quite true, however useful may be in practice? Do these considerations add up to a *solid rational support* for principles like *I* (ALSTON, 1985, p. 443, emphasis added)?

Sutton (1989) claims, in turn:

> We still need more than a few references to intuition as an account of why we are justified in our acceptance of common sense beliefs if Reid's appeal to common sense is to be substantiated. Granting that common sense may be the degree of reason particularly appropriate to provide us with beliefs in first principles, and that it functions as a form of intuition giving us subjective conviction about those beliefs, still the question remains 'are the beliefs with which common sense furnishes us true'? If not, then it fails to justify first principles as the foundations of our knowledge (SUTTON, 1989, p.172-3).

Finally, Philip de Bary (2002) considers this problem by proposing the following question: Does Reid satisfactorily connects the *Innateness Claim* and the *Truth Claim* for the first principles?

> Reid clearly takes it that the beliefs which come under first principles thus 'marked' are true beliefs (they are 'first principles of contingent *truths*'); yet the marks (which are in any case suggestive, not conclusive) are marks of what are purely psychological states. Reid may be as correct as you please, descriptively speaking, about the range of beliefs that people instinctively hold true; and he may have arrived, by abstraction, at unerring criteria for identifying these innate beliefs. But, as the sceptic will quickly point out, such psychological

> description is beside the epistemological point. In the absence of some link between what we shall later call 'the Innateness Claim' and 'the Truth Claim' for first principles, the sceptical challenge to their *warrant* will not have been met. So the important question is: how does Reid forge such a link (De BARY, 2002, p. 37)?

Does Reid in fact hold that the psychological description of common sense beliefs is an appropriate epistemic justification for them? My answer is negative: Reid has more to say about them. I disagree with the authors who refuse to see that Reid goes beyond this psychological description of common sense beliefs. I think of, for instance, Yves Michaud's interpretation. In *Reid's attack on the theory of ideas* (1989), Michaud argues that Reid would have exaggeratedly appealed to common sense to criticize the theory of ideas. According to him, it is not enough to claim that the skeptical conclusions resulting from the ideal hypothesis contradict common sense in order to refuse it. Reid himself, claims the author, does not justify common sense. Michaud understands that common sense by itself could not reply to the skeptical doubt resulting from the ideal hypothesis. On his view, the very doubt could be natural. The skeptical doubt could be as natural as our natural beliefs:

> For Hume clearly saw that their irresistible strength [of our natural beliefs] is a remedy to skeptical doubts, but he hastened to underline that the philosophical disposition which brings out skepticism is as natural as natural beliefs are. Our minds follow alternate dispositions which neither refute nor even neutralize each other but simply alternate. The sceptic doubts and the ordinary man believes but neither refutes the other. The case may even be that the former and the latter exist successively in the same person (MICHAUD, 1989, p. 16-7).

According to Michaud, to claim that common sense beliefs are natural could not be understood as a justification for them, since it would only be a reaffirmation of them: "Reid's mistake–but it is the mistake of any common sense philosophy–was to overlook the irresistible sceptical element which lies at the heart of natural beliefs themselves: they are merely natural" (MICHAUD, 1989, p. 31).

I make some observations on Michaud's objection. Firstly, Reid considers another sort of skepticism in his works, contrarily to what the commentator claims. Besides the skepticism of the ideal system, Reid also has in sight the skepticism on the reliability of the faculties of mind. Secondly, the appeal to common sense–to claim that our beliefs are natural, that they are immediate and irresistible–is not the only argument of Reid's critique of the ideal system. Indeed, in the chapter *Reflections on the common theory of ideas*, in the *Intellectual Powers*, he presents five reflections in order to show

why the ideal system fails as a theory for explaining the operations of mind–only one of these five reflections concerns the fact that the conclusions of the ideal system contradict common sense. Thirdly, Michaud does not explain in what sense a skeptical doubt could be natural. It is possible to understand that philosophical reflexion may create some disposition to doubt, nevertheless, it is not clear how the skeptical doubt about the existence of the external objects is similar (with regard to its naturality) to the belief shared by the greatest part of humankind that those objects actually exist. Why is the skeptical doubt natural as common sense beliefs? Is it an original determination of mind, a disposition universally shared by us? The skeptical doubt do not seems to have some important marks of our natural beliefs that are assumed as first principles of knowledge. Finally, contrary to what Michaud suggests, I argue that Reid actually goes beyond the mere psychological description of common sense beliefs.

4.1.3) Three solutions to the problem considered

I consider subsequently three supposed solutions to the problem of Reid's defense of the first principles of common sense. All of them have in common the attempt of showing that Reid actually goes beyond the psychological description of common sense beliefs. I present them and argue why I hold them insufficient to the purpose of showing to what extent common sense beliefs may be assumed as true beliefs according to Reid.

Reid's supposed appeal to God

Some authors have proposed the following solution to the problem of the truth of common sense beliefs: Reid's defense of the first principles would depend on a theistic assumption. More specifically, Reid's theory would be based upon the existence of a non-deceiver God who would guarantee the reliability of the faculties of mind and, consequently, their beliefs. Common sense beliefs are true due to the Creator of human beings who would not have given us fallacious powers. William Hamilton has discussed this possibility in a footnote presented in *The Works of Thomas Reid*. Commenting

Reid's observations on the source of the first principles of common sense[60], Hamilton claims:

> The philosophers who have most loudly appealed to the veracity of God, and the natural conviction of mankind, in refutation of certain obnoxious conclusions, have too often silently contradicted that veracity and those convictions, when opposed to certain favourite opinions. But it is evident that such authority is either good for all, or good for nothing. Our natural consciousness assures us (and the fact of that assurance is admitted by philosophers of all opinions) that we have an immediate knowledge of the very things themselves of an external and extended world; and, on the ground of this knowledge alone, is the belief of mankind founded, that such a world really exists. Reid ought, therefore, either to have given up his doctrine of the mere suggestion of extension, as subjective notions, on the occasion of sensation, or not to appeal to the Divine veracity, and the common sense of mankind, in favour of conclusions of which that doctrine subverts the foundation. In this inconsistency, Reid has, however, besides Des Cartes, many distinguished copartners (REID, 1852, p. 130).

According to Hamilton's interpretation, Reid not only appeals to common sense but he also appeals to God to refute certain *obnoxious conclusions*, that is, skeptical conclusions. Norman Daniels, in *Thomas Reid's 'Inquiry'* (1974), seems to maintain the same interpretation: "Reid's only defense against the skeptical outcome of his own nativism – namely, that our constitutions might lead us to systematically false beliefs–is *his belief that God would not deceive us*" (DANIELS, 1974, p. 117, emphasis added). He continues:

> I restrict myself to an important point that emerges even in his appeal to God. Reid maintains his realist stance; he tries not to slip into idealism, even if he does slip into dogmatism. God is guaranteeing our *knowledge* of real world. It is not our constitution that *makes* the unrevisable propositions necessarily *true*. Rather, our constitution is designed by God to *reveal the truth* (DANIELS, 1974, p. 118).

Daniel Schulthess does not discuss this interpretation in details in *Philosophie et sens commun chez Thomas Reid* (1983). Nevertheless, he makes some suggestions that God would have an important epistemological role in Reidian philosophy. When discussing the relation between evidence and truth, Schulthess claims:

[60] This is the passage commented by Hamilton: "how or when I got such first principles, upon which I build all my reasoning, I know not; for I had them before I can remember: but I am sure they are parts of my constitution, and that I cannot throw them off […]. The belief of it, and the very conception of it, are equally parts of our constitution. If we are deceived in it, we are deceived by Him that made us, and there is no remedy" (*IHM*, V, VII, p. 72).

> Si l'assentiment commun définit l'évidence, les opinions irrésistibles observables et admises permettent de décider de ce qui est évident. La vérité dérive alors de l'adhésion effective des esprits. *Le recours à la véracité de Dieu* permet de dire, après coup, que ce consentement est bien fondé (SCHULTHESS, 1983, p. 82, emphasis added).

In the discussion on Reid's denial of the thesis of the resemblance between the external world and our knowledge, Schulthess suggests once again that Reid appeals to God in order to guarantee the reliability of the faculties of mind:

> Reid s'attaquera, par conséquent, à l'exigence de ressemblance elle-même. La garantie de l'adéquation (et donc de la réalité de notre connaissance) offerte par la thèse de la ressemblance est assumée chez lui par la véracité de nos facultés, qui, en dernier ressort, *dépend de Dieu* (SCHULTHESS, 1983, p. 128, emphasis added).

