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Kant and Tetens on Transcendental Philosophy

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the significance of Johann Nikolas Tetens, a German empiricist philosopher working in the 1770's, to the theoretical philosophy of Immanuel Kant. I begin by examining Tetens' discussion of philosophical methodology in his 1775 essay *Über die allgemeine speculativische Philosophie*. I make the case that Tetens' criticism of the methodology of the Scottish common sense philosophers and his subsequent attempt to incorporate what he takes to be their valuable insights into the approach of the broadly Wolffian philosophical tradition provides important context for interpreting Kant's methodology in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. I then examine two different cases of Tetens' applying this methodology in his 1777 text *Philosophische Versuche über die menschliche Natur und ihre Entwicklung*. I argue that Tetens' discussion and critique of Humean causation in the fourth essay of the *Philosophische Versuche* heavily influenced Kant's understanding of "Hume's Problem" and that many of the more obscure issues about the Kant-Hume relationship can be greatly clarified by giving sufficient attention to Tetens. I then examine Tetens' engagement with Thomas Reid's account of perception. I argue that Tetens' attempt to develop a representationalist account of perception which withstands Reid's objections leads him toward the view that representation requires object concepts and the problem of accounting for the origin of these concepts pushes Tetens to articulate an account of synthesis. In the final chapter, I examine Kant's proof that the real of appearances has intensive magnitude in the Anticipations of Perception. I raise several difficulties for the interpretation of the proof and then argue that Tetens' discussion of perception can provide us with the context for such a proof and the nature of the "correspondence" between sensation and objects.

Keywords: Immanuel Kant, Johann Nikolaus Tetens, Thomas Reid, Representation, Transcendental Philosophy

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Introduction

Johann Nicolaus Tetens (1736-1807) was a German empiricist philosopher and contemporary of Immanuel Kant who was given the nickname “the German Locke.” Though he is largely forgotten today, Tetens was a highly regarded philosophical figure in the 1770’s during the period of time which is known as the “silent decade” in Kant’s career. In that period, Tetens published two books which discuss philosophical topics that are closely related to issues that Kant was known to be concerned with as he was working out the details of what would eventually become the *Critique of Pure Reason: Über die allgemeine speculativische Philosophie* (1775) and *Philosophische Versuche über die menschliche Natur und ihre Entwicklung* (1777).

One of the most significant aspects of Tetens’ philosophical work was his level of engagement with the work of philosophers outside of Germany. As a student of Johann Christian Eschenbach (1719-1758), the German translator of Berkeley’s *Three Dialogues*, Tetens was particularly well acquainted with the contemporary English philosophical scene.¹ His work contains extensive discussions of the work of the Scottish philosophers of the period, particularly that of David Hume and Thomas Reid. However, Tetens’ importance is not limited to the role of simply being a commentator; his discussions often led to critiques and attempts to work out solutions to the problems he raised by incorporating what he took to be useful insights from these other philosophers into the broadly Wolffian framework that surrounded him. When one looks at these discussions through Kantian lenses, one notices an immediate resemblance between some of the positions that Tetens articulates and those of Kant in the first *Critique*.

¹See Johann Christian Eschenbach. *Sammlung der vornehmsten Schriftsteller, die die Wirklichkeit ihres eignen Körpers und der ganzen Körperwelt läugnen. Enthaltend des Berkeleys Gespräche zwischen Hylas und Philonous und des Colliers Allgemeinen Schlüssel*. Rostock, 1756. For a more detailed discussion of Tetens’ career and his relation to Eschenbach, see their entries in Heiner F. Klemme and Manfred Kuehn, eds. *The Dictionary of Eighteenth Century German Philosophers*. Continuum, 2010.

Kant was known to be fairly well acquainted with Tetens' work. Hamann noted that Kant had a copy of Tetens' *Philosophische Versuche* open on his desk while writing the *Critique*.² Kant himself comments on Tetens' work in a letter to Marcus Herz and complains about Tetens' writing:

Tetens, in his diffuse work on human nature, made some penetrating points; but it certainly looks as if for the most part he let his work be published just as he wrote it down, without corrections. When he wrote his long essay on freedom in the second volume, he must have kept hoping that he would find his way out of this labyrinth by means of certain ideas that he had hastily sketched for himself, or so it seems to me. After exhausting himself and his reader, he left the matter just as he had found it, advising his reader to consult his own feelings.³

While Kant may not have enjoyed Tetens' writing style, it does seem to be the case that he cared about what Tetens thought of his work. Two letters make it clear that Kant thought of Tetens as among his immediate philosophical audience. After thanking Herz for distributing copies of his book and for taking the time to read it, Kant comments on the difficulty of his investigation and the need for it to be clarified:

This sort of investigation will always remain difficult, for it includes the *metaphysics of metaphysics*. Yet I have a plan in mind according to which even popularity might be gained for this study, a plan that could not be carried out initially, however, for the foundations needed cleaning up, particularly because the whole system of this sort of knowledge had to be exhibited in all its articulation...I am very uncomfortable at Herr Mendelssohn's putting my book aside;

²Hamann to Herder, May 17, 1776. "Kant is hard at work on his Moral of Pure Reason and Tetens lies open constantly before him."

³Kant to Herz, April 1778 (10:232).

but I hope that it will not be forever. He is the most important of all the people who could explain this theory to the world; it was on him, on Herr Tetens, and on you, dearest man, that I counted most.⁴

Similarly, in a letter to Christian Garve, Kant remarks that “Garve, Mendelssohn, and Tetens are the only men I know through whose cooperation this subject could have been brought to a successful conclusion before too long...”⁵ Tetens, along with Garve, Mendelssohn, and Herz, is counted among the few people that Kant thought could appreciate the *Critique* and explain its importance to the rest of the community. This shows that Tetens is important to Kant, not simply as an influence, but as someone who was among the intended audience of the book. Kant would have expected Tetens to read the *Critique* and engage with his work, particularly in places where his work seems to parallel what Tetens had done.

With Tetens in the background, one can notice a sort of continuity between certain discussions in Tetens’ *Philosophische Versuche* and Kant’s *Critique*. One of the most noteworthy elements of Kant’s thought as a whole is the length he goes through to distinguish descriptive questions from normative ones and his elevation of the normative questions above the descriptive.⁶ Kant begins the Transcendental Deduction by distinguishing two important questions:

Jurists, when they speak of entitles and claims, distinguish in a legal matter between the questions about what is lawful (*quid juris*) and that which concerns the fact (*quid facti*), and since they demand proof of both, they call the fist, that which is to establish the entitlement or legal claim, the **deduction**. (A84/B116)

These are the questions that must be answered if any legal dispute is to be resolved. The former asks what the law states and the latter asks about the facts underlying the particular

⁴Kant to Marcus Herz, May 11, 1781 (10:269-270).

