HUME, JACOBI, AND COMMON SENSE
AN EPISODE IN THE RECEPTION OF HUME IN GERMANY AT THE TIME OF KANT

Jacobi's dispute with Mendelssohn over the alleged Spinozism of Lessing[0] was to be important for the development of subsequent German philosophy, especially because it quickly became intertwined with the reception of Kant's critical philosophy. So far as this paper is concerned, however, we are interested in it only because in the course of it Jacobi appealed to Hume's authority to defend his use of the term "faith" or "belief" (both rendered in German as *Glaube*). This appeal, as we shall see, set in motion as intricate a play of conflicting views as can be found in the history of philosophy. It forced hidden ambiguities to light, and exposed conceptual affinities and differences where none would have been suspected.

Jacobi himself did not have Hume particularly in mind in his original attack on Mendelssohn. His concern was to publicize what he took to be the Spinozistic implications of Enlightenment philosophy. Yet one can understand why, in retrospect, Jacobi could have appealed to Hume's authority. For Jacobi's brief against Mendelssohn was based on the claim that, when divorced from its basis in sensations and left to its own devices, reason could quite consistently argue itself into conclusions untenable at the level of common experience. Jacobi had accordingly pleaded with Mendelssohn to abandon his rationalistic ways, and to heed to a more primordial authority than that of philosophy--namely to an innate certainty about what is real, a certainty that animates our experiences from the beginning and pervades all levels of language.[2] Since this certainty is not to be arrived at by any process of ratiocination but is immediate, Jacobi called it "faith," by which one has traditionally understood precisely an assent based on a reflectively unjustifiable subjective certainty.[3] And Jacobi could with right connect this use of the word faith with Hume's definition of opinion or belief as "a lively idea related to or associated with a present impression."[4] It was also clear from other passages that Hume too, like Jacobi, regarded belief as naturally induced.[5] Moreover, in his original exchange with Mendelssohn, Jacobi had argued that reason's conceptions are "second hand" replicas of sense representations, and hence totally dependent on them, exactly as Hume had also defined them in his opening statements of the *Treatise*.[6]

One can however equally well understand the reaction of many critics of Jacobi at the first stage of the dispute, and then again when Jacobi published a dialogue to which he gave the title *David Hume.* For there obviously were religious motivations behind Jacobi's polemic, and, although himself not a Christian in any orthodox sense, Jacobi had chosen to couch his plea to Mendelssohn in pietistic language, using Biblical as much as classical imagery to make his point.[7] Mendelssohn had good reasons, therefore, to suspect Jacobi of being a *Schwärmer* (an "enthusiast") whose aim was to substitute blind faith in a supposed supernatural revelation for the rational pursuit of truth.[8] And equally justified were those who, upon the publication of the dialogue, objected to what they took to be Jacobi's unwarranted usurpation for religious purposes of a purely philosophical conception of Hume.[9] As these critics saw Hume, he had used reason reflectively in order to destroy the illusion that one can demonstrate the truth of otherwise spontaneous beliefs.[10] He had indeed never claimed that he could suspend these beliefs--nor, for that matter, had he ever wished to do so. He had nonetheless still kept reason as the arbiter of truth, even if sceptical doubt was all that it could ultimately deliver. In this respect Hume belonged to the party of the rationalists and was not to be appropriated by a pious enthusiast of the sort Jacobi seemed to be.[11]

Thus what counted as Humean for one party was taken as anti-Humean by the other. Contributing to the conflict was the not always stringent manner in which Enlightenment philosophers had appropriated elements of the empirical tradition. Mendelssohn was a clear case in point. In *Morgenstunden,* although he assumed a theory of sense impressions as sceptical in its implications as that of Hume,[12] he nonetheless argued to the reality of an external world with the very kind of arguments which Hume had attempted to undercut for once and for all.[13] And when in the dispute with Jacobi he saw himself forced to uncomfortable conclusions on the strength of his own premises, he reacted by appealing to the prerogative of what he called *le bon sens* (common sense or healthy sense) to distinguish between questions that can meaningfully be asked and questions that are best left unvoiced since they lead nowhere.[14] The implication was that ratiocination requires a more fundamental yet indemonstrable feeling of truth, in virtue of which one can "orient oneself" (Mendelssohn's expression) in that very process. But this was exactly the point that Jacobi wanted to make and was later to defend on the strength of Hume's authority. The upshot was that Jacobi's young friend Thomas Wizenmann (a *bona fide* pietist and enthusiast) published a book in which he argued that Mendelssohn had had no right to accuse Jacobi of taking retreat from philosophical argument "under the banner of faith,"[15] for his *bon sens* was, after all, a kind of faith as well. Both men, Jacobi and Mendelssohn, were drawing their inspiration from faith.

The difference was that Jacobi's faith was that of a Christian; Mendelssohn's, that of a Jew.[16]

It was on the occasion of Wizenmann's book that Kant--fearful of the damage being done to the cause of reason--entered the dispute with his 1786 essay, "What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself In Thinking?"--philosophically speaking perhaps the most important document to come out of the dispute. Playing on Mendelssohn's image of "orienting oneself," Kant tried to define "common sense" critically.[17] The unintended result of his contribution, as we shall see in a moment, was however to show how uncritical Kant himself was with respect to some of his own assumptions--how much, therefore, he too became victim of the general confusion.