Michel Malherbe seems to follow the same line of interpretation in *Thomas Reid on the five senses* (1989). In the context of his observations on the processes involved in the knowledge of the external objects (the impressions of the objects on the external senses, the impressions transmitted by the nerves to the brain, sensation and perception), he claims:

> [...] Nevertheless, even though we would agree with Reid on those conclusions that he repeats all the time, we should observe that he cannot wholly neutralize the connection between sensorial impressions and the perceptions of the mind, and reduce the mediating function of the senses to the one fact of our limitation. *The appeal to God's wisdom is certainly more than the simple metaphysical mark of a matter of fact*. For, at the risk of introducing a doubt about the trusthfulness of our perceptions and, more generally, the truth of our knowledge, we must suppose that the connections between sense impressions and the perceptions of the mind are constant, regular and unvarying, and that there is a permanent correspondence, even if we can assign no relationship of causation or likeness to it. An assumption which widely surpasses the evidence that common sense gives us, since it does not bear on a phenomenon within the mind, but on the mind-body relationship. Hence the metaphysical thesis of a 'bon genie' is required (MALHERBE, 1989, p. 112, emphasis added).

According to this passage, Malherbe suggests that the appeal to God is what justifies common sense as a reliable source of knowledge in Reid's philosophy. The guarantee of common sense is something metaphysical-divine: "[...] Reid has to secure common sense metaphysically and justify the sense-perception correspondence by a final argument" (MALHERBE, 1989, p. 112).

I should confess that this line of interpretation seems to have textual ground. Indeed, many passages of Reid's works seem to suggest this theistic assumption. I quote

some of these passages. In the *Inquiry*, Reid observes in the context of the discussion on the philosophical conclusions that contradict common sense:

> If this is wisdom, let me be deluded with the vulgar. I find something within me that recoils against it, and inspires more reverent sentiments of the human kind, and of the universal administration. Common sense and reason have both one author; that Almighty author, in all whose other works we observe a consistency, uniformity, and beauty, which charm and delight the understanding: there must therefore be some order and consistency in the human faculties, as well as in other parts of his workmanship (*IHM*, V, VII, p. 68).

Again, in the context of the discussion of the systems of Democritus and Epicurus and the systems of the peripatetics, Reid notes:

> The one system made the senses naturally fallacious and deceitful; the other made the qualities of body to resemble the sensations of the mind. Nor was it possible to find a third, without making the distinction we have mentioned; by which indeed the errors of both these ancient systems are avoided, and we are not left under the hard necessity of believing, either, on the one hand, that our sensations are like to the qualities of body, or, on the other, that God hath given us one faculty to deceive us, and another to detect the cheat (*IHM*, VI, VI, p. 90).

In the *Intellectual Powers*, it is possible to find the same sort of references to God:

> Our senses, our memory, and our reason are all limited and imperfect: This is the lot of humanity: But they are such as the Author of our being saw to be best fitted for us in our present state. Superior natures may have intellectual powers which we have not, or such as we have, in a more perfect degree, and less liable to accidental disorders: But we have no reason to think that God has given us fallacious powers to any of his creatures: This would be to think dishonorably of our Maker, and would lay a foundation for universal skepticism (*EIP*, II, XXII, p. 244).

I argue that these references to God, though they seem to suggest some sort of epistemological theistic-dependence in Reid's philosophy, do not imply that Reid actually appeals to God in order to defend common sense beliefs. Firstly and most important, this line of interpretation faces the difficulty that Reid himself criticizes Descartes for his appealing to God as the guarantee of the reliability of the faculties of mind. I treat this critique in more details ahead[61], but, in brief, Reid holds that there is an inevitable *circularity* in every attempt to prove the reliability of the powers of mind, since it would be necessary to appeal to the very operations of mind - what is at stake–in

[61] See p. 174-176.

order to prove their reliability. Reid blames Descartes for not having identified this circularity: he appeals to God to guarantee the reliability of the powers of mind he uses to prove the very existence of God. Reid has other arguments in favor of the first principles of common sense, arguments which do not lead him to that inevitable circularity of which Descartes has been victim. Secondly, against this theistic line of interpretation, it is possible to find some passages in which Reid acknowledges that God has created human beings as imperfect, limited and fallible creatures:

> That a man, and probably every created being, is fallible; and that a fallible being cannot have that perfect comprehension and assurance of truth which an infallible being has, I think ought to be granted. It becomes a fallible being to be modest, open to new light, and sensible, that by some false bias, or by rash judging, he may be misled. If this be called a degree of skepticism, I cannot help approving of it, being persuaded, that man who makes the best use he can of the faculties which God has given him, without thinking them more perfect than they really are, may have all the belief that is necessary in the conduct of life, and all that is necessary to his acceptance with his Maker (*EIP*, VII, IV, p. 563-4, emphasis added).

God has created human beings but He cannot prevent us from being wrong in the operations of the powers of mind. Despite our divine origin, we are susceptible to error: we made mistakes. Passages like that reveals why it is hard to claim that there is a theistic assumption in Reid's defense of the first principles of common sense. God could not play an epistemological role in Reid's philosophy, as the guarantee for the reliability of the powers of mind.

Reid's supposed metaprinciple

Some authors have proposed another solution to the problem of the truth of common sense beliefs: Reid's defense of the first principles would depend on a special first principle, a *metaprinciple* which guarantee their truth. Keith Lehrer's is the author of this solution. According to him, the solution for the problem may be found inside the very list of first principles enumerated by Reid. Lehrer holds that there is a *metaprinciple* which guarantees that our mental faculties do not deceive us in their operations:

> The first principles that give rise to these judgements are formulated as principles that, in effect, tell us that the convictions resulting from our faculties, those of consciousness, perception, and memory, for

> example, are judgements of things that really do exist, the operations of the mind, the qualities of the mind, the qualities of perceived objects, the events remembered. There is, moreover, among these first principles a kind of metaprinciple articulating the general thesis that our faculties are not fallacious (LEHRER, p. 144-5, 1989).

The first principle upon which Lehrer based this view is the seventh principle of contingent truths: "another first principle is, That the natural faculties, by which we distinguish truth from error, are not fallacious". According to this interpretation, this first principle has a special place in Reid's epistemology: it guarantees that the operations of the powers of mind are not fallacious and, consequently, it justifies common sense beliefs as true beliefs. In *Reid, the moral faculty, and first principles* (2010), Lehrer attempts to be clearer about the role of the *First First Principle*:

> The principle might be used to confirm the others if they were in need of confirmation. They are, however, not in need of confirmation because they are first principles, and their evidence is intrinsic to them from their origin. Nevertheless, the First First Principle vouches for the truth of all the rest and is a premise telling us that they are not fallacious. Moreover, and of some interest, is the fact that the principle vouches for the truth of itself in the same way that it vouches for the other first principles (LEHRER, 2010, p. 26).

The first first principle, according to the author, vouches for the truth of our moral beliefs as well:

> The philosophical payoff of arguing that our moral judgments are the judgments of a faculty, given the First First Principle, is that the principles of the moral faculty are not fallacious. So, given that principle, the defense of moral judgment requires only the defense of the claim that they are judgments of the moral faculty (a claim challenged by Hume) (LEHRER, 2010, p. 27).

This interpretation seems to have a strong textual ground. It is based upon a passage in which Reid clearly states that this first principle has a special status:

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

Lehrer himself notes that this statement seems to contradict another of Reid's claims according to which all the first principles are immediate truths which do not depend on any sort of reasoning. That is, the metaprinciple could not be used as a premise in an

argument whose conclusion would be the reliability of any faculty: we could not extract the truth of our perceptual beliefs–which are immediate - from it. However, Lehrer explains:

> The apparent inconsistency may be resolved by noting that other first principles arise in us as evident in themselves without reasoning from this metaprinciple. Upon reflection, we may see that the principle is taken for granted in our assent to other first principles, but we do not reason from it to arrive at those principles (LEHRER, 1989, p. 163).

Roberto Pich agrees with Lehrer on what guarantees the truth of the first principles. In the context of the discussion on how the senses allow us to know the external world, in *Thomas Reid sobre Concepção, Percepção e Relação Mente-Mundo Exterior* (2010), Pich claims:

> The confidence in the senses to obtain a true, immediate, and evident belief about the existent and present external world is naturally guaranteed by the non-fallacious character of human mental operations, and this amounts to a first principle of common sense. A perceptual judgment has evident truth about its object while it is a kind of mental operation, and the definitive source of its evidence is a first principle of common sense about perception itself (PICH, 2010, p. 153).

In a footnote, Pich assumes that this first principle of common sense–which Lehrer calls *metaprinciple*–is what justifies the belief in the existence of the external world.