⁵Kant to Christian Garve, August 7, 1783 (10:341).

⁶The classic treatment of this topic leading up to Kant and in the philosophers working on perception after him in the nineteenth century is given by Gary Hatfield. See Gary Hatfield. *The Natural and the Normative: Theories of Spatial Perception from Kant to Helmholtz*. Mit Press, 1990, Chapter 1.

case. It is clear that these are very different questions, and that this difference is a difference in kind. If someone is on trial, it must be demonstrated by the prosecution that the law forbids a particular act and that the person actually committed this act. The former, which is called a “deduction” in the German legal system in this period, is established by specifying the obligations covered by the law, whereas the latter is answered by appealing to a description of what took place.⁷ Immediately, Kant applies the notion of a deduction to our concepts, and notes that in the case of empirical concepts, a deduction is unproblematic because experience can be appealed to in order to establish their reality. This is not the case with some of our other concepts, however. Where there is no direct link to experience, as in the case of concepts like fortune or fate, the *quid juris* is not easily answerable and we are left without a demonstration that we are entitled to use them (A84-85/B117).

In the case of *a priori* concepts, these will always require a deduction because “proofs from experience are not sufficient for the lawfulness of such a use, and yet one must know how these concepts can be related to objects that they do not derive from experience” (ibid). This leads Kant to distinguish two kinds of deduction:

I therefore call the explanation of the way in which concepts can relate to objects *a priori* their transcendental deduction, and distinguish this from the empirical deduction, which shows how a concept is acquired through experience and reflection on it, and therefore concerns not the lawfulness but the fact from which the possession has arisen. (ibid)

In the subsequent pages, Kant mentions two other philosophers who run afoul of this kind of distinction: Locke and Hume. Locke, Kant tells us, neglected this distinction and was led to try to derive the pure concepts from experience. Hume is evaluated more favorably

⁷See Dieter Henrich. “Kant’s Notion of a Deduction and the Methodological Background of the First Critique”. In: *Kant’s Transcendental Deductions: The Three Critiques and the Opus postumum*. Ed. by Eckart Förster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989, pp. 29–46 for a discussion of the history behind the term “deduction” in the German legal tradition.

insofar as Kant thinks that he recognizes that these concepts would have to be *a priori*, and then out of an inability to see how this might be possible, tries to derive them from association in experience (A95/B127).

What this makes fairly clear is that Kant perceives a significant difference between himself and most of his predecessors in his realization that there is a distinction between an empirical deduction and a transcendental deduction, and that where most of his predecessors were interested in the former, he is interested in the latter. However, Kant is likely not being completely forthcoming about the relationship between his own thought and that of his predecessors.⁸ Kant was notoriously bad at citing the people that he was reading, and as I will argue, his understanding and assessment of his predecessors did not occur in isolation, but rather was heavily informed by discussions happening around him in the German philosophical scene. This is particularly true with respect to his relationship to Hume, which was heavily influenced by Tetens.⁹ In the few places where Kant mentions Tetens in writing, we find a similar characterization:

I concern myself not with the evolution of concepts, like Tetens (all actions by means of which concepts are produced), nor with their analysis, like Lambert, but solely their objective validity. I am not in competition with these men. R4900 (18:23)

Tetens investigates the concept of pure reason merely subjectively (human nature), I investigate them objectively. The former analysis is empirical, the latter transcendental. R4901 (18:23)

These two *Reflexionen*, which are dated between 1776-1778, suggest that Kant explicitly had Tetens in mind when he contrasts his objective and transcendental investigation with

⁸In an unpublished remark, Kant mentions that he does not bother to cite everyone whom he has read. See R5019 (18:63).

⁹It is probably relevant that Tetens characterizes his investigation as following the observational method of Locke in the preface of the *Philosophische Versuche*. See pg. 1.

the empirical and subjective investigation that he also attributes to Locke and Hume.¹⁰

It does not take more than a quick glance through Tetens' essays to see why Kant would say something like this, but the obviousness of Kant's distinction is misleading.¹¹ There is a long history of philosophers confusing normative and descriptive questions, and this is very easy to do when the two kinds of questions can be worded in ways that make them barely distinguishable and this is especially true when the question "What justifies my belief that P?" and the question "How do I form the belief that P?" can both be given the seemingly identical answer of an appeal to an experience. One notable place where such a blurring occurs is Condillac's posing of the question of *why* we are justified in believing that objects have the properties that we represent them as having and his attempt to answer it by way of giving an account of *how* such a belief is formed.¹²

This gets even more difficult when we are talking about the reality of concepts. When one is committed to thinking that all real concepts are empirically derived, the *quid juris* is virtually indistinguishable from the *quid facti* of whether or not a concept was derived from experience or not. Kant's characterization of Tetens suggests that Tetens was not engaged with the transcendental (and thus objective) investigation of object concepts, but this is misleading. The concern of justifying the use of various object concepts is present in Tetens thought and Kant's use of transcendental-empirical distinction obscures the fact that the descriptive and the normative are intertwined for Tetens. This can be seen in both the discussion of transcendental concepts in *Über die allgemeine speculativische Philosophie* (1775)

¹⁰Lewis White Beck claims that "Tetens wrote a psychology which could and did serve Kant as a starting point in the study of the operations of the mind, but only as a starting point." See Lewis White Beck. *Early German Philosophy*. Harvard University Press, 1969, p. 414. It seems likely that they would have to be dated after 1777 when the *Philosophische Versuche* was published. There is also precedent for using Tetens' alleged influence on Kant for dating some of Kant's unpublished manuscripts. See Wolfgang Carl. *Der schweigende Kant: Die Entwürfe zu einer Deduktion der Kategorien vor 1781*. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989, pp. 118-119.

¹¹Beck is particularly unfair to Tetens in this regard, claiming that "Tetens failed, after a brilliant beginning, to write a genuine system of transcendental philosophy, but wrote instead philosophical essays on human nature and thereby missed the boat." (Beck, *Early German Philosophy*, pp. 414-415).