But, first, more about "common sense." I leave aside the question of the sources of Mendelssohn's *bon sens.* Important for us is that by the time of the Mendelssohn-Jacobi dispute Thomas Reid's philosophy of common sense had been widely and well received in Germany,[18] and that, although that philosophy had normally been used there as a weapon against Humean scepticism, in the dialogue named after "Hume" Jacobi had indifferently appealed to the authority of both Reid and Hume to justify his use of "faith."[19] Strange as it might appear, although Hume was the dialogue's eponymous authority, in the dialogue itself Jacobi had gone on explicitly to distance himself from what he was later to call the Humean "twin-or-universal-idealism" (i.e. idealism with respect to the external world *and* to the self).[20] He had also claimed that, on the contrary, it was possible to be an empiricist yet remain, as he himself had, a realist.[21] In the philosophically most interesting part of the dialogue, Jacobi had in fact expounded a theory of rationality based on an understanding of sense and sensibility which bore obvious resemblances to that of Reid.

In brief, Jacobi had argued that it is false to assume that in sensation perception never takes us further than the mental impression itself constituting the sensation.[22] On the contrary, inasmuch as sensations enter into mental life at all, they have a revelatory power, for their object is apprehended in them precisely as transcending the subject. Sensations, in other words, are "perceptions" *(Wahrnehmungen)* in the Latin and German sense of "apprehensions." They are complex events because, even as subjective states of the mind, they entail a judgement and hence have objective significance. However indeliberately, they take up *(nehmen)* a certain position with respect to something and hold it as the right one *(Wahr).*[23] But this was also Reid's point, and one that Reid had made to rebut Hume--[24]even though the vagaries of English philosophical usage forced him to deny that perception is what he called "simple apprehension" precisely in order to restore to it the meaning of the Latin *apprehendere* or of the German *wahrnehmen.*[25] And from this point there follows a conclusion that Jacobi as well as Reid explicitly

drew. Reason's reflective conceptions and reflective judgements, far from being the faint copies of sense representations that Hume makes of them, articulate and hence enhance distinctions already found in sense perceptions.[26] Reason could indeed not function apart from the senses--or more precisely, it could, but only at the risk of generating illusions. This was a fundamental thesis of empiricism on which Hume, Reid, and Jacobi could equally agree. For Reid and Jacobi, however, this only meant that reason must continue, and never abstract from, the work of perception already in principle performed by the senses. Within this restriction, reason can claim its own objective significance, for its rationality is in essence only a heightened, i.e. a more self-aware and hence deliberate form of sensibility. In a passage of his dialogue that strikingly resembles one in Reid's *Essays*, Jacobi argues that, even according to the witness of common language, to be rational really means to have some form or other of good "sense."[27]

Jacobi's reference to Thomas Reid in his *David Hume* is incidental, even though he elsewhere praises Reid explicitly and his debt to him is incontrovertible.[28] In the dialogue, moreover, Jacobi moves imperceptibly between Hume and Reid without signalling any difference between the two,[29] and, later in the dialogue, he establishes the precedents of his own realist theory in none other than Leibniz, with the curious result that a typically Reidian position is sandwiched (so to speak) between an appeal to Hume's authority on the one side, and to Leibniz's on the other. Yet this juxtaposition, though curious, is not altogether surprising. For there was an ambivalence inherent in Hume's use of "reason" and of naturally induced "belief" which, as we shall see in a moment, artistically allowed Jacobi easily to shift from Hume's phenomenalism to Read's realism, and from the latter to Leibniz's organic notion of reason, without however ever abandoning Hume's psychological standpoint. This ambivalence was all the more apparent if one read Hume--as Jacobi was doing--with the deliberate purpose of playing immediacy of belief and reflectivity of reason against one another. On the one hand, reason's conceptions are said by Hume to be less vivid copies of impressions; they depend on these, therefore, for both content and whatever degree of belief accompanies them. In this respect, since impressions are the products of nature's mechanism, the momentary or habitual tendency to believe in external objects that accompany certain impressions can only betoken--on Hume's statement of the case--a special affinity for truth which is the prerogative of nature and which reason has no ground to oppose.[30] But, on the other hand, it also transpires from Hume that, by distancing itself from the immediacy of impressions, reflective reason in fact acquires a special capacity to pass judgement on the objectivity of naturally induced beliefs.[31] Truth now appears to be *its* prerogative, and nature spares us from its negative conclusions only because of the mind's innate indolence. In brief, reason is two opposite things at once, the handmaid of sense impres-

sions yet the judge of objectivity; belief, for its part, is the only context within which reason can operate yet also the source of illusion.