De Bary closely considers Lehrer's interpretation on the special status of the seventh first principle of contingent truths. In *Thomas Reid's metaprinciple* (2000), De Bary claims that this first principle does not actually refer to all faculties of mind, such as Lehrer understands it. There are other first principles–the first, third and fifth first principles of contingent truths, for instance–which guarantee the reliability of the powers of mind. If those other first principles are not able to play their epistemological role, why could the seventh first principle of contingent truth do it? On De Bary's view, the seventh first principle would only refer to the powers of judgment and reasoning, "the natural faculties by which we distinguish truth from error". In order to understand it, he argues, it would be necessary to exclude the first comma of the proposition formulated by Reid to express the seventh first principle: "that the natural faculties by which we distinguish truth from error, are not fallacious". De Bary explains:

> Here, the phrase 'by which we distinguish truth from error' has ceased to be a general gloss on *all* the faculties taken as a set, and has become

> a description which picks out just two of them. It is now judgment and reasoning which this principle is vouching for – no more and no less (De BARY, 2000, p. 380).

De Bary adds to this argument the claim that there are four textual evidences–along Reid's discussion of the seventh first principle of contingent truths (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 480-2)–that Reid has the powers of judging and reasoning in sight when he discusses this first principle. In favor of De Bary's interpretation, there is a passage of the *Active Powers*, not quoted by him, which seems to make his interpretation more consistent. In the context of the discussion on the development of the power of conscience, Reid presents a parallel between the progress of the moral faculty and the power of reasoning. In this passage, Reid clearly identifies the power of reasoning as the power by means of which human beings are able to discern truth from error: "it would be extremely absurd, from the errors and ignorance of mankind, to conclude that there is no such thing as truth; or that man has not a natural faculty of discerning it, and distinguishing it from error" (*EAP*, III, III, VIII, p. 187). Certainly this passage is not an evidence of how the meaning of the proposition that express the seventh principle of contingent truths should be understood. Nevertheless, it may be a strong indication of how De Bary may be right in his interpretation of this principle.

Patrick Rysiew is interested by the question of understanding the status of the seventh first principle as well. In *Reid's first Principle #7* (2014), the author suggests that, in order to understand, it is necessary to conjoin Lehrer's and De Bary's interpretations on the seventh first principle of contingent truth: on the one hand, it really has the special role Lehrer attributes to it, on the other hand, it could not only be a general and redundant first principle about the reliability of the powers of mind, as De Bary suggests. Rysiew explains:

> The trick is to retain these insights [Lehrer's and De Bary's insights] simultaneously. The key to doing so, I'll be suggesting, is to reject a widely-held belief about Reid's FPs – namely, that by the time we get to FP#7 in the Reid's enumeration, he has *already* claimed that various of our faculties are reliable. Other FPs that are typically taken to be reliability (or otherwise epistemological) principles are, I want to suggest, not epistemological at all, but metaphysical. Once we see that, just why and wherein FP#7 is special becomes clear: *it is* properly epistemological, and perfectly general; and its priority consists in the epistemic fact that it, and it alone, is taken for granted whenever we form any beliefs (arrive at any truths) at all. So too: once we see that FP#7 is (almost) the uniquely epistemological FP, any concern that its introduction invites a vicious regress goes away (RYSIEW, 2014, p. 168).

Rysiew's thesis is that the seventh principle of contingent truths is actually special among the twelve first principles: its special status is due to its epistemological character–it guarantees the reliability of the powers of mind. According to him, the first, third and fifth principles of contingent truths are not essentially epistemological:

> They are, I suggest, merely metaphysical; more specifically, these other FPs 'relate to existence'; they tell me that the various acts of the mind of which I am conscious (FP#1), the past events I distinctly remember (FP#3), and the thigs that I distinctly perceive (FP#5) around me, *do really exist* or *did really happen*. Or, insofar as we're taking them to (at least) state our most deeply held commitments, these principles are meant to capture the fact that the reality of these things is something that all normal humans (irresistibly, naturally, etc.) believe or take for granted (RYSIEW, 2014, p. 174-5).

They do not refer to the very faculties of mind, but they refer to the existence of the objects of those faculties. They have epistemological implications, but they are not essentially epistemological first principles. The seventh first principles, however, would have that epistemological role:

> Its 'priority' or 'specialness' consists in the fact that, just as Reid says, unique among the FPs, *it* is taken for granted whenever one forms any beliefs at all, including any beliefs in any of other FPs. It is in this sense that FP#7 is a 'first first principle', as Lehrer puts it: it is, so to speak, the implicit commitment behind all others (RYSIEW, 2014, p. 177).

I argue that even if we attribute that special role–to be the epistemological first principles par excellence in Reid's list–the problem of the truth of common sense beliefs cannot be solved. It rests to explain how this first principle vouches for the truth of itself. Lehrer does not explain it, nor does Rysiew. The seventh first principles of contingent truth, after all, is only another first principle of the twelve enumerated by Reid, that is, it is only a common sense belief. In this case, we would have a common sense belief that vouches for the truth of other common sense beliefs without it being justified. Based upon this metaprinciple solution, we would still be stuck in the terrain of the psychological description of common sense beliefs. What does guarantee the truth of the metaprinciple? What would Reid have to say about it besides it is an immediate and irresistible belief shared by the greatest part of humankind? Therefore, I argue that it is not clear how the metaprinciple could guarantee the truth of the first principles of common sense. Moreover, it is at least strange that Reid does not refer to

this important first principle in the *Inquiry*, if it has that special epistemological role Lehrer supposes it does. Reid never enunciates, in this work, that there is a common sense first principle that holds a special status among all the first principles, a first principle which guarantees the reliability of all the faculties of mind and of itself.

Reid's supposed transcendental argument

In *An Scottish Kant?* (1989), T. J. Sutton presents an interpretation according to which there would be great resemblance between Reid and Kant in what concerns their replies to skepticism. More particularly: Reid's appeal to common sense, according to Sutton, could be understood as a sort of *transcendental argument*. Sutton tries to show that the first principles of common sense have not only temporal priority with regard to the foundations of knowledge but they also have a sort of *logic priority*. He states:

> Accordingly I think that Reid does give us grounds to say that he claims at least for the most important of his first principles logical and not just temporal priority, arguing that they are the "foundations of reasoning" in the strong sense that they are preconditions for knowledge (or rational belief for that matter)" (SUTTON, 1989, p. 179).

He completes:

> The reason why we must believe according to common sense would on this reading be that to do so is an essential feature of our human nature. From this it follows that we cannot conceive of a human being who denies common sense, any more than according to Kant we can conceive of a world not structured according to the categories (SUTTON, 1989, p. 180).

Sutton understands that Reid holds that the first principles of common sense are the principles of every rational activity of human beings. For this reason, common sense would be a *structure without which human beings would not be rational beings*. He mainly bases his interpretation upon passages in which Reid seems to talk about the necessity we have of first principles in order to reason. For instance: "there are, therefore, common principles, which are the *foundation of all reasoning*, […]" (*EIP*, I, II, p. 39, emphasis added). Sutton takes care of moderating his attempt to approach both Reid's theory of the first principles and Kant's transcendental argument. Indeed, he recognizes the difficulty of this approaching:

> Of course, Reid does not develop a full-scale transcendental deduction, or discusses systematically what it is for experience to be meaningful. He does however make one claim for the faculty of common sense which points very firmly towards a Kantian interpretation (SUTTON, 1989, p. 180).

Sutton seems to be right on this point. Reid indeed never talks about the first principles in terms of *preconditions of the meaningful experience*, as if human experience only acquires significance in virtue of our capacity of believing them. Common sense beliefs do not build human experience in the sense that the *sensible forms* or the *categories* do. What matters in this approach, according to Sutton, is that the first principles work as preconditions of rational activity:

> To sum up, it is tempting to regard Reid's insistence on the necessity of belief according to common sense as a form of transcendental argument, defending a set of preconditions or foundations not on the ground that without them there could be no meaningful experience, but on the ground that *without them there could be no knowledge or rational activity* (SUTTON, 1989, p. 180, emphasis added).

I do not consider the relevance of this approach. I do not intend to discuss the question of knowing if there is some sort of transcendental argument in Reid's philosophy. I concentrate in Sutton's suggestion that, on Reid's view, the first principles are necessary not only in the common affairs of life but in the affairs of the intellectual life. I argue Sutton is right on this point. Reid actually underlines this fact: without the first principles of common sense, there would be no reasoning. As I argue later, Reid's claim is that philosophy itself depends on the acceptance of the truth of the first principles of common sense in a way that, to deny common sense, implies the very impossibility of philosophizing in a non-skeptical manner.

4.2) Reid's three arguments

Such as I understand Reid's philosophy, the psychological argument on the *immediacy* and *irresistibility* of the beliefs shared by the greatest part of humankind is only the start pointing of his defense of common sense beliefs. In a first instant, Reid actually bases his theory upon an argument on the subjective marks of those beliefs. However, he has more to say about the truth of the first principles of common sense. Reid does not hold that the psychological description of common sense beliefs is enough to epistemically justify them. He presents three reasons why philosophical

investigation should begin by the acceptance of all common sense beliefs, that is, why philosophers should suppose them as good candidates to be true beliefs, to be a solid foundation upon which human knowledge should be built. As self-evident first principles of knowledge, they do not depend on direct proof. However, Reid observes:

> There are ways by which the evidence of first principles may be made more apparent when they are brought into dispute; but they require to be handled in a way peculiar to themselves. Their evidence is not demonstrative, but intuitive. They require no prove, but to be placed in a proper point of view (*EIP*, I, II, p. 41).