¹²Etienne Bonnot Abbé de Condillac. *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*. Trans. by Hans Aarsleff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 16-18.

and the fifth essay of the *Philosophische Versuche* (1777). In the earlier essay, Tetens is interested in demonstrating that these concepts [*Grundbegriffe*] are employed legitimately, which is a matter of demonstrating that the concepts are derived solely from sensation and that they contain nothing added in by the fictive faculty [*Dichtungsvermögen*].¹³ In the the *Philosophische Versuche*, Tetens attempts to demonstrate the role that these concepts play in making perceptual experience possible, which is very much in line with Kant's aims in the *Transcendental Analytic*. Thus, it is not entirely the case that Tetens was not engaged in the kind of investigation that Kant called transcendental.

While Kant's characterization of Tetens may be somewhat misleading, it is accurate on the supposition of Kant's major doctrines from the *Analytic*, several of which were likely influenced by a close study of Tetens' investigations and their failures. One of Kant's jabs towards the notion of an empirical deduction is very reminiscent of Tetens: "The unfolding of experience in which [concepts] are encountered, however, is not their deduction (but their illustration), since they would thereby be only contingent" (A94/B126).¹⁴ The problem of finding another kind of necessity which can make sense of the necessary connection essential to causation which plagued Tetens in the fourth essay and his stumbling around the attempt to work out a notion of subjective necessity with enough explanatory efficacy to make sense of the laws governing the understanding in the seventh essay are both resolved with the introduction of synthetic *a priori* necessity. Since Tetens is forced to ground this necessity in the activity of the subject and cannot accept it as *a priori*, his unchanging subjectivity is ultimately contingent. From Kant's perspective, everything that Tetens attempts to do in the fourth and fifth essays of the *Philosophische Versuche* is ultimately an illustration of these concepts and not a deduction of them. If there is any one philosopher that Kant

¹³See *Über die allgemeine speculativische Philosophie*, pg. 63-64, 70-1. For a discussion of this, see Corey W. Dyck. "Kant's Transcendental Deduction and the Ghosts of Descartes and Hume". In: *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19.3 (2011), pp. 473-496, pp. 482-484

¹⁴Also see Kant's comment on the attempted physiological derivation of the categories given by "the famous Locke" (A86-87/B119). The comment that a "very different birth certificate than that of an ancestry from experiences" must be given for a deduction would apply to Tetens as well.

would have studied closely who most strongly exemplified the limitations of an empirical deduction of the categories, it is Tetens.

In the *Philosophische Versuche*, Tetens discusses five problems that would have been of interest to Kant:

1. The Problem of Providing a Successful Alternative to Humean Causation
2. Explaining the Necessity Involved in Representation
3. The Sensationist Problem: Explaining Intentionality
4. Explaining the Unity of Perceptual Experience
5. Accounting for Object Concepts

What is particularly interesting is that these are all problems which, from a Kantian standpoint, can be reduced to the problem of the synthetic *a priori* and the problem the Transcendental Deduction. In the A-edition preface, Kant tells us that the deduction is broken up into two sides:

This inquiry, which goes rather deep, has two sides. One side refers to the objects of the pure understanding, and is supposed to demonstrate and make comprehensible the objective validity of its concepts *a priori*; thus it belongs essentially to my ends. The other side deals with the pure understanding itself, concerning its possibility and the powers of cognition on which it itself rests; thus it considers the subjective relation, and although this exposition is of great importance in respect of my chief end, it does not belong essentially to it... (A xvi-xvii)

The first side is directed at establishing the objective validity of the categories, and the second is concern with the possibility of the pure understanding. The former is the objective side, and the latter is the subjective side. While the aim of the objective side seems

straightforward, the presence of the subjective side seems problematic from the outset because of Kant's comments. In the passage above, he claims that the subjective side does not belong essentially to his chief end. Further down the page, he says that the subjective side is "something like the search for the cause of a given effect, and is therefore something like a hypothesis..." But Kant immediately tries to dispel the notion that what he is doing is simply offering an opinion which is simply there to be taken or left by the reader. He claims that the conclusion the subjective side establishes can be fully supported by the objective side, that the objective side is his "principle concern." This raises an obvious question: If the objective deduction is what is truly essential, then why bother with the subjective side at all?

The structure of the A-Deduction itself further compounds the issue. The chapter is divided into three major sections. The first section, as noted above, lays out the notion of a deduction, distinguishes an empirical deduction from a transcendental one, and then sketches out the problem to be solved. The second section contains the account of the threefold synthesis, and the third section is widely taken to be the objective side of the deduction, with two seemingly distinct proofs which establish that the objective validity of the categories. This seems to make the subjective side of the Deduction, and the second section which comprises it, almost completely redundant. It is hard to see why Kant felt the need to include it, especially when Kant himself suggests that very little of importance rests on it.

In the first section, Kant makes it clear that Transcendental Deduction itself is framed around a specific problem. In the case of concepts of space and time, we can be certain that they will always relate to their objects because it is only through a shared set of *a priori* conditions (space and time as forms of intuition) that their objects can even appear to us in the first place. This is not the case when it comes to thought because the categories do not specify the conditions under which objects are given to us in intuition. It then seems entirely possible that objects can appear to us without there being a shared set of conditions

governing the manner in which they appear. As Kant puts it,

Thus a difficulty is revealed here that we did not encounter in the field of sensibility, namely how **subjective conditions of thinking** should have **objective validity**, i.e., yield conditions of the possibility of all cognition of objects; for appearances can certainly be given in intuition without functions of the understanding. (A89-90/B122)

This is the problem which must be solved, and as Kant quickly makes clear, the stakes are quite high. It seems entirely possible that “appearances could after all be so constituted that the understanding would not find them in accord with the conditions of its unity...” This would be quite unfortunate. As Kant points out, if this were the case, “everything would then lie in such confusion that, e.g., in the succession of appearances nothing would offer itself that would furnish a rule of synthesis and thus correspond to the concept of cause and effect...” As a result, the concept of cause and effect would be completely useless (A90/B122-123).