This is of course an oversimplification. It is common place in Hume, and Jacobi must have known, that neither ideas (which make for rationality) nor impressions (which are the source of belief) are of one piece, so to speak. Ideas are either simple or complex, depending on whether they are the direct copy of an impression or, on the contrary, the sum of simple ideas which have been divorced from the impressions of which they originally were the copy and are now associated together into a new mental product--this in keeping with the psychological laws Hume duly specifies.[32] Impressions, for their part, are either "of sensation" (derived "in the soul originally from unknown causes") or "of reflection."[33] In the latter case, they are the effect on the mind of ideas--whether simple or complex--which are originally traceable to impressions of sensation. These second order impressions (such as "fear" or "desire") can in turn provide the content for another layer of simple and complex ideas which, presumably, can themselves give rise to yet more complex impressions of reflection. The possibilities for psychological complexity are thus for Hume practically inexhaustible. Moreover, because of the particular psychological function which they play and the manner in which they arise, both complex ideas and impressions of reflection can either originally display or eventually come to acquire a degree of vividness just as strong (if not stronger) than any we expect from the impressions of sensation. To this extent, therefore, they can be just as abundant a source of naturally induced beliefs as the simplest of sensations.

These complexities make indeed for a deeply textured picture of the mind. Yet the ambiguity on which Jacobi was playing is not lost in the richness of detail. For whatever their origin or their mechanics, complex ideas and impressions of reflection can have the vividness required by Hume to be a source of belief only to the extent that, functionally at least, they display the same kind of immediacy which we expect in the first instance from the simplest impressions of sensation. Though originally derived, they must begin to function (through habituation or what have you) as immediate phenomena. Ideas, for their part, gain the distance they require for a critique of naturally induced beliefs only to the extent that they function merely as copies of whatever immediate affection in the mind produces such beliefs--whatever the origin of the immediacy at issue might be, or however sophisticated and deliberate as copies the ideas are.[34] To that extent, however, ideas are also powerless to generate belief on their own terms. In other words, despite Hume's many attempts at saving all the phenomena of mental life, his picture of the mind is shut through with a distinction between immediate impression and derived idea, between spontaneous belief and reflective conception, which leaves it abiguous on which side the burden of truth ultimately

lies. And, as a result, it also fails to save the possibility of the weighty and unequivocal sense of objectivity which for Read and Jacobi constituted the basic fact of mental life.[35]

Now Jacobi, like Hume, was also operating with the same distinction, and he too was saying *both:* that judgements of existence originate in a natural tendency to believe which cannot ever be generated reflectively; *and,* that reflective reason is yet the ultimate arbiter of the possibility of objective truth. Unlike Hume, however, Jacobi could reconcile these two claims simply by dropping as contrary to fact Hume's claim that the sense perceptions on which reason's conceptions ultimately depend never take us beyond these very perceptions considered as mental states. By implication, while still relying on Hume's language of "belief," Jacobi was in fact interpreting our natural tendency to accept the reality of things (which in Hume had to appear blind from a reflective point of view) as the product of a primordial and irreducible, yet in principle rational, judgement of the senses--exactly what Reid meant by "common sense."

And Jacobi was thereby rejoining Leibniz as well. Unlike Mendelssohn, who accepted Hume's subjectivism at the level of the senses, but then tried to escape its sceptical consequences by way of inference, Jacobi was confronting that subjectivism head on by rejecting any presumed dichotomy between sense representation and rational conception. So far as he was concerned, the two were different expressions of one and the same human form of life--exactly what Leibniz and his scholastic tradition also took them to be. The crucial difference, of course, was that the tendency in that tradition had been to pattern the senses after the requirements of reason, i.e. to consider them as confused forms of a prior and autonomous rationality. Jacobi was now interpreting the latter, on the contrary, as a more reflective form of sensibility. In his dialogue *David Hume*, already mindful of the presence on the scene of Kant, Jacobi quite deliberately tried to establish an *a priori* of the senses.[36] Inasmuch as sensations are complex events--"apprehensions" in the literal meaning of "taking hold of an object"--they have a structure of their own which determines the conditions of their possibility. These conditions can be reflectively recognized and a theory of knowledge established on their basis.

Here is where Kant must be brought into the picture. I have said that the purpose of his contribution to the dispute was to define "common sense" critically. In his estimate of the situation, the greatest danger for reason came from the side of the religious enthusiasm with which he associated Jacobi and Wizenmann. Though not agreeing with Mendelssohn's metaphysics, Kant's sympathies lay squarely with him. He agreed with Mendelssohn that "speculative reason" needs orienting in its use; but, since reason can alone be its judge (as Kant presumed Mendelssohn would also maintain),[37] the "common sense" to which Mendelssohn had appealed must be understood as itself a function of reason.

Since reason recognizes that, in its pursuit of knowledge and moral determination, it must make assumptions that in principle transcend its ability to establish those assumptions objectively, reason directs itself in its choice and formulation of them by its need to discharge its function as the source of theoretical discovery and/or moral action. This need generates a "feeling," or a tendency to accept certain theses as true despite the critical recognition that they can never be demonstrated as such.[38] It generates a faith, in other words, which Kant calls the "faith of reason" *(Vernunftglauben)* in order to differentiate it from the faith as "inspiration of reason" which he attributed to Jacobi and Wizenmann.[39] For Kant this "faith of reason" was all that Mendelssohn could have meant by common or sound sense.