In the light of this passage, I understand these arguments as "ways by which" their evidence is made more apparent.

My view on how Reid epistemically justifies common sense beliefs is based mainly upon the interpretation of some authors, among them, William Alston, Alvin Plantinga, Philip de Bary and John Greco. These authors give me the grounds to think a plausible solution to the problem, a solution which reveals, on the one hand, why Reid is justified in assuming common sense beliefs as true beliefs and, on the other hand, why his philosophy has an appropriate reply to those skeptics who demand the justification of our natural beliefs. It is important to note this solution does not contradict Reid's thesis that it is impossible to prove the truth of the first principles of common sense. Instead, I argue that Reid shows us why we have *good reasons* to suppose that common sense beliefs are true beliefs. In order to reply to the skeptic who demands the proof of the reliability of the faculties of mind, he shows why philosophers should accept that the powers of mind are not fallacious and the beliefs due to them are true.

4.2.1) The inevitable circularity argument

In brief, this argument reveals why every philosophical investigation should start by the acceptance of the reliability of the powers of mind and, consequently, the truth of common sense beliefs. Reid argues that the process of providing this proof implies an inevitable circularity in reasoning: it is impossible to prove the reliability of the powers of mind without appealing to the very mental powers whose reliability is at stake. This explains why it is impossible to satisfy that skeptical demand–the proof of the reliability

of the faculties of mind. Therefore, philosophers should accept all the powers of mind as reliable sources of knowledge.

This argument is developed more systematically in the *Intellectual Powers*. To understand it, it may help to consider Reid's critique of Descartes' proof of the reliability of the powers of mind. Reid's claim is based upon the consequences of that attempt. He asks: how could Descartes prove the reliability of the powers of mind if he appeals to the very mental powers whose proof is demanded? He observes:

> If a man's honesty were called in question, it would be ridiculous to refer it to the man's own word, whether he be honest or not. The same absurdity there is in attempting to prove, by any kind of reasoning, probable or demonstrative, that our reason is not fallacious, since the very point in question is, whether reasoning may be trusted (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 480).

There is an *inevitable circularity* involved in every reasoning for the reliability of the powers of mind. The problem is that, in order to prove that our faculties are not fallacious, such as Descartes has intended to do, it is necessary to appeal to the very faculties whose trustworthiness is into question. Reid accuses Descartes of not recognizing this problem in his reasonings:

> It is strange that so acute a reasoner did not perceive, that in this reasoning there is evidently a begging of the question.
> For if our faculties be fallacious, why may they not deceive us in this reasoning as well as in others? And if they are to be trusted in this instance without a voucher, why not in others?
> Every kind of reasoning for the veracity of our faculties, amounts to no more than taking their own testimony for their veracity; and this we must do implicitly, until God gives us new faculties to sit in judgment upon the old; and the reason why Descartes satisfied himself with so weak an argument for the truth of his faculties, most probably was, that he never seriously doubted of it (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 481).

The faculties of mind can deceive us in this reasoning as well in the others. What does guarantee their reliability in this case and not in other reasonings? If Descartes has accepted this proof is due to the fact that he has never sincerely doubted that the powers of mind could guide him to true beliefs. Human beings, Reid argues, are not able to judge about the reliability of the power of their minds. This is impossible, since it would be necessary to judge them in the light of the very faculties which are at stake. Human beings could verify the reliability of the powers of mind if they dispose of a new set of faculties in the light of which the old ones could be judged. This passage is also interesting in that it explains why philosophers, according to Reid, should not appeal to

God in epistemological matters. The appeal to God cannot guarantee the reliability of the powers of mind, like Descartes has supposed God does. Descartes has tried to prove the existence of God by means of the faculties whose truth is guaranteed by God. To appeal to God, in this case, implies an inevitable circularity.

As far as I know, William Alston is the first author to call attention to the importance of this argument for Reid's theory of the first principles of common sense. According to him, in *Thomas Reid on epistemic principles* (1985), this argument can show in what senses the skeptical demand for the proof of the reliability of the powers of mind is impossible to be satisfied. Alston's interpretation may be summarized as follows. Reid does not consider those psychological marks as reasons to justify common sense beliefs as true beliefs. The enumeration of those marks would only be the first level of arguments and Reid actually passes to a second level of arguments. His major argument starts from the idea that *each and every attempt to prove the reliability of our mental faculties entails an epistemic circularity problem.* The skeptic demands a proof of the reliability of our power of perception, however, to prove its reliability, it is necessary to examine it from another power, a power that should be examined by another faculty, and so forth: "if the skeptic complains that no adequate reasons can be given for the reliability of sense perception, we can respond that the circularity point shows that the same is to be said for whatever faculties he favors, whatever faculties he exempts from critical scrutiny" (ALSTON, 1985, p. 446). The skeptic faces a dilemma: to deny the reliability of all the powers of mind or to accept the reliability of one power in particular from which the reliability of the other would be judged. It is clear that the second option is not justified, once it would involve an inevitable circularity. Reid's main positive argument in favor of the truth of first principles would be an implication of this negative thesis:

> The dilemmatic argument just presented is not just a way of silencing the skeptic. It is a revelation of our epistemic situation as human beings; it lays bare our 'epistemic condition'. It points up the way in which our situation in the world – our powers in correlation with the way things are – renders vain the aspiration to accept beliefs only from those sources the reliability of which can be rationally justified. What these considerations show is that this noble sounding aspiration is based on a thoroughly unrealistic assessment of our situation, and even on an overweening pride unsuited to our creaturely status. (ALSTON, 1985, p. 447).

This passage, such as I understand it, is a brilliant resume of Reid's view on human mind and the *epistemic situation* of human beings. Indeed, the inevitable circularity argument reveals what is our epistemic situation: we are not able to judge about the reliability of our present faculties of mind. For this reason, the skeptical pretension of accepting only the beliefs of faculties epistemically justified may be understood as vain. To suppose we can do it, is to maintain an *unrealistic assessment of our situation*. I agree with Alston on the value of this Reidian argument for the reliability of the faculties of mind. It reveals us why philosophers should start by accepting all our mental powers as reliable sources of knowledge. I pass now to the second good reason Reid gives us to proceed in this way.

4.2.2) The problem of the philosophical arbitrariness

Reid presents some other reasons why human beings are justified in assuming common sense beliefs as true beliefs, despite the fact they would never be able to prove the reliability of the powers of mind. To try to prove the reliability of the powers of mind not only implies an inevitable circularity but it would also be an *arbitrary act* of the philosophers. Reid argues: it is not a legitimate philosophical procedure to choose one of the powers as the only reliable source of true beliefs. For this reason, philosophers should equally trust all the powers of mind.

This argument is presented both in the *Inquiry* and in the *Intellectual Powers*. In the *Inquiry*, the problem of the philosophical arbitrariness is placed in the light of the problem of the choice of the first principles of investigation. Reid calls attention to the immediate and irresistible character which equally characterizes all the beliefs due to our faculties. Why, he asks, could we deny our assent to some of those beliefs–for instance, the belief on the existence of the external objects–and accept other beliefs as true beliefs–such as, for instance, the belief on the existence of the operations of mind? On Reid's view, it is an important fact that even the most skeptical philosopher of the theory of ideas, Hume, has been surrendered to the force of one first principle of common sense:

> The author of the *treatise of human nature* appear to me to be but a half-sceptic. He hath not followed his principle so far as they lead him: but after having, with unparalleled intrepidity and success, combated vulgar prejudice; when he had but one blow to strike, his courage fails him, he fairly lays down his arms, and yields himself a

> captive to the most common of all vulgar prejudices, I mean, the belief of the existence of his own impressions and ideas (*IHM*, V, VII. p. 71).

Hume has not been able to accept the most radical sort of skepticism–that one which denies the assent to every belief due to the powers of mind. Indeed, according to Reid, he has accepted one first principle of common sense: the immediate and irresistible belief in the existence of the operations of mind attested by consciousness. In the light of this Humian concession, Reid believes he has found a strong argument in favor of the first principles of common sense: if a philosopher accepts one of those first principles, that is, if she assumes as true the existence of the operations of mind pointed by consciousness, why could she not assume all the other first principles suggested by the mind?