This is a skeptical problem, but as we have seen, skeptical problems play a very specific role in Kant’s thought as they do in the thought of Tetens.¹⁵ This is an explanatory challenge—a problem to be solved rather than a position to be refuted. Unsurprisingly, it is not really a new problem either, as it is a generalization of a problem underlying several discussions in Tetens *Philosophische Versuche* and Kant’s favorite example, the concept of cause and effect, is also a favorite of Tetens. Most of Tetens’ efforts in the fourth and fifth essays are attempts to show how it is that a set of concepts which make object representation possible are there to be acquired by each of us in the same ways. The seventh essay is overtly an attempt to explain how it is that there is a shared set of conditions which govern

¹⁵Also see the more Cartesian sounding problem which guides the subjective deduction at A112: “...without that sort of unity, which has its rule a priori, and which subjects the appearances to itself, thoroughgoing and universal, hence necessary unity of consciousness would not be encountered in the manifold of perceptions. But these would then belong to no experience, and would consequently be without an object, and would be nothing but a blind play of representations, i.e., less than a dream.”

how the mind thinks of things and that these conditions apply consistently between different thinkers. As we have seen, Tetens is unsuccessful in these endeavors, not only because in some places he is admittedly only gesturing towards solutions, but also because there is no genuine sense of necessity grounding the uniformity between the conditions governing the thought of different thinking subjects on his account.

If we stick to the example of cause and effect, both Tetens and Kant appeal to this concept to perform a function which is required for object representation: establishing the rule-like regularity of events. Both of them think that the same requirement applies to everyone, but they have very different senses of why this is so. For Tetens, we all come to form this concept in the same way—from an awareness of our own feeling of acting and striving. For Kant, it is because this is an *a priori* condition of the possibility of cognition that we can be assured that the concept is legitimately employed. Tetens' solution is unsatisfactory insofar as the fact that the requirement holds is entirely contingent, and there is no explanation why it must be as it is. Kant's attempt to solve this problem by way of demonstrating the *a priori* conditions of thought, is very much an attempt to remedy the problem facing Tetens. The beauty of a transcendental deduction, as opposed to the messy explanation that Tetens offers, is that if we can prove that it is only by means of these *a priori* conditions that an object can be thought, a satisfactory explanation is provided and the skeptical problem which haunts the investigation fades away.

There are strong similarities between Tetens' discussion of the mass of innumerable sensations being unified together into a single sensation and Kant's discussion of the three-fold synthesis, and it is hard to accept that these similarities are merely coincidental.¹⁶ Where Tetens thought he could use this process to explain the problematic origin of these

¹⁶de Vleeschauwer especially notes similarities between this discussion in Tetens and Kant's synthesis of apprehension in intuition. See Herman J. de Vleeschauwer. *The Development of Kantian Thought*. Trans. by A.R.C. Duncan. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1962, p. 86; Beck, *Early German Philosophy*, p. 468 Also see Béatrice Longuenesse. *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*. Trans. by Charles T. Wolfe. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 37; Patricia Kitcher. *Kant's Thinker*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 98.

concepts and thereby offer what Kant would call an empirical deduction, Kant separates the issue of their origin from their justification and focuses exclusively on justification. The major similarity is that Tetens, like Kant, thinks that the fact that our perceptual experience is that of a unified manifold requires explanation and that this explanation is to be found in the application of concepts of objects. The major difference between them has to do with the fact that Tetens does not share Kant's position that space and time are *a priori* forms of intuition and instead takes them to be conceptual relations. This leads Kant to distinguish synthesis of apprehension in intuition (1) from synthesis of reproduction in the imagination (2).¹⁷ In the first, Kant offers an account of how manifold of intuition is unified into a single representation (A99). In the latter, Kant offers an account of how it is that representations follow or accompany each other in a law-like manner. Here, Kant makes a comment which alludes to Humean causation:

It is, to be sure, a merely empirical law in accordance with which representations that have often followed or accompanied one another are finally associated with each other and thereby placed in a connection in accordance with which, even without the presence of the object, one of these representations brings about a transition of the mind to the other in accordance with a constant rule. (A100)

While this may be an empirical law, the fact that it can even be formed from association in the first place requires further explanation. Kant proceeds to claim:

This law of reproduction, however, presupposes that the appearances themselves are actually subject to such a rule, and that in the manifold of their representations an accompaniment or succession takes place according to certain rules; for without that our empirical imagination would never get to do

¹⁷Kant did not think that time, as the form of inner sense, could be sensed, so awareness of successive mental states must be explained through combination. See (A35/B51, A100).

anything suitable to its capacity, and would thus remain hidden in the interior of the mind, like a dead and to us unknown faculty. (ibid)

Without appearances already being structured in consistent and uniform manner, we could never be able to form the empirical law of association in the first place. This first passage echoes the complaint that Kant and Tetens raise about empirical association being inadequate to account for causation. Like Tetens, Kant will ground the possibility of this empirical association or “law of reproduction” in a more fundamental rule which establishes a relation between temporally ordered representations—the concept of cause and effect.¹⁸ Kant illustrates the need for this rule by pointing out that, in a world devoid of any consistency, empirical synthesis would be impossible (A101).

This worry parallels Tetens’ concern in the seventh essay of the *Philosophische Versuche* when he discusses objectivity. We would ordinarily just appeal to the way the world is to explain the consistency in our representations, and this is the traditional notion of objectivity that Tetens discusses. But, as Tetens points out when referencing Lossius, we are dealing with representations which do not provide us with access to things as they are in themselves, and this makes any explanatory appeal to things problematic. The truth in the traditional notion objectivity, which Tetens wants to preserve at all costs, is that we all experience things consistently. Tetens then tries to ground this consistency in a set of unchanging features common to different perceiving subjects. Kant’s concern here can easily be seen as an attempt to accomplish a similar strategy. Kant notes that, “There must therefore be something that itself makes possible this reproduction of the appearances by being the *a priori* ground of a necessary synthetic unity of them. One soon comes upon this if one recalls that appearances are not things in themselves, but rather the mere play of our

¹⁸Tetens’ discussion of causation in *Philosophische Versuche* IV is more heavily focused on criticizing Hume, but his own account, which locates necessary connection in the understandings’ employment of the concept of a cause, when paired with his wider commitment that object concepts (of which cause is just one) are required for object representation entails this.

representations, which in the end come down to determinations of inner sense” (A101). A *priori* synthetic unity does the job that Tetens’ unchanging subjectivity does, but it does so by grounding this necessary feature of thinking in a condition that applies to all possible discursive thinkers, rather than by appealing to a set of contingent facts about such thinkers.