Now, it could well appear that with one brilliant move, simply by making faith a function of reason's needs, Kant had resolved all possible ambiguities in the use of "reason" and "faith." Yet this new clarity was only apparent. To see why we must note that Kant was indeed being faithful to the literal meaning of "perception" or *"Wahrnehmung"* (i.e. its meaning as "apprehension") by not calling "sensation" or *"Empfindung"* a perception (as Hume had done). Rather, perception was for Kant "empirical intuition," of which sensations constituted only the content or matter.[40] It was space and time that informed this intuition[41] and thereby established for any given sensation the possibility of determining it as the appearance *here and now* (as contrasted to some other possible appearance *there and then)* of a constantly presupposed object of experience. Whatever did not fit within this intuitively apprehended order of "heres and nows" was not to be considered as a true (or objective) appearance. On its basis, therefore, Kant seemed indeed to have provided the possibility of the clear demarcation between subjective and objective which Read and Jacobi wanted but Hume had left begging.

Kant did nonetheless share with both Hume and Mendelssohn the assumption that sensations never take us further than the mental states they are.[42] Moreover, according to what perhaps is the most peculiarly Kantian of Kant's doctrine, he also claimed that space and time are merely *subjective* forms of intuition, i.e. they are not themselves physical objects but only the conditions that establish the possibility for such objects to appear within intuitively apprehensible limits. Unlike the objects themselves, therefore, they cannot be expected to have limits of their own. How ever one understands the nature of the manifold which Kant attributed to space and time as their *a priori* content, such a manifold could definitely not consist of an actually given (i.e. determined) multiplicity of spatio-temporal points.

Here is where Kant, however, begins his own slide into the ambiguity of Hume. For on Kant's understanding of space and time, these are not rigid "grids" (as it were) within which one can determine absolutely the here and now of each appearance of an object. It is only within the presupposed limits of

an already assumed spatio-temporal field that, on the contrary, such determination is possible. But, if such is the case, it then follows that the question whether one such field is to be assumed in preference over another, whether any is *in fact given in experience* and is not, rather, merely the product of imagination, hallucination or fabrication--that any such question cannot ultimately be answered on the strength of the form of the field alone (i.e. space/time) but requires reference to its material content as well. On Kant's assumption, however, this content is sensation, itself a merely subjective affection of the mind--hence equally incapable of yielding the required objective determination. But if neither form nor content of empirical intuition can individually provide the sufficient basis of a judgement of *what is here now,* there is no reason to expect that together the two can do any better.

Kant was of course aware of the difficulty. It is for this reason that for him true perception cannot be based exclusively on intuition but requires a conceptual ingredient as well. The dynamic principles of experience are significant in this respect, since they constitute the rules governing judgements of existence. Their function is to define the kind of connections we must assume *a priori* to obtain between the appearances of an object so far as the content, not just the form, of such appearances is concerned. For instance, should we not assume that such appearances are linked together by an irreversible series of cause-effect connections, and that all appearances must fit within one such indefintely extended series, we would not be able to distinguish between appearances of objects actually given to the senses (i.e. in fact existing) and such as are only imagined. In other words, the function of the principle of causality is to enable us to distinguish real from imaginary space and time, i.e. to establish the very demarcation between subjective and objective at issue here.[43]

Yet Kant was thereby only deferring the impending ambiguity rather than actually resolving it. For, as he well knew, one thing is to establish the validity of a principle in general, and quite another to determine that any connection of appearances actually displayed in sensation is in fact an instance of it.[44] The difficulty, moreover, is inherently unresolvable, because it is due to the disproportion between two radically different forms of representation (intuitive and conceptual), neither of which can determine the other on its own terms. A concrete subject engaged in the actual process of cognition can therefore bring a formal conceptual determination to bear in judgement on a given intuitively apprehended instance only by placing itself hypothetically in the position of a universal observer who, because of the totality of its vision, is capable of apprehending intuitively the necessity of the causal link (or of any other necessary link) posited in the instance at issue, hence also of recognizing the relevance of the formal conceptual determination to the real world. With his usual thoroughness Kant identified a number of "ideas" which all are the product of reflective reason, and each is justifiable precisely because of the special function it

discharges in the process of arriving at particular judgements. Together these ideas constitute a system of necessary hypotheses or postulates. They all are, however, avowedly purely subjective--their necessity merely a function of the requirements of scientific and moral praxis.

Now in the essay on the orientation of thought, Kant himself was stressing the fact (which he had already alleged elsewhere) that these ideas are subjectively motivated by reason's very interest in establishing truth, and that, in the process of helping to shape our picture of the phenomenal world, they also generate a kind of faith.[45] The point to note, however, is that in Kant's critical scheme the faith at issue serves as a surrogate for the certainty which a realist like Read and Jacobi would rather derive in actual experience from sensations, i.e. from the immediate content of perception rather than any form imposed upon it. Such a certainty is based on the intuitive apprehsion that in experience we attain to truly existing objects, not merely imaginary ones. And since it underlies all experience, it allows the possibility for experimenting with different formal determinations and explanations (as needs be) of *what* is that is being experienced here and now, and *why,* while still resting assured that, whatever the value of these determinations and explanations, and however much they might have to be reformed in the future, the fact that in experience we are in the presence of something which is not merely fabricated by the imagination stands unchallanged.[46] Neither Hume nor Kant would of course have wanted to deny this certainty. But since they both denied that sensations take us further than just the affections of the mind itself, for both the certainty had to be a kind of pragmatic (if not blind) faith which no amount of formalization could ever save--though for Hume the faith was immediately induced by "nature," for Kant by reflective reason.