> And what is there in impressions and ideas so formidable, that this all-conquering philosophy, after triumphing over every other existence, should pay homage to them? Besides, the concession is dangerous: for belief is of such a nature, that if you leave any root, it will spread […]. A thorough and consistent sceptic will never, therefore, yield this point; and while he holds it, you can never oblige him to yield any thing else (*IHM*, V, VII. P. 71).

Reid accepts it is impossible to argue with the radical skeptic who equally denies all the first principle of common sense, who puts all of them into question without surrendering to the force of any one of them. However, the *half-skeptic* who accepts one of those first principles should acknowledge that Reid may be right in his claim: what is the reason for the arbitrariness in her choice of the first principles? If one accepts a first principle which cannot be proven by reasoning, the existence of the operations of mind, why is she justified in denying many other first principles due to the same source? It is necessary to recognize every mental power as a reliable source of knowledge. The reason is clear: the common origin of all the powers of mind. Reid claims

> The sceptic asks me, Why do you believe the existence of the external object which you perceive? This belief, Sir, is none of my manufacture; it came from the mint of Nature; it bears her image and superscription; and, if it is not right, the fault is not mine: I even took it upon trust, and without suspicion. Reason, says the sceptic, is the only judge of truth, and you ought to throw off every opinion and every belief that is not grounded on reason. *Why, Sir, should I believe the faculty of reason more than that of perception; they came both out of the same shop, and were made by the same artist; and if he puts one piece of false ware into my hands, what should hinder him from putting another* (IHM, VI, XX, p. 168-9, emphasis added)?

The belief in the existence of the external objects comes from the same source that the belief in the existence of the operations of mind does. It is as immediate and irresistible as the belief in the existence of the very perceptions of mind. There is no reason for privileging one belief and not the other.

This argument reappears in the *Intellectual Powers*. Reid focuses his attention on the power of consciousness and how it has a privileged status among the modern authors. The idea that mind has an unproblematic access to its own operations–by means of consciousness–has never been questioned by any modern philosopher. Reid notes that Descartes' first philosophical discovery, expressed by the enthymeme "*I think therefore I am*", is fundamentally based upon the belief in the reliability of consciousness, the power of mind by means of which we know the existence of the operations of mind: "if it should be asked, how Descartes came to be certain of the antecedent preposition [*I think*], it is evident, that for this he trusted to the testimony of consciousness. He was conscious that he thought, and needed no other argument" (*EIP*, VI, VII, p. 51). That is, in order to know that he thinks, that he exists, Descartes should firstly take for granted that his consciousness is a reliable source of information about his mental operations. Descartes "[…] adopts in this famous enthymeme is this, That those doubts, and thoughts, and reasoning, of which he was conscious, did certainly exist, and that his consciousness put their existence beyond all doubts" (*EIP*, VI, VII, p. 515). A skeptic may readily reply to Descartes by raising doubts about the power of consciousness:

> […] how do you know that your consciousness cannot deceive you? You have supposed, that all you see, and hear, and handle, may be an illusion. Why therefore should the power of consciousness have this prerogative, to be believed implicitly, when all our other powers are supposed fallacious (*EIP*, VI, VII, p. 515)?

Descartes has decided to doubt everything he had accepted without evidence–without a clear and distinct conception of it. Following this intention, he has doubted the very existence of the objects of external world. Descartes, nevertheless, has never proven the reliability of the power of consciousness. Why has he unreservedly accepted it? Reid himself answers: "to this objection, I know no other answer that can be made, but that we find it impossible to doubt of things of which we are conscious. *The constitution of our nature* forces this belief upon us irresistibly" (*EIP*, VI, VII, p. 515, emphasis

added). The very constitution of mind impels him to accept the existence of his thoughts, reasonings, passions, emotions and feelings when he is conscious of them.

But Descartes has not been the only author to proceed in such a way. According to Reid, many other authors have not felt obligated to justify the belief in the existence of the operations of mind:

> No philosopher has attempted by any hypothesis to account for this consciousness of our own thoughts, and the certain knowledge of their real existence which accompanies it. By this they seem to acknowledge, that this at least is an original power of the mind; a power by which we not only have ideas, but original judgments, and the knowledge of real existence (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 471).

That is why Reid believes that the acceptance of this first principle and the denial of many other first principles is the very *spirit of modern philosophy*. Consciousness has been unanimously taken for granted by the authors of the period while other first principles have been denied:

> And so far has his [Descartes] authority prevailed, that those who came after him have almost universally followed him in this track. This, therefore, may be considered as *the spirit of modern philosophy*, to allow no first principles of contingent truths but this one, that the thoughts and operations of our own minds, of which we are conscious, are self-evidently real and true; but that every thing else that is contingent is to be proved by argument (*EIP*, VI, VII, p. 516, emphasis added).

Reid argues that it is inconsistent to admit only one power as a reliable source of knowledge and to demand a proof for the reliability of the other powers of mind:

> Thus the faculties of consciousness, of memory, of external senses, and of reason, are all equally the gifts of nature. No good reason can be assigned for receiving the testimony of one of them, which is not of equal force with regard to the others. The greatest Sceptics admit the testimony of consciousness, and allow, that what it testifies is to be held as a first principle. If therefore they reject the immediate testimony of sense, or of memory, they are guilty of an inconsistency (*EIP*, VI, IV, p. 463).

Why would philosophers be authorized to put into question some common sense beliefs if they accept another set of them, consciousness beliefs, as true beliefs? This way of proceeding is not legitimate: “thus the faculties of consciousness, of memory, of external sense, and of reason, are all equally the gifts of nature. No good reason can be assigned for receiving the testimony of one of them, which is not of equal force with regard to the others” (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 463).

Reid argues, on the one hand, that every reasoning for the reliability of the faculties of mind implies an inevitable circularity. We would not be able to prove their reliability without incurring in this inconsistency. Philosophers, for this reason, should start their investigations by equally accepting all the powers of mind as reliable sources of true beliefs. On the other hand, to choose one of those faculties as the only source of knowledge is not less problematic. Reid shows why: this is clearly an arbitrary act. Nothing can legitimate philosophers in the arbitrarily choice of the first principles: all of our beliefs come from the same origin, the original constitution of mind, and, for that reason, all of them should be accepted as true beliefs. Reid has one more argument to present in his intention of presenting the good reasons we have to believe our faculties of mind.

4.2.3) The proper function argument

Alvin Plantinga, both in *Positive epistemic status and proper function* (1988) and in *Warrant and proper function* (1993), intends to develop a theory of epistemic justification in the light of the idea that the proper function of the mental faculties is fundamental to guarantee human knowledge. Plantinga, after considering some of the main contemporary theories of justification (of philosophers as Roderick Chisholm, Keith Lehrer, Fred Dretske and Alvin Goldman), presents the central idea of his own theory:

> In the above discussions, there is a sort of recurring theme. We saw repeatedly that various proposed analyses of justification come to grief when we reflect on the variety of ways in which our noetic faculties can fail to function properly. […] In each case the reason, I suggest, is *cognitive malfunction*, failure of the relevant cognitive faculties to function properly (PLANTINGA, 1988, p. 32).

Epistemic justification may be done in terms of the proper function of the faculties of mind. The guarantee of the truth of our beliefs is the absence of malfunction in the operations of the powers of mind:

> I therefore suggest that a necessary condition of *positive epistemic status* is that one's cognitive equipment, one's belief forming and belief sustaining apparatus, be free of such cognitive malfunction. A belief has *positive epistemic status* for me only if my cognitive apparatus is functioning properly, working the way it ought to work in producing and sustaining it (PLANTINGA, 1988, p. 32, emphasis added).

I call attention to one of Plantinga's inspiration. On a passage in which he acknowledges the author to whom he owes his thesis, he confesses, indeed: "still another kind of intellectual debt: the position I shall develop is broadly Reidian; the global outline of Thomas Reid's epistemology seems to me to be largely correct" (PLANTINGA, 1993, p. X). I and other authors agree with Plantinga on this point: the proper function of the powers of mind seems to be an important matter for Reid. It is clear that the context in which Plantinga develops his theory is different from the context in which Reid's philosophy is developed. However, I call attention to Plantinga's basic idea, recognized by himself as being inspired by Reid: the powers of mind are equally reliable while they operate in a proper way.

Many passages of the *Intellectual Powers* suggest that Reid has real interest by the way our faculties work in the production of our natural beliefs. According to him, it matters for his theory of the first principles of common sense the way the powers of mind operate. In particular, Reid seems to suggest that we do not have many reasons to doubt the reliability of our powers when they are in good and healthy conditions: our mistakes (our false beliefs) may be explained more by some disorder or disease which affects the mind than by a general inclination to falsehood. For instance, in the context of a discussion on how human beings take for granted immediate and irresistible beliefs, he claims:

> All I have to say to this is, that our minds, in our present state, are, as well as our bodies, liable to strange disorders; and as we do not judge of the natural constitution of the body, from the disorders or diseases to which it is subject from accidents, so neither ought we to judge of the natural powers of the mind from its disorders, but from its sound state (EIP, II, V, p. 98).