Things get even more interesting with Kant’s discussion of synthesis of recognition in the concept (3). In *Philosophische Versuche* V, Tetens gives us an incomplete sketch of how it is that our mind comes to acquire the concepts which make object representation possible and along the way, he gestures at the function of each of these concepts in accomplishing this end. Kant’s discussion in this section not only covers the problem Tetens sought to solve, but also a solution to it that remedies the crucial flaw in Tetens’ account. In two places, Kant brings up a problem that echoes Tetens’ discussion of objectivity in *Philosophische Versuche* VII:

And here then it is necessary to make understood what is meant by the expression “an object of representations.” We have said above that appearances themselves are nothing but sensible representations, which must not be regarded in themselves, in the same way, as objects (outside the power of representation). (A104)

All representations, as representations, have their object, and can themselves be objects of other representations in turn. Appearances are the only objects that can be given to us immediately, and that in them which is immediately related to the object is called intuition. However, these appearances are not things in themselves, but themselves only representations, which in turn have their object, which therefore cannot be further intuited by us... (A109)

Both of these passages are expressions of what is very much the question that Tetens poses after he abandons the traditional notion of objectivity. The first passage states the basic problem that once it is the case that we cannot ground our representations in objects apart

from them, we can no longer appeal to the straightforwardly realist notion of what it is to be an object. This requires us to redefine objectivity. The second is a more precise statement of the problem as it is reflected in Kant's commitment to transcendental idealism.¹⁹ It follows from Kant's account of space and time as the *a priori* forms of intuition that we lack access to things-in-themselves and are restricted to appearances. As Kant notes, all of our representations refer to something as an object, but our most basic representations, intuitions, are themselves representations. When it is remembered that a judgment is a representation involving an intuition subsumed under concepts which are also representations, we are left with a chain of representations taking other representations to be their objects, with nothing to ground them. Kant raises precisely this question in the sentence after the first passage above: "What does one mean, then, if one speaks of an object corresponding to and therefore also distinct from cognition?" (ibid). Kant immediately points out that this object must be thought of as a "something in general=X" because we cannot talk about anything outside of our representations corresponding to it.

The explanatory problem of accounting for objectivity still exists, and Kant proceeds to argue that the solution must involve *a priori* necessity:

We find, however, that our thought of the relation of all cognition to its object carries something of a necessity with it, since namely the latter is regarded as that which is opposed to our cognitions begin determined at pleasure or arbitrarily rather than being determined *a priori*, since insofar as they are to relate to an object our cognitions must also necessarily agree with each other in relation to it, i.e., they must have that unity that constitutes the concept of an object. (A104-105)

If we cannot appeal to things in themselves to explain how it is that our representations are

¹⁹See Corey W. Dyck. "The Proof Structure of Kant's A-Edition Objective Deduction". In: *Kants transzendente Deduktion der Kategorien: Neue Interpretationen*. Ed. by Giuseppe Motta; Dennis Schulting. Berlin: DeGruyter, forthcoming, for a detailed discussion of this problem.

all unified in the same way, we are left with the possibility that this might not actually be the case and we are left with the skeptical problem from earlier. This problem goes away if this non-arbitrary necessity can be accounted for, and Kant will ground it on the unity of the concept of an object.

The parallels between Tetens' discussions in the *Philosophische Versuche* and the three-fold synthesis of the subjective deduction seem to straightforwardly indicate Tetens' influence on Kant. Kant would have found Tetens' critique of Hume, his account of mental representation, and his theory of objectivity to be very useful. Tetens demonstrates not only the gravity of the problem Kant faces, but also provides a rough approximation of the form that a solution to such a problem would ultimately have to be take. Perhaps more importantly, Tetens would have provided Kant with a clear example of the limitations of an empirical deduction and its inability to actually resolve these explanatory problems.

Layout of the Dissertation

In the first chapter, I examine the problem of interpreting Kant's philosophical methodology. I examine the two opposing traditions of interpreting Kant's approach as either progressive or regressive transcendental argumentation. I argue that beneath these differing approaches is the underlying issue of Kant's aims and motivations, specifically with respect to problems of skepticism. As I show, there is a dilemma facing commentators with respect to the issue of Kant's relationship to skepticism. When Kant is interpreted as aiming to provide a refutation of skeptical positions, it is quite hard to reconstruct his arguments in ways that both fit the text and have potential to succeed in that aim. On the other end, when Kant is distanced from any concern with skepticism, it is quite hard to appreciate why he seems to spend so much time talking about it. In an effort to find a context which can resolve this tension, I examine two opposing views of philosophical methodology put forward by Christian Wolff and Thomas Reid, and I show that Tetens' critique of the methodology employed

by Reid and his followers leads him to incorporate several aspects of Reid's approach into a broadly Wolffian methodology. I argue that this new hybrid approach, which Tetens calls "transcendent philosophy" provides a suitable context to appreciate Kant's philosophical methodology.

In the second chapter, I examine the problems with interpreting Kant's discussion and response to Hume on causation. The issues of which Humean texts Kant had access to at various times and our lack of information about Hume's influence on him at any one point in the decade leading up to the publication of the *Critique* make it very difficult to understand how he was interpreting Hume and what he would have considered to be a sufficient response to Hume. To this end, I argue that Tetens' discussion of Humean causation in the fourth essay of the *Philosophische Versuche* anticipates several of Kant's later comments about Hume. It is Tetens who first raises the objection that empirical association through the imagination is incapable of explaining necessary connection. Moreover, Tetens' response to Hume involves grounding necessary connection on the application of the concept of a cause, and thereby relocates the source of necessary connection to the understanding. However, this leads Tetens to a new problem of explaining the exact kind of necessity that is involved in causation. This gets picked up again with a discussion of objectivity in the seventh essay, where Tetens is forced to articulate a distinction between changing and unchanging subjectivity to make room for a more stable subjective necessity. When Kant's relationship to Hume is framed with Tetens' discussion of causation in the background, it becomes possible to recognize both a positive and a negative side to Kant's "answer" to Hume.

In the third chapter, I examine Tetens' engagement with Thomas Reid's account of perception. In order to set this up, I give a brief overview of the shared set of problems facing the philosophers in this period who held that view that sensations are non-intentional mental states occasioned by the interaction of some object. I show how such a view is motivated by tensions with the Cartesian account of mental representation as well as its articulation

by Malebranche. I then briefly discuss the ways in which Malebranche, Condillac, and Reid can each be taken to offer responses to these problems. I then examine Tetens' perplexing comments on Reid's account of perception. I argue that in an attempt to show how the theory of ideas can be tweaked to withstand Reid's criticisms, Tetens is forced to explain how it is that representations derived from non-intentional sensations can be directed at objects. His solution is that the application of a set of object concepts establishes the relation to objects. Tetens takes Reid's *experimentum crucis* thought experiment to present a challenge for a strategy like this, so he is forced to give a novel account of how these concepts can be acquired from sensations which seemingly do not present us with the relations from which these concepts can be abstracted. The result is an account of how the power of thought unifies sensations and produces these relations from which object concepts can be abstracted.