This ambivalence was all the more apparent if one read Hume--as Jacobi was doing--with the deliberate purpose of playing immediacy of belief and reflectivity of reason against one another. On the one hand, reason's conceptions are said by Hume to be less vivid copies of impressions; they depend on these, therefore, for both content and whatever degree of belief accompanies them. In this respect, since impressions are the products of nature's mechanism, the momentary or habitual tendency to believe in external objects that accompany certain impressions can only betoken--on Hume's statement of the case--a special affinity for truth which is the prerogative of nature and which reason has no ground to oppose.[47] But, on the other hand, it also transpires from Hume that, by distancing itself from the immediacy of impressions, reflective reason in fact acquires a special capacity to pass judgement on the objectivity of naturally induced beliefs.[48] Truth now appears to be *its* prerogative, and nature spares us from its negative conclusions only because of the mind's innate indolence. In brief, reason is two opposite

things at once, the handmaid of sense impressions yet the judge of objectivity; belief, for its part, is the only context within which reason can operate yet also the source of illusion.

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But were Hume's claims about the function in mental life of sense and sensibility, which Kant uncritically accepted, correct? The irony is that, also at the beginning of his essay on the orientation of thought, Kant acknowledges that the metaphor of "orienting oneself" derives from the body's ability to distinguish between left and right and thus to find its way in a region of space instinctively. He also points out that this ability is subjective and primordial, and that, though at the basis of other representations attained through reflective abstraction, is itself not reducible to any deliberate judgement.[53] But now, how could Kant claim this much and not also recognize that the body, even at the level of its simplest experiences, already naturally distinguishes itself from a world that both transcends it and yet contains it, and naturally finds a place for itself with respect to it? This further conclusion is an obvious one, and the only likely explanation for why Kant did not draw it is that he had been blinded by Hume's arguments that sensations have no significance except as impressions.[54] But Kant did not have to accept these arguments. He did not have to divide "apprehension" into two essentially different components--subjective sense-content on the one hand, and, on the other, formal determination that generates objectivity. Like Reid and Jacobi, he could have taken sensations as signs and suggestions which, though naturally occurring events, are already judgement-like; inasmuch as they enter into conscious life, they already are perceptions in a strict sense, i.e. implicitly rational from the beginning. Kant would then have been well on the road towards Jacobi's (and Reid's) theory of rationality as a reflective form of sense perception. In fact, Kant accepted a false picture of the senses, and thereby settled himself with a paradoxical notion of objectivity.

In the debate over Jacobi's use of "faith" the parties involved never reached a meeting of mind.

This paper must remain, therefore, the story of a confusion. "The Dust that Hume Raised" could be an apt subtitle for it, because, as we have seen, behind the confusion lay an ambiguity in Hume's use of "reason" and "belief." Yet Hume cannot be held to have been the only culprit, for that ambiguity was itself the result of Hume's misconception of the facts of sensibility and of his mistrust of the senses, and these--the misconception and the mistrust--were long standing ingredients of both the empiricist and the scholastic traditions from which all the protagonists in our story drew their inspiration. Jacobi himself seemed, in his dialogue on Hume, more to have stumbled upon his theory than to have deliberately thought it through. Witness is the fact that he was eventually to distance himself from it,[55] precisely because, in line with long-standing prejudices, he feared he had granted to much to the senses. But, these developments apart, the lesson to be learned is that, though many were making much of the nature of rationality, and much had been made about it in virtually every philosophical tradition, the real problem, the one that had caused (and still causes) confusion, was a lack of understanding of the nature and function of the senses

.1.For a very good account, perhaps a bit too slanted in favour of Mendelssohn, see Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1973), chs. VII, VIII. The main relevant documents are: Moses Mendelssohn, *Morgenstunden, oder Vorlesungen Über das Daseyn Gottes, Erster Theil* (Berlin: Voß, 1785); Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Breslau: Löwe, 1785); *David Hume Über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus. Ein Gespräch* (Beslau: Löwe, 1787). For an English translation of these texts (equipped with original paginations), see *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi: The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel "Allwill",* tr. with introductory study, notes and bibliography by G. di Giovanni (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen, 1994). For a detailed treatment of Jacobi's relation to his contemporaries, see *The Unfinished Philosophy of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi,* pp. 3-167 of the just cited volume of translations.

2.Cf. *Letters Concerning Spinoza* (1785), pp. 162-63; 171 (Thesis VI).

3.*David Hume* (1787), p. 21-22.

4.*A Treatise of Human Nature,* ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon, 1888), p. 96; cf. also p. 183: "*...All our reasonings concerning causes and effects are deriv'd from nothing but custom; and...belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our nature."* Cf. Jacobi, *David Hume* (1787), pp. 29 ff. Jacobi cites extensively from *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding.* Since he is not satisfied with the current German translation (very likely the one published by Hermann Andreas Pistorius in 1754), he adds the original English.