In another passage, Reid denies that the mistakes resulting from a faculty affected by some disorder would be sufficient to consider it as a fallacious faculty: "the imagination, the memory, the judging and reasoning powers, are all liable to be hurt, or even destroyed, by disorders of the body, as well as our powers of perception; but we do not on this account call them fallacious" (*EIP*, II, XXII, p. 243-4). This idea reappears ahead in the text: "the imagination, the memory, the judging and reasoning powers, are all liable to be hurt, or even destroyed, by disorders of the body, as well as our powers of perception; but we do not on this account call them fallacious" (EIP, II, XXII, p. 324-5). One of the clearest passages on this point is presented as follows:

> Our intellectual powers are wisely fitted by the Author of our nature for the discovery of truth, as far as suits our present state. Error is not their natural issue, any more than disease of the natural structure of the body. Yet, as we are liable to various diseases of body from accidental causes, external and internal; so we are from, like causes liable to wrong judgments (EIP, VI, VIII, p. 527).

According to Reid, it is possible to see that our mistakes are more result of some disorder or disease that affects the mind than of a general inclination of error. It is possible to understand, in the light of those passages and others, how the question of the proper function of the powers of mind is an important aspect of the truth of common sense beliefs.

Certainly this argument does not prove the truth of common sense beliefs. However, it gains force in the face of, on the one hand, the impossibility of presenting the proof of the reliability of the faculties of mind and, on the other hand, the illegitimacy of the choice of only one faculty as a source of reliable knowledge. Before those difficulties, Reid suggests: we do not have good reasons to doubt the reliability of our powers if they operate properly, if our minds have not been affected by some disorder or disease. Why would the skeptic suppose that the faculties of mind, when they properly function, when they are in a good and healthy condition, are fallacious? According to Reid, they are wrong in denying them, once we are legitimate in supposing that "the understanding, *in its natural and best state*, pays its homage to truth only" (EIP, VI, VIII, p. 527-8, emphasis added).

As far as I know, the first author who suggests the importance of this argument for Reid's theory of the first principles of common sense was Wolterstorff, in *Hume and Reid* (1987):

> Does Reid go beyond polemics to offer an alternative account of warrant (of positive epistemic status, of justification)? Yes, I think he does. Reid is not an egalitarian concerning beliefs. About some he thinks there is something amiss – whether or not, now, they be true. And over and over the principle of discrimination to which he appeals is this: Some of our beliefs are produced by mature faculties *functioning properly* and some are produced by immature faculties, or faculties functioning improperly. About a belief produced by an immature faculty or one functioning improperly, there is something amiss. Such a belief is lacking in warrant of a certain sort, in justification, in positive epistemic status (WOTERSTORFF, 1987, p. 409-10, emphasis added).

As seen before, Wolterstorff has abandoned this view in favor of his antifoundationalist interpretation of Reid's philosophy. De Bary also follows this line of interpretation. According to him, Reid's observations on senses are paradigmatic. After considering Reid's four classes of perceptual mistakes–presented in the section *Of the fallacy of senses* in the *Intellectual Powers*, De Bary claims:

> Reid's view is that once these cases of genuine perceptual error have been isolated, they can be seen not to trouble an account of the overall reliability of the senses. As exceptional, as pathological, they cannot be used as a basis from which to generalize, [...] (De BARY, 2002, p. 55).

The fact is that some isolated cases of perceptual mistakes cannot put into question the reliability of the powers of senses–and of the other powers of mind. It is true: our sense sometimes deceive us. However, the possibility of verifying the causes of those mistakes guarantees the reliability of these powers. Only the identification of a general cause of mistake[62] would put into question the link between the *Innateness Claim* and the *Truth Claim* for common sense beliefs:

> This adds up to an account on which common sense beliefs are *prima facie* justified, or 'innocent until proved guilty'. It is, if we like, reliabilism with one epicycle: the true beliefs of common sense are justified, and so amount to knowledge, provided only that the believer have no good reason to doubt them (De BARY, 2002, p. 86).

Once our mental faculties properly operate, skeptics would have to have a good reason to doubt our faculties. This is the reliabilist assumption of Reid's theory of the first principles of common sense. John Greco, both in *Reid's reply to the skeptic* (2006) and in *Common sense in Thomas Reid* (2014), tries to show why Reid holds a sort of *reliabilism of the proper function of human mind faculties*:

> In general, positive epistemic status derives from the proper functioning of our natural, non-fallacious cognitive. The faculties that make up common sense (for example, perception, memory, consciousness) are faculties of that sort. As such, they are of equal

[62] For instance, the ideal hypothesis: "[…] there is also, at the top end of the scale, a potentially devastating defeater for all common sense beliefs, namely the doctrine of mental representationalism within the ideal theory. Once it is accepted that the mind's only immediate objects are its own 'ideas', then scepticism about perception, memory, personal identity (both synchronic and diachronic), and about the existence of other minds, becomes unavoidable. In fact the only sort of scepticism not generated by the ideal theory is scepticism about the contents of presently existing mental states. Just such a 'global' defeat of common sense beliefs, in Reid's view, was the aim, and has been the result, of Hume's arguments in the Treatise" (De BARY, 2002, p. 86).
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> authority with reason, and with all other natural, non-fallacious cognitive faculties. Since they are non-inferential (non-reasoning) faculties, they are sources of non-inferential knowledge (GRECO, 2014, p. 149).

I claim, therefore, that Reid's theory of epistemic justification is mainly based upon three arguments. The initial step is to show that every reasoning for the reliability of the faculties of mind implies an inevitable circularity. Philosophers could not prove their reliability without being inconsistent. The second step is to show that to pick up one single faculty as the only source of reliable beliefs is as inconsistent as to demand the proof for the reliability of the mental powers. In doing this, philosophers could be accused of being arbitrary. The last step completes the purpose of arguing for the truth of the faculties of mind: if we are not able to prove their reliability, nor we can pick one of them as a reliable source of true beliefs, is it necessary to embrace a skeptical position on the truth of common sense beliefs? Reid's answer is negative: we do not have many reasons to doubt them if they properly operate, if we do not identify a general cause of mistakes in their operations. We are justified in assuming all the powers of mind as reliable sources of beliefs. This does not prove the truth of the first principles of common sense. I understand these three arguments as *good reasons* to accept common sense beliefs as true beliefs.

4.3) Reid's moderate foundationalism

In the first subsection, I discuss Reid's view that common sense beliefs are not indubitable, infallible and incorrigible, such as a strong foundationalist would suppose them to be. In the second subsection, I discuss the passages in which Reid confesses his incapacity of offering a reply to the most radical sort of skepticism. These two themes help us to understand the moderation of Reid's foundationalist project.

4.3.1) Common sense beliefs are dubitable, fallible and corrigible

From the tenor of the discussion presented in the last section, I think it is clear why Reid's foundationalism should be understood as a moderate form of foundationalism. As seen before, a strong version of foundationalism is characterized by its assumption that the basic / foundational beliefs are *certain*, *indubitable*, *infallible* and *incorrigible*. Reid's view on common sense beliefs moves him away from this sort

of foundationalism. According to him, common sense beliefs may be *dubitable, fallible* and *corrigible* and, nevertheless, they are true beliefs which should be assumed as the foundation of many branches of knowledge.

Firstly, on Reid's view, common sense beliefs are not indubitable, since they are always liable to skeptical attacks. In a passage of the *Inquiry*, for instance, Reid is really clear about our impossibility of acquiring that strongest sort of certitude which could make impossible to doubt the first principles of common sense:

> How or when I got such first principles, upon which I build all my reasoning, I know not; for I had them before I can remember: but I am sure they are parts of my constitution, and that I cannot throw them off […]. The belief of it, and the very conception of it, are equally parts of our constitution. If we are deceived in it, we are deceived by Him that made us, and *there is no remedy* (*IHM*, V, VII, p. 72, emphasis added).

Human beings are not able to know if they are ultimately deceived or not. In matters of common sense, there is always room for philosophical doubts. Common sense dictates that there is a world full of physical objects, that there is a mind and that there is intelligence with whom we have a conversation. We have good reasons to believe these beliefs are true. Moreover, we have good reasons to base our philosophical investigations upon those common sense beliefs. However, they are not beyond the possibility of any doubt, such as, for instance, necessary truths.