In my fourth chapter, I examine Kant's Anticipations of Perception and the difficulties involved in interpreting his proof for the principle that the real of appearances has intensive magnitude. The proof itself seems to involve a problematic inference from a property of sensations to a property of "the real of appearances" and it is not clear what kind of inference this is supposed to be. I examine two interpretations of this proof: one that construes it as resting on a causal inference and another that takes the real of appearances to be identical to sensations. After noting significant problems with each of these interpretations, I argue that the problem being addressed by the proof is a narrower version of the sensationist problem of accounting for the representation of objects. Tetens' discussions of the role of the concepts of causation and reality in the fifth essay of the *Philosophische Versuche* can shed considerable light on Kant's proof by highlighting a the need for a conceptual relation to be established between sensation and an object of perception in order for object representation to take place, and that causal relations alone do not suffice for this. I offer a new interpretation where the correspondence relation between sensation and the real of appearances is established through the application of the category of reality.

Kant, Tetens, and Commonsense Transcendental Philosophy

1.1 The Problem of Transcendental Methodology

One of the core problems with interpreting Kant's theoretical philosophy is that, while we can often find ways to reconstruct the arguments of the *Critique* as we find them, it is often the case that different readers will see very different lines of reasoning in his writings. Kant is a notoriously unclear writer in both the style of his writing and his employment of technical vocabulary, and he rarely wears his aims and motivations on his sleeves. The most immediate problem that emerges when interpreting the *Critique* is not simply that of determining the correct structure of his arguments, but rather determining what many of them are even really about. If we are to understand many of the argumentative moves that Kant makes, we must first gain some insight into what exactly is the methodology behind transcendental philosophy.

There are roughly two diametrically opposed ways of thinking about Kant's methodology in the first *Critique*, which are most clearly exhibited in terms of how they construe Kant's project in the Transcendental Deduction. The first approach to Kant's methodology, which first gained prominence in the English literature through the work of Peter Strawson, Jonathan Bennett, and Robert Paul Wolff, takes Kant's primary aim in the *Critique* to fall in line with the epistemological tradition concerned with skepticism and construes his project as an attempt to construct decisive arguments against Cartesian and Humean skeptical posi-

tions.¹ On this understanding of Kant’s methodology, Kant is taken to employ a strategy of *progressive* argumentation against the skeptic that proceeds by taking seemingly innocuous assumptions accepted by the skeptic and showing that, in granting these assumptions, the skeptic must accept a further proposition (or set of propositions) on the grounds that such a proposition is a necessary condition for the assumption. This sort of argument, which has been labeled a “transcendental argument” after Kant’s supposed use of such arguments, takes the general form of $X \rightarrow Y$, where X is some indisputable claim that a skeptic would have to accept and Y is some substantive proposition that must be accepted if X is true. Interest in the merits of this form of argumentation, both within Kant’s thought and in more recent epistemology, has generated a considerable literature.²

Conceived in this way, the Transcendental Deduction is at its heart an attempt to strike a death blow to the skeptic. In his famous reconstruction of the Transcendental Deduction, Strawson argues that the chapter is not simply an explanation, but rather a proof aiming “to establish that experience necessarily involves knowledge of objects, in a weighty sense.”³ Wolff conceives of the Transcendental Deduction as an argument that “the categories are conditions of the possibility of consciousness itself” and later claims that “the deduction will not work unless the categories are viewed as the ‘necessary conditions of any consciousness whatsoever.’”⁴ Bennett likewise sees the Deduction as containing “attempts to show that the unity of consciousness—or the awareness thereof—entails objectivity...”⁵

The second approach to thinking about Kant’s methodology takes its point of depar-

¹Peter F. Strawson. *The Bounds of Sense*. London: Methuen, 1966; Jonathan Bennett. *Kant’s Analytic*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1966; Robert Paul Wolff. *Kant’s Theory of Mental Activity*. Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1963.

²Strawson famously employs transcendental arguments in the first half of *Individuals*. See Peter F. Strawson. *Individuals*. New York: Doubleday, 1959. Barry Stroud is largely responsible for the controversy surrounding the usefulness of such arguments. See Barry Stroud. “Transcendental Arguments”. In: *The Journal of Philosophy* 65.9 (1968), pp. 241–256. For a more contemporary overview of transcendental arguments in epistemology, see Robert Stern. *Transcendental Arguments and Scepticism: Answering the Question of Justification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

³Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, pg. 88.

⁴Wolff, *Kant’s Theory of Mental Activity*, pg. 94, 159.

⁵Bennett, *Kant’s Analytic*, pg. 130-131.

ture from the difficulties commentators face in trying to reconstruct convincing progressive transcendental arguments that defeat the skeptic. Instead of interpreting Kant as attempting to construct proofs for substantive philosophical positions by showing that they are necessary conditions for seemingly undeniable claims, Kant's actual argumentative strategy is to argue from some knowledge claim to the necessary conditions for the acceptance of that claim. In this sense, Kant's transcendental argumentation is taken to be *regressive* in its approach. There are two versions of this interpretation of Kant's methodology, the first of which can be found in the work of Hermann Cohen, T.D Weldon, and Stephan Körner; the second version comes from Karl Ameriks.⁶ Like its progressive counterpart, the regressive transcendental argument takes the form of a conditional. Unlike in the progressive version, the antecedent is not some innocuous claim that a skeptic might willingly grant, but a substantive knowledge claim. The argument progresses from this knowledge claim to an explanation of its possibility. For Weldon or Körner, the starting premise would be knowledge of Newtonian physics and Euclidean geometry; Ameriks holds Kant to the far weaker claim that we possess empirical knowledge.

Ameriks, who has the most influential version of this interpretation, argues that Kant's remark that the Transcendental Aesthetic is an example of a transcendental deduction (B114) and his discussion of what is meant by a "transcendental exposition" in the Transcendental Aesthetic (B40) suggest very strongly that Kant's strategy in the Transcendental Deduction is similar in structure to the argument of the transcendental exposition of space, where Kant argues that possibility of geometry depends on the ideality of space. What is most striking about this example is that Kant takes geometrical knowledge for granted and

⁶Hermann Cohen. *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*. 2nd ed. Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1885, pg. 51-58, T. D. Weldon. *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1958, Stephan Körner. "On the Kantian Foundation of Science and Mathematics". In: *The First Critique: Reflections on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. Belmont: Wadworth Publishing Company, 1969, pp. 97-108, Karl Ameriks. "Kant's Transcendental Deduction as a Regressive Argument". In: *Kant-Studien* 69 (1978), pp. 273-87, reprinted as Chapter 1 of Karl Ameriks. *Interpreting Kant's Critiques*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003

then offers an explanation of the necessary and sufficient conditions of such knowledge. When the Transcendental Deduction is interpreted regressively like the transcendental exposition of space, it becomes an argument that takes for granted that we have empirical knowledge and then looks to ground it in the unity of apperception, which in turn is only possible insofar as the categories have objective validity.⁷ The Deduction, so conceived, is an explanatory account of the grounds of empirical knowledge, not a proof that we have such knowledge.