5.Cf. *Treatise*: "Most fortunately it happens that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose....I dine, I play a game of back gammon....Here then I find myself absolutely and necessarily determin'd to live, and talk, and act like other people in the common affairs of life. But notwithstanding that my natural propensity, and the course of my animal spirits and passions reduce me to this indolent belief in the general maxims of the world...." p. 269; "I may, nay I must yield to the current of nature, in submitting to my senses and understanding...." p. 269.

6.*Letters Concerning Spinoza* (1785), p. 162. Cf. Hume: "All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS. The difference between these consists in the degree of force and liveliness with which they strike the mind....Those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name *impressions*; and under this name I comprehend all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul. By *ideas* I mean the faint image of these in thinking and reasoning; such, as for instance, are all the perceptions excited by the present discourse...." *Treatise,* p. 1.

7.He had even cited Lavater. Cf. the peroration at the end of the work.

8.Cf. his letter to Kant, 16 October 1785, Academy Edition, Vol. X, p. 414.

9.Cf. the anonymous reviewer of the dialogue in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung,* II(1788), No. 92, 105-107. Hamann too, though siding with Jacobi and even conspiring with him in the process leading up to the publication of *Letters Concerning Spinoza,* was upset by Jacobi's attempt to construe his appeal to faith in that book as a case of Humean belief. Cf. J. G. Hamann, *Briefwechsel,* ed. A. Henkel, 7 vols (Wiesbaden & Frankfurt/Main: Insel Verlag, 1955-1979), Letter to Jacobi, 27 April-3 May 1787, p. 167. For another criticism of Jacobi's use of faith in *Letters Concerning Spinoza,* see *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung,* I(1786), 292-296.

10.Cf.: "As the sceptical doubt arises naturally from a profound and intense reflection on those subjects, it always encreases, the farther we carry our reflection, whether in opposition or conformity to it. Carelessness and in-attention alone can afford us any remedy. For this reason I rely entirely upon them...." *Treatise,* p. 218.

11.Hume would have agreed. Cf.: "...Concerning the choice of our guide...I make bold to recommend philosophy, and shall not scruple to give it preference to superstition of every kind and denomination. For as superstition arises naturally and easily from the popular opinions of mankind, it seizes more strongly on the mind, and is able to disturb us in the conduct of our lives and actions. Philosophy, on the contrary, if just, can present us only with mild and moderate sentiments; and if false and extravagant, its opinions are merely the objects of a cold and general

speculation, and seldom go so far as to interrupt the course of our natural propensities....Generally speaking, the errors in religion are dangerous; those in philosophy only ridiculous." *Treatise,* pp. 271-272.

12.Cf. *Treatise*: "Now since nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions, and since all ideas are deriv'd from something antecedently present to the mind; it follows, that...we never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appear'd in that narrow compass...." pp. 67-68.

13.*Morgenstunden,* especially ch. VI, pp. 95-113.

14.*Letters Concerning Spinoza* (1789), p. 85.

15.Cf. *Letters Concerning Spinoza* (1785), p. 161.

16.Thomas Wizenmann, *Die Resultate der Jacobischen und Mendelssohnischen Philosophie, kritisch untersucht von einem Freywilligen* (Leipzig: Göschen, 1786), Cf. especially pp. 39, 236 ff. I am oversimplifying what is an otherwise very complex, and possibly confused, position. Wizenmann's point is that Mendelssohn and Jacobi both stand on the same grounds to the extent that they both agree that reason is bound to the immediacy of the senses and to common sense. But Wizenmann's intention is to show the limitations of "common sense," which he takes to be the exclusive starting point of "speculative reason" (i.e. the reason of rationalistic philosophy). This "common sense" constitutes the immediate experience that we have of reality as consisting of merely finite beings; it therefore inevitably leads to the fatalism of Spinoza. Cf. pp. 142 ff. According to Wizenmann, Mendelssohn's reason relies on "common sense" alone whereas Jacobi's also feeds on the immediate testimony of a historical, revealed, religion. This latter, although also a "faith," is superior to anything that "common sense" can offer. Cf. pp. 180 ff.

17."Was heißt: Sich im Denkem orientiren?" *Kant's Werke,* Academy Ed. Vol. VIII, pp. 131 ff.; Cf. pp. 133-134.

18.On this, see Manfred Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1786-1800* (Kingston and

Montreal: McGill-Queen, 1987).

19.*David Hume* (1787) pp. 26-27. Jacobi cites from a review in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung,* II(1786), 181-183, of Reid's *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man.* He turns to the "good David Hume" on pp. 30 ff.

20.In the 1815 ed. of the *David Hume,* in *Werke,* II (Leipzig: Fleischer, 1815), p. 204; cf. p. 107 of the 1787 ed.

21.Pp. vii, 49 ff.

22.Cf. Hume: "Those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name *impressions*; and under this name I comprehend all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul. By *ideas* I mean the faint image of these in thinking and reasoning; such, as for instance, are all the perceptions excited by the present discourse...." *Treatise,* p. 1; and "Now since nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions, and since all ideas are deriv'd from something antecedently present to the mind; it follows, that...we never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appear'd in that narrow compass...." pp. 67-68.