Reid discusses this last point in more details in the *Intellectual Powers*. He observes that, differently from the necessary truths–metaphysical, mathematical and grammatical truths, for instance, contingent truths can always be object of skeptical doubts. It is true that the greatest part of humankind takes for granted the existence of the objects of the external world. It is also true that human beings are not able to put the existence of this world in question in non-philosophical contexts, such as their common lives. However, from a philosophical point of view, there is nothing that could prevent a skeptic from raising doubts about this common sense belief. Since some of our first principles are not necessary truths, skeptics are free to cast doubts about them. Mathematical knowledge is necessary / demonstrative. In a mathematical proposition, there is a necessary connection between the subject and the predicate. This is all the evidence necessary to believe in its truth. However, in the case of the powers of consciousness, memory and perception, for instance, this is not what happens. The knowledge of contingent / probable truths is different:

> When I believe that I washed my hands and face this morning, there appears no necessity in the truth of this proposition. It might be or it might not be. A man may distinctly conceive it without believing it at all. How then do I come to believe it? I remember it distinctly. This is all I can say (*EIP*, III, II, p. 256).

In this case, Reid does not see any necessary connection between the mental act of remembering and the past event, as much as he does not see any necessary connection between the mental act of being conscious of and the existence of the operations of mind. Here are the boundaries of the account of contingent knowledge:

> If any man can show such a necessary connection, then I think that belief which we have of what we remember will be fairly accounted for; but, if this cannot be done, that belief is unaccountable, and we can say no more but that it is the result of our constitution (*EIP*, III, II, p. 256).

The fact is that the faculties of which we dispose are not able to eliminate the possibility of doubting the common sense beliefs. Such as seen before, it is impossible to prove the reliability of the powers of mind and the truth of their beliefs. Consequently, the truth of common sense beliefs is not beyond any possible doubt.

Secondly, as seen in details in the last section, common sense beliefs are due to fallible powers of mind, according to Reid. Consciousness, memory, perception, taste, conscience and reasoning may deceive us in their use. None of them are infallible. Differently from Descartes' view–who understands reason as a sort of superior faculty of mind, a privileged source of true knowledge, Reid holds that the faculties of mind are all on the same level. There is no room for a mental power par excellence. Consciousness, memory, perceptual, taste and conscience beliefs are equally certain. As Reid argues, however, despite their fallibility, the powers of mind should not be seen as fallacious powers. Human beings have good reasons to see them as reliable sources of knowledge and, consequently, to trust all common sense beliefs:

> There is no more reason to account our senses fallacious, than our reason, our memory, or any other faculty of judging which nature hath given us. They are all limited and imperfect; but wisely suited to the present condition of man. *We are liable to error and wrong judgement in the use of them all*; but as little in the informations of sense as in deductions of reasoning (*EIP*, II, XXII, p. 251-2, emphasis added).

Reid underlines that those fallible powers are everything nature has given human beings. For that reason, philosophers should not disdain them: these dubitable and fallible powers of mind are the only tools available to them to search for the truth.

Thirdly, according to Reid, common sense beliefs can be corrected: they can be undermined by further information. Reid works with a hypothetical possibility to reveal why common sense beliefs are not definitely established: in another state, if we could dispose of *a new set of mental faculties*, we could end up discovering that all common sense beliefs are not actually true. There would be only one way to perfectly evaluate the present state of human beings with regard to the reliability of their faculties and the truth of their beliefs: a new set of faculties, less limited and more perfect by means of which we could evaluate the powers our minds dispose of in the present state. The argument of these hypothetical new faculties appears several times in Reid's work. For instance, in the *Intellectual Powers*, Reid observes: "every kind of reasoning for the veracity of our faculties, amounts to no more than taking their own testimony for their veracity; and this we must do implicitly, until God give us *new faculties* to sit in judgments upon the old" (*EIP*, VI, V, p. 481, emphasis added). In the *Active Powers*, in turn:

> The faculties which nature hath given us, are the only engines we can use to find out the truth. We cannot indeed prove that those faculties are not fallacious, unless GOD should give us *new faculties* to sit in judgment upon the old. But we are born under a necessity of trusting them (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 179-80, emphasis added).

New faculties could correct our common sense beliefs, they could give us new informations which would invalidate our present beliefs. These new faculties would make us able to evaluate the faculties available to us in our present state without the risk of circularity. Therefore, according to how I understand those passages and many others, it would not be possible to establish irrevocably foundational beliefs. In the light of this hypothetical point of view, the possibility of a set of new faculties, it would be possible to suppose new common sense beliefs which would correct the present ones.

Reid's foundationalist, therefore, is developed upon the idea that the first principles of common sense, the principles of philosophy of mind and morals, are actually dubitable, fallible and corrigible. They are dubitable in that their truth cannot be proven by reasoning. Skeptics, for this reason, may continue to philosophically doubt them–even though they accept them in common life like the greatest part of humankind.

They are fallible in that they are a result of a limited and not perfect human nature. There are cases in which the powers of mind may deceive us in their operations–even though we do not have reasons to suppose them fallacious. Finally, they may be corrigible: a new set of faculties, for instance, may reveal us that common sense beliefs are actually not true. In the face of the dubitability, fallibility and corrigibility of common sense beliefs, it is up to philosophers, Reid argues, to be *modest*:

> That a man, and probably every created being, is fallible; and that a fallible being cannot have that perfect comprehension and assurance of truth which an infallible being has, I think ought to be granted. *It becomes a fallible being to be modest*, open to new light, and sensible, that by some false bias, or by rash judging, he may be misled. If this be called a degree of skepticism, I cannot help approving of it, being persuaded, that man who makes the best use he can of the faculties which God has given him, without thinking them more perfect than they really are, may have all the belief that is necessary in the conduct of life, and all that is necessary to his acceptance with his Maker (*EIP*, VII, IV, p. 563-4, emphasis added).

It is the very human nature condition–we are fallible creatures, after all–which makes impossible to go beyond this modest source of knowledge, common sense. We are not able to reach a more solid sort of knowledge, to reach a more certain knowledge than that one that is offered by our constitution, by the first principles of common sense. This is a humble foundation, but it is the most solid one upon which our knowledge can be built. Such as William Alston states:

> Our proper place in the scheme of things is rather to accept with thankfulness the native belief-forming tendencies with which we have been endowed by our creator, using them for the purposes for which they were intended, not presuming to sit in judgment over them, an office reserved for their maker (ALSTON, 1985, p. 447).

It is up to us to accept the reliability of the powers of mind, abandoning that pernicious ambition of attempting to prove their trustworthiness. This would be God's task.

4.3.2) Reid's moderate reply to skepticism

Reid's moderate foundationalism has this epistemological consequence: it is unable to reply to a certain sort of skepticism, that radical sort of skepticism of the philosopher who denies her assent to every single common sense belief. Reid himself admits this: his arguments in favor of the truth of the first principles of common sense

are not sufficient to reply to that radical and consistent skeptic who insists on denying any faculty of mind as a reliable source of knowledge. I begin by considering Reid's confession in the *Inquiry*. In the context of his observations on consciousness and its privileged status among the modern authors, he claims:

> To such a sceptic [the radical one who denies consciousness beliefs] I have nothing to say; but of the semi-sceptics, I should beg to know, why they believe the existence of their impressions and ideas. The true reason I take to be, because they cannot help it; and the same reason will lead them to believe many other things (*IHM*, V, VII, P. 71).

Reid clearly recognizes that he cannot reply to the radical skeptic, that philosopher who does not surrender to the force of any first principles of common sense, putting into question all the powers of mind without exception. He does not have arguments to convince this skeptic to accept common sense beliefs, since this philosopher refuses to accept any of them. In the *Intellectual Powers*, Reid reinforces his incapacity of replying to the radical skeptic. Once again, he has nothing to say to her:

> Thus, if any man were found of so strange a turn as not to believe his own eyes; to put no trust in his senses, nor have the least regard to their testimony; would any man think it worth while to reason gravely with such a person, and, by argument, to convince him of his error? Surely no wise man would. For before men can reason together, they must agree in first principles; and it is impossible to reason with a man who has no principles in common with you (*EIP*, I, II, p. 39).

How would he argue with a radical skeptic of this sort, a skeptic who puts into question the reliability of all the power of mind and the truth of all common sense beliefs? If she denies her assent to consciousness, perception, memory and reasoning and consequently, all common sense beliefs due to them, there in any base from which Reid could argue with her. Finally, this confession reappears in the *Active Powers*. Reid denies that it is possible to discuss with a human being who is unable to acknowledge, in her moments of impartial and disinterested reflexion, the evidence of a conscience judgment such as "we ought to act that part towards another, which we would judge to be right in him to act toward us, if we were in his circumstances and he in ours". She would not be even a moral agent, since she would be deprived of the notions of *duty*, *right* and *wrong*, *virtue* and *vice*. Reid acknowledges: there is no argument which would be able to convince her of the evidence of this judgment, if she is not able to immediately and irresistibly recognize it by means of conscience:

> From what topic can you reason with such a man? You may possibly convince him by reasoning, that it is his *interest* to observe this rule; but this is not to convince him that it is his duty. To reason about justice with a man who sees nothing to be just or unjust; or about benevolence with a man who sees nothing in benevolence preferable to malice, is like reasoning with a blind man about colour, or with a deaf man about sound (*EAP*, III, III, VI, p. 178, emphasis added).