This divide between interpretations of Kant's methodology contributes to several other interpretive disputes surrounding the first Critique. Commentators are divided on the interpretation of the rest of the major lines of argument in the Transcendental Analytic, particularly the discussion of causality in the Second Analogy of Experience and the Refutation of Idealism. The progressive anti-skeptical Kant, after attempting to counter Humean skeptical concerns about the validity of our most basic concepts by proving that the objective validity of the categories is necessary for conscious experience, is then faced with the task of proving that specific categories must be applied for some aspect of our experience to be objective in the Analytic of Principles. This is followed by an attempt to refute Cartesian skepticism about our knowledge of external objects in the Refutation of Idealism. The regressive interpretation takes Kant to be engaged with the more "modest" explanatory project of demonstrating the transcendental conditions for what amounts to a common sense claim to empirical knowledge of the world. Kant, on this interpretation, is not interested in constructing a response to skepticism from premises that even the most harsh skeptic would have to accept, and as a result, it makes little sense to discuss and evaluate Kant's arguments in terms of their ability to defeat the skeptic.

These two interpretations of Kant's transcendental methodology are so far apart from each other that it is a worthwhile question to ask how Kant's commentators can be so

⁷Ameriks, *Interpreting Kant's Critiques*, pg. 52-54.

divided on this issue. This controversy is a significant example of the situation that I mentioned at the outset, namely that Kant's readers are not simply disagreeing about what the premises of Kant's arguments are, but are disagreeing about the point of Kant's theoretical project. What is ultimately at stake here is an understanding of the proper context to situate Kant's philosophy. A brief survey of the major figures of early modern philosophy reveals broadly two sorts of philosophical projects: (1) refuting skepticism, (2) constructing explanatory metaphysical systems. Since it is uncontroversial that Kant was a critic of systematic metaphysics in the transcendent sense that it was practiced in that period, it seems that the most obvious context to situate Kant is with the concern with skepticism. The progressive interpretation of Kant fits in well with the familiar preoccupation that several early modern philosophers (and many twentieth century epistemologists) have with the problem of defeating the skeptic, it fits neatly with the long tradition of presenting Kant as concluding a narrative of modern philosophy that begins with the skepticism that Descartes sought to avoid, and culminates in the skeptical conclusions reached by Hume.

Kant and Skepticism in the Critique

That the context for Kant's theoretical philosophy is anti-skeptical is also supported by several passages in the *Critique*. Right from the outset in the first edition preface of the Critique, Kant presents his project as an attempt to navigate through the "battleground of endless controversies" that is metaphysics by navigating through the extremes of dogmatism and skepticism. The dogmatic metaphysicians are presented as "despotic" in the sense that they forcefully insist on engaging in the enterprise of trying to prove things about the God, the soul, and the world based on principles applied beyond the scope of experience. In doing so, they find themselves unable to reach any substantive agreement about how to employ such principles, and their hold over metaphysics "gradually degenerated through internal wars into complete anarchy" (A viii-ix) The skeptics are presented as being "a kind of nomads who abhor all permanent cultivation of the soil..." (A ix). They are a negative

reaction to dogmatists insofar as they attempt to cast doubt on their ability to carry out their proposals, and while they are never completely successful in preventing others from attempting dogmatic metaphysics, the skeptics nonetheless present an obstacle for the dogmatists who cannot agree upon a method to proceed with. Since Kant wishes to avoid crashing into either position, it would seem that skepticism must be a serious concern. The preface to the second edition also suggests that skepticism is a major target of the book. Here Kant uses far less colorful metaphors than the first edition to set up the aims and motivations of the project, but Kant famously includes a footnote with amendments to his proof in the refutation of idealism where he makes the bold claim that “it always remains a scandal of philosophy and universal human reason that the existence of things outside us should have to assumed merely on faith, and that if it occurs to anyone to doubt it, we should be unable to answer him with a satisfactory proof” (B xxxix). This bold claim immediately draws our attention towards the Cartesian skeptical worries that the possibility that our senses deceive us leaves us unable to know anything about external objects. This is a radical skeptical challenge, and Kant like so many other modern philosophers, seems eager to tackle it head on.

Kant also has a tendency to raise skeptical worries as he is introducing his substantive arguments in the *Transcendental Analytic*. Nowhere is this more the case than the *Transcendental Deduction* chapter, where Kant appears to draw attention to both Humean and Cartesian versions of skepticism. In the first section, Kant draws attention to a specifically Humean sounding spectre:

appearances could after all be so constituted that the understanding would not find them in accord with the conditions of its unity, and everything would then lie in such confusion that, e.g., in the succession of appearances nothing would offer itself that would furnish a rule of synthesis and thus correspond to the concept of cause and effect, so that this concept would therefore be empty nugatory, and without significance. (A90/B123)

This passage echoes the Humean criticisms of the idea of cause and effect in section VII of the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. In looking for the source of our idea of a necessary connection between an apparent cause and its effect, we find ourselves coming up short. We can observe that events are constantly conjoined, but we never encounter the connection itself. Hume answers that after repeated observations of certain events following others, “This connexion, therefore, which we feel in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion.”⁸ It would seem that if Kant is alluding to this discussion in Hume’s writing so early in the chapter, then his concern in the deduction has to be aimed at solving this sort of problem, skepticism about specific metaphysical concepts such as causality.

Similarly, Kant seems to allude to the distinctly Cartesian variety of skepticism motivated by the dream hypothesis in Descartes’ second Meditation. Kant raises the worry that without the sort of unity that we find in the categories, there would be no necessary unity for any given manifold of perception, and then “these [perceptions] would then belong to no experience, and would consequently be without an object, and would be nothing but a blind play of representations, i.e., less than a dream” (A112). If Kant has Descartes in mind here, then it would seem that the deduction is also directed at this sort of skeptical challenge in showing that we can have knowledge of external objects.