23.Cf. pp. 181 ff.

24.Cf. *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man,* Essay II, chs. 3 and 4, where Reid argues that "sensations," understood as mere impressions in the manner of Locke and Hume, are physical events that do not constitute as such consciousness proper, even though God has made them the necessary pre-conditions of mental life. The latter begins only with perception, and it is clear that "if, therefore, we attend to that act of our mind which we call the perception of an external object of sense, we shall find in it these three things:—*First,* Some conception or notion of the object perceived; *Secondly,* A strong and irresistible conviction and belief of its present existence; and *Thirdly,* That this conviction and belief are immediate, and not the effect of reasoning." *The Works of Thomas Reid,* ed. Sir William Hamilton (Edinburgh: MacLachlan and Stewart, 1873)

Vol. I, p. 258. Cf. also Reid's critique of Hume's theory of ideas in ch. 14.

25.*On the Intellectual Powers,* Essay IV, Ch. 1. See especially the bottom of the right column on p. 361 and the beginning of the following.

26.*On the Intellectual Powers of Man,* cf. Essay V, ch. 1, pp. 418-419. *David Hume* (1787), p. 182.

27.*David Hume* (1787), "He: You can rest easy about that. You must have noticed that whenever I want to express what is most eminent about a man, I speak of his *sense*. *One never has more understanding than one has sense.* I: The common use of language which, whenever philosophy tries to make a laughing-stock of it, usually turns out to be the wiser one, teaches us the same lesson....We derive from *Sinn* ("sense") the most characteristic forms of understanding as well as of the lack of it. *Unsinn* (or "nonsense"), which is the extreme lack of understanding, is its opposite. Then come *Schwachsinn* ("feeblemindedness" or "dullness of sense"), *Stumpfsinn* ("insensitivity"), *Leichtsinn* ("frivolity"), and their opposites, *Scharfsinn* ("sharpness of sense") and *Tiefsinn* ("profundity of sense")...." p. 133. *On the Intellectual Powers of Man,* Essay VI, ch. 2: "The Latin words *sentire, sententia, sensa, sensus,* from the last of which the English word *sensus* is borrowed, express judgement or opinion, and are applied indifferently to objects of external sense, of taste, of morals, of the understanding...." p. 422; "I have endeavoured to show that sense, in its most common, and, therefore, its most proper meaning, signifies judgement....From this it is natural to think that common sense should mean common judgement...." p. 423.

28.Jacobi indirectly acknowledged his debit to Reid in at least one place—in a passage of the 1784 *Woldemar* in which he has one of his characters (a Scott named Sydney, who expresses many of the views dear to Jacobi's heart) praise the Scottish philosopher. Part I, p. 80 of the 1796 ed. (Königsberg: Nicolovius). Cf. *Werke,* V(1820), p. 71. Jacobi also praises Reid in a letter to Johann Neeb, 18.Oct.1814, *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's auserlesener Briefwechsel,* 2 vols, ed. f. Roth (Leipzig: Fleischer, 1825-27) II, #351, p. 445. For Reid's influence on Jacobi, see Kuehn, pp. 143-149, 158-166, and also Günther Baum, *Vernunft und Erkenntnis: Die Philosophie F. H.*

Jacobis (Bonn: Bouvier, 1969), pp. 42-49. In his "Tagebuch der Reise nach dem Reich 1788" Wilhelm von Humboldt reports Jacobi as saying to him in 1788: "There is a big and important difference between perception *[Perception]* and sensation *[Sensation]*, between perception *[Wahrnehmung]* of external alterations and the feeling of internal ones--a difference that Kant denies, because, according to him, everything is only a modification of the soul itself, everything is only sensation. We do not perceive, as is usually said, merely the picture of external things *[Dinge]*; we perceive these things themselves (though, to be sure, modified according to the relationship of our position with respect to the thing we perceive and to all other things in the world). This perception occurs, as Reid has said quite correctly, *by a sort of revelation* [English in the original]. Hence we do not demonstrate that there are objects external to us, but believe it. This belief is no acceptance in accordance with probable reasons. It has a greater and more unshakeable certainty than any demonstration could ever afford." Humboldt, *Gesammelte Schriften,* ed. A. Leitzmann (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968), Vol. XIV, p. 58. Cf. p. 61: "We intuit *[schauen...an]* the things outside us; these things are actual things, and the certainty intuition affords us we call faith. This certainty is so strong for us, and so necessary, that every other certainty, indeed, even self-consciousness, depends on it. Hence Kant is wrong when he reduces all things to the human being *[den Menschen selbst]*, when he explains everything as a modification of the soul and accepts external objects *[Objekte]* in word only while denying their reality *[die Sache selbst]*." I understand from Mr Hammacher that there is unpublished epistolary evidence that Jacobi became acquainted with Read's works the year before the publication of the *David Hume.*