Arguments and reasonings are good to convince a person of her interest. However, arguments and reasonings cannot supply the mind with its moral notions. They are not able to convince a person of her duty, to convince her that to act against a natural judgment of conscience is to act against the very virtue itself.

As seen before, Reid acknowledges the impossibility of proving the reliability of the powers of mind and, consequently, the truth of common sense beliefs. Skeptics, for this reason, are legitimate in casting doubts about the beliefs due to the original constitution of mind. But they seem to have at least two options. Firstly, a skeptic may choose to deny the reliability of all the powers of mind and assume the most radical sort of skepticism. By proceeding this way, she ends up denying the possibility of any sort of knowledge. In the face of this possibility, Reid seems to point out some *good reasons* we have to accept common sense as a reliable source of true beliefs. It is clear that these reasons are not able to oblige the skeptic to abandon her skepticism, but they may convince her to accept the reliability of all the powers of mind, keeping a reliabilist view about knowledge. Secondly, a skeptic may choose to reason for the reliability of the mental faculties. In order to do this, she has to choose one power of mind as a reliable source of knowledge–reason, for instance–and, by means of which, she can judge the reliability of the other powers of mind. However, Reid shows us why this is not a legitimate way of proceeding: this is not only inconsistent–there is an inevitable circularity in every reasoning for the reliability of the mental faculties–but it is also arbitrary. To this partial-skeptic, Reid asks: what justifies your partiality in your choice of the first principles? If you accept one first principle, why do you deny many other principles of human constitution? The partial-skeptic faces a dilemma: to deny the reliability of all the powers of mind–becoming a radical skeptic–or to accept common sense as a reliable source of true beliefs. This seems to reveal that Reid keeps open the possibility of that radical sort of skepticism–this is a consistent philosophical position on his view. This position, however, has a pernicious consequence: if we adopt the position of a radical skeptic, we end up invalidating the very possibility of philosophizing. Indeed, if we are not able to prove the reliability of the powers of mind

and the truth of common sense beliefs, there is no foundation for our philosophical reasonings. Would there be any first principle from which we could start our philosophical investigations? In order to reason / philosophize, philosophers should have to admit some first principles, the foundations upon which their reasonings will be based. To philosophize in a positive / a non-skeptical way, therefore, depends on believing in the reliability of the powers of mind. Such as I note about the merit of Sutton's interpretation of Reid's philosophy[63], philosophers should assume the truth of the first principles "[…] on the ground that *without them there could be no knowledge or rational activity"* (SUTTON, 1989, p. 180, emphasis added).

Conclusion

I believe it is not possible to think that Reid has confused psychology and epistemology. The argument of the psychological characteristics of common sense beliefs, immediacy and irresistibility, is not the only argument he presents in favor of the first principles of common sense. Reid certainly does not prove, by reasoning, the truth of those first principles. This is not his aim. He shows contrarily the reasons we have to start to philosophize by accepting all common sense beliefs, that is, the reasons that make them good candidates to be the foundation upon which all knowledge should be built. Firstly, we are justified in supposing they are true beliefs because it is impossible to prove the reliability of any power of mind, so that, from the start of the investigation, it is necessary to assume that they all (consciousness, perception, memory, etc.) are not fallacious and, consequently, the truth of the beliefs that are due to them. Secondly, it is not a legitimate philosophical procedure to choose one of the powers of mind as if it were the only source of true beliefs. This only reveals the arbitrariness of the philosophers. Those who choose consciousness only strengthen the argument that all mental powers are equally reliable: they yield beliefs as immediate and irresistible as the beliefs of consciousness. Thirdly, since the powers of mind are functioning properly, that is, when the human mind is not affected by any disorder or disease, there are no good reasons to put into question the reliability of those powers and, therefore, to question the trustworthiness of the beliefs due to them. Those three

[63] Once again, I would like to make clear that I do not consider the question of knowing if this thesis is some sort of *Reidian transcendental argument* such as Sutton claims.

arguments show why it is legitimate to take the common sense as the foundation of knowledge.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

I dedicate my final considerations to present, once again, the main points I have tried to underline in this thesis on Reid's theory of the first principles of knowledge. The first chapter was dedicated to discuss Reid's general view on the structure of knowledge. The basic idea I discuss is that he has a conception of science, presented in philosophy of mind, morals and politics, but this conception is not enough to make him a foundationalist philosopher in these three fields of knowledge. In my view, it is clear that Reid is a foundationalist with regard to speculative and moral knowledge, mainly in virtue of his distinction between basic / foundational beliefs and non-basic / non-foundational beliefs, as well as his understanding that basic / foundational beliefs have the characteristic of being immediately justified, justified from the start. I have also argued that we do not have textual ground to suppose Reid as a foundationalist in politics. The text of the *Lectures on Politics* does not present any evidence of a foundationalist view in this branch of knowledge. I have also questioned some interpretations which deny Reid's foundationalism. I have tried to show that Wolterstorff's, Lehrer / Smith's and Poore's interpretations fail in any or some other aspect in attempting to explain Reid's philosophy in another perspective.

The second chapter was dedicated to discuss Reid's view on two sources of human knowledge, namely, common sense and knowledge of mankind. In this chapter, I have attempted to present my view that political knowledge is not directly based upon common sense beliefs, differently from the philosophy of mind and morals. The first principles of politics are found in the knowledge of mankind, of the world or of human nature are due to a mixture of sagacity and experience. That is, they are not the immediate and irresistible judgments of the original constitution of mind shared by the greatest part of humankind – common sense, such as, for instance, beliefs on the existence of the external objects (perception), on the beauty or deformity of an object (taste) or on the right or wrong of an action (conscience). The judgments and beliefs of the political scientist are not result of the original constitution of mind, they could not be appropriately called *common sense beliefs*, such as I understand the term common sense.

The third chapter was dedicated to my explanation of what a first principle of knowledge is. After presenting Reid's lists of first principles of knowledge, I have argued that first principles are general propositions which express particular beliefs of

common sense or of knowledge of mankind. This general proposition can be understood as a general principle about a number of particular principles upon which the knowledge must be built and from which reasonings must be drawn in philosophy of mind, morals and politics. I have also discussed my view that there is a difference between the principles of contingent and the principles of necessary truths that Reid does not make explicit. Such as I understand them, it seems to me that the principles of necessary truths may be understood as results of a mature mind, of a mind whose powers have developed by exercise and instruction, differently from the principles of contingent truths. It is possible, in this sense, that non-mature minds are not able to recognize the first principles of necessary truths; it is possible that the first principles of mathematics, morals and aesthetics are not self-evident for those whose mind has never developed. I have dedicated the last section of this chapter to discuss Reid's view on the means philosophers have to identify a true first principle of knowledge in philosophy of mind, morals and politics.

Finally, I have dedicated the last chapter to discuss Reid's defense of the first principles of common sense. I have argued that the argument of the psychological characteristics of common sense beliefs, immediacy and irresistibility, is not everything Reid has to say about the truth of the first principles of common sense. He presents a set of arguments to show why we are legitimate in assuming them as true beliefs, even though we are not able to prove their truth. Reid shows the good reasons we have to start to philosophize by accepting all common sense beliefs, that is, the reasons that make them good candidates to be the foundation upon which all knowledge should be built. Firstly, we are justified in supposing they are true beliefs because it is impossible to prove the reliability of any power of mind. From the beginning of the investigation, it is necessary to assume that they all are not fallacious and, consequently, that our common sense beliefs are true. Secondly, Reid condemns the authors who choose one of the powers of mind as the only source of true beliefs. This is arbitrary. Those philosophers who choose consciousness as a reliable source of knowledge only strengthen the argument that all mental powers are equally reliable: they all yield beliefs as immediate and irresistible as consciousness beliefs. Thirdly, since the powers of mind are functioning properly, when the human mind is not affected by any disorder or disease, there are no good reasons to put into question their reliability. It is not reasonable to doubt our common sense beliefs if the faculties of mind are properly functioning. I have ended this chapter with some observation on how Reid is in fact a

moderate foundationalist, not a strong one. According to him, our common sense beliefs are not indubitable, infallible and incorrigible. They are dubitable in that their truth cannot be proven by reasoning (skeptics, for this reason, may continue to philosophically doubt them). They are fallible in that they are a result of a limited and not perfect human nature. There are cases in which the powers of mind may deceive us in their operations (even though we do not have reasons to suppose them fallacious). Finally, they may be corrigible: a new set of faculties, for instance, may reveal us that common sense beliefs are actually not true.

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