29. Some modern Hume scholars would not find Jacobi's imperceptible shift from Hume to Reid in any way surprising, because they deny that there is a substantial difference between the two. Cf. Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume: A Critical Study of its Origins and Central Doctrines* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1941; reprinted 1964), p. 8; Richard Popkin, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* s.v. "Skepticism," Vol. VII, 456). Norton finds this view mistaken. As he says, "There is...a crucial difference between Hume and his Scottish critics. However often Hume may say that we have certain natural propensities to believe this or that, he

does not go so far as to say that what we must naturally *believe* must be *true."* David Fate Norton, *"David Hume": Common sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press), pp. 200-201. This is however drawing a distinction between Hume and Reid in the very empiricist terms Reid and Jacobi want to deny. Reid (and so too the scholastic tradition that he represents) does not make certain knowledge depend on psychological certainty. His point is rather that, *as perceptions,* sensations delineate a first distinction between what is subjective and what is objective and, therefore, also establish the possibility of assent and denial. They are "revelatory," in other words. They of course also establish the possibility of doubt; but this doubt must always be localized, i.e. must always be limited to particular objects and circumstances, for it is impossible to doubt anything unless there is something, already cognized in some respect, about which we can be doubtful in some other respect.

30."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 backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends: and when after three or four hours' 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." *Treatise,* p. 269. "Reason" is a term which Hume uses in a variety of senses, not all of them necessarily consistent with each other. On this point, see Norton, *David Hume,* pp. 96-98, note.

31."But tho' we are led after this manner, by the natural propensity of the imagination, to ascribe a continu'd existence to those sensible objects or perceptions, which we find to resemble each other in their interrupted appearance; yet a very little reflection and philosophy is sufficient to makes us perceive the fallacy of that opinion." *Treatise,* p. 210.

32.*Treatise,* p. 3. Also, Part I, Section IV.

33.*Treatise,* pp. 7.

34.Hence Hume's original statement that "All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS....By *ideas* I mean the faint image of [impressions] in thinking and reasoning" (see note 6 above) stands despite the many subsequent qualifications.

35.To make the same point by glossing on an image Hume himself used to describe the mind *(Treatise,* p. 253), if the latter is like a stage (or a "theatre"), then on Hume's theory it is not clear what room there is for a spectator of the play being produced there. On the one hand, the spectator must stand outside the stage in order to recognize the play for the mere spectacle that it is. On the other hand, since no other view is available to him except what he finds on the stage itself, the same spectator cannot describe his "looking on" except as continuous with the play he judges a mere spectacle. In that case, however, he must admit that he is merely playing at being a spectator, and that his judgement that the play is only a spectacle is itself no less of a spectacle than the play which he judges to be such. The question of how one can invoke the image of a stage without already contrasting it with a real world, and thus presupposing a strong notion of objectivity, has been left begging. This is, moreover, a fundamental problem in Hume which cannot be resolved by appealing to the image of "the competent judge" whose views are more likely to be objective than those of other less trained individuals--an image to which Hume appeals in the essay "Of the Standard of Taste." This essay is an elegant piece of writing which could just as well have been produced by a common sense philosopher or, for that matter, by any eighteenth century Aristotelian. For underlying it is the tacit assumption that an unambiguous sense of objectivity is possible, within the limits of which the question can then be debated whether somebody's view of a situation is more objective than somebody's else. But, on Read's and Jacobi's reading of Hume, this unambiguous sense is precisely what Hume lacks.

36.Cf. *David Hume* (1787), pp. 119-120, and the footnote that Jacobi adds to this section in the 1815 edition, *Werke,* II, p. 215-216. In the 1815 footnote Jacobi claims to have been inspired for his deduction by Spinoza. He then refers, however, to a book on logic by G. E. Schulze (of *Ænesidemus* fame), and to a review of the book in the *Göttingen Erudite Notices,* both of which in fact echo themes from Reid's "common sense" philosophy. Cf. G. E. Schulze, *Grundsätze der*

allgemeinen Logik (Helmstädt: Fleckeisen, 1802), and *Göttingische Gelehrte Nachrichten,* III(1802) 1409-1421, especially 1412-1413.

37.P. 140.

38.Pp. 136-137.

39.P. 141.

40.*Critique of pure Reason,* B34.

41.B34 and §§ 2 and 3 of the Transcendental Aesthetics.

42.B 44-45.

43.I recognize that Kant's arguments in the Analogies of Experience are open to differing interpretations, and that my statement cannot but be a simplification. So far as the development of the present paper is concerned, however, the crucial consideration is that Kant *needs* some such argument as the one stated. If the Analogies do not provide it, then Kant's position is all the more vulnerable to the charge of ambiguity being levelled against it.

44.Cf. *Critique of Judgement,* Introduction, Section IV, also pp. 183 ff. among other places. Academy Edition, Vol. V.

45.*Critique of Pure Reason,* A822/B850 ff.

46.Except, of course, in accidental cases.

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53.Pp. 134-135.

54.Or perhaps he implicitly did draw it when he argued that sensibility has its own *a priori* forms. But then, why make so much of a supposed material content of sensations which could at best only have psychological meaning and would *per se* lack any epistemic value?

55.Cf. the long footnote added in 1815 to p. 123 of the 1787 *David Hume,* and the emendation of the text; *Werke,* II, pp. 218-223.