While these passages suggest that skepticism is at least on the radar, it is unclear that they establish it as Kant’s primary target. There are three fundamental problems with interpreting Kant as primarily concerned with skepticism. The first is that commentators have been notoriously unsuccessful in reconstructing the arguments of the Deduction and the Second Analogy so that they might have any force against a skeptic.⁹ Those who have

⁸Enquiry, VII.ii, pg. 75

⁹This has been highlighted by Ameriks with respect to the Deduction. See Stephen Engstrom. “The Transcendental Deduction and Skepticism”. In: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 32 (1994), pp. 359–380; Ameriks, *Interpreting Kant’s Critiques*, p. 55. Eric Watkins has argued this for Kant’s treatment of

insisted upon attributing the progressive anti-skeptical argumentation to Kant are forced to admit that his arguments are rather ill-suited for the task for which he is employing them. A second problem is that although Kant does invoke discussions of skepticism in multiple places, his engagement with skepticism is incredibly convoluted and does not occupy a large portion of the Critique as a whole. Kant's primary concern in the Transcendental Deduction is establishing the objective validity of the categories, and it is less than clear how achieving this undermines skepticism. This is even more problematic when it is acknowledged that the two primary skeptical positions taken to be his targets in the Deduction, the Cartesian and Humean varieties, each are more directly dealt with in the Second Analogy and the Refutation of Idealism. It then seems downright strange that a large book supposedly aimed towards refuting skepticism would have so few pages dedicated to that end. A third problem is that it is entirely possible that Kant's discussions of skepticism are being employed to different ends than has been commonly supposed. Skeptical positions were frequently invoked by German philosophers in this period, not as positions to be refuted, but to motivate further discussions. If this is the case, then it becomes more difficult to infer anti-skeptical motivations behind Kant's project simply because skepticism appears in various places within Kant's writing.

Kantian Commonsense

If Kant is not to be thought of as engaged in the classic fight against the skeptic, then it would seem that appreciating him in this tradition is to situate him in an improper context. This raises an important question: if Kant's philosophy is departing from what is commonly seen as the driving problem behind much of modern philosophy, then what kind of philosophical project is Kant really engaged in? Ameriks has suggested a different answer.

causality. See Eric Watkins. *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pg. 209-217.

Rejecting skepticism, speculative metaphysics, or Newtonian science as the dominant context for Kant's work, Ameriks argues that Kant's methodology and aims are unique and that pigeonholing Kant's approach into any of these philosophical projects obscures the distinctiveness of his work.¹⁰ Ameriks argues in several places that Kant is engaged with providing the foundations for what are ultimately common sense knowledge claims. As he puts it:

What Kant goes on to propose is that, instead of focusing on trying to establish with certainty—against skepticism—that the objects of common sense exist, let alone that they have philosophical dominance, or, in contrast, on explaining that it is only the theoretical discoveries of science that determine what is objective, one can rather work primarily to determine a positive and balanced philosophical relation between the distinct frameworks of our manifest and scientific images.¹¹

This puts him at odds with not only those who interpret Kant as holding a progressive anti-skeptical methodology, but also those who hold that Kant's project is a regressive explanation of Newtonian science. In line with this interpretation, Ameriks has argued that Kant's philosophy can be fruitfully interpreted as in line with Thomas Reid's common sense philosophical project.¹²

That Kant and Reid might be taken to be engaged in a shared philosophical endeavor is not something that is obvious to a number of Reid's more influential commentators. Since Reid has had the unfortunate history of being a rather forgotten secondary figure in the narrative of eighteenth century philosophy, those who have spent significant time writing about his work have done everything possible to rehabilitate his image and reintroduce him

¹⁰Karl Ameriks. *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

¹¹Ameriks, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*, pg. 43.

¹²Karl Ameriks. *Kant and the Historical Turn*. Oxford Clarendon Press, 2006, pg.108-133.

as a philosopher worthy of serious consideration in his own right. To this end, Reid is often presented as a philosopher who was more in line with twentieth century philosophical sensibilities than the Kantian tradition. Reid's commentators have been inclined to emphasize aspects of his thought that present strong contrasts to Kant, often presenting Reid's direct realist account of perception and his epistemological project as being an attractive alternative to the complicated phenomenalist metaphysics that they find in Kant. Since one does not have to interpret Kant in this manner, it is quite possible that these differences are exaggerated. Even so, there are a number of immediate contextual problems that arise when presenting Kant and Reid as being engaged in a shared philosophical project.

The first major problem with attributing a common sense philosophical project to Kant stems from his brief dismissal of the common sense philosophers as a group. In the entirety of his published writings, Kant mentions Reid only once. This passage is in the preface to the *Prolegomena*, where Kant accuses Reid, Beattie, Oswald, and Priestley of failing to appreciate Hume's work:

One cannot, without feeling a certain pain, behold how utterly and completely his opponents, Reid, Oswald, Beattie, and finally Priestley, missed the point of his problem, and misjudged his hints for improvement—constantly taking for granted just what he doubted, and conversely, proving with vehemence and, more often than not, with great insolence exactly what it had never entered his mind to doubt—so that everything remained in its old condition, as if nothing had happened. (4:258, pg. 56)

Kant is dismissive towards these philosophers as a group, and his comment does not display any appreciation for their work. The inclusion of Priestley into that group is also problematic. Since Priestley was a harsh critic of Reid, Oswald, and Beattie as a group, going so far as to publish a polemical book where he quoted passages from each philosopher and ridiculed them, his inclusion here seems to suggest a lack of awareness of all of their

views as a whole.¹³ It is also not clear that Kant ever directly read Reid's *Inquiry*, further complicating this picture. This presents another serious obstacle: if there is no plausible influence between Reid's work and Kant's, then the similarities one can find in their thought might be largely coincidental.

A second problem reemerges with respect to skepticism. A great deal of Reid's thought is dedicated to the philosophical problem of skepticism. Reid's rejection of the "way of ideas," or the representationalist account of perception is driven by an attempt to reject the assumptions that he thinks underlie skepticism about the external world. This presents at least a *prima facie* difficulty for situating Kant in the context of Reidian common sense philosophy, if this context is supposed to be an alternative to taking him to be primarily concerned with skepticism. Paul Guyer has argued against interpretations of Kant that are too quick to dismiss the relevance of skepticism to Kant's theoretical philosophy, by arguing that there is an important sense in which Cartesian skepticism remains the major concern behind Kant's theoretical philosophy, even if it is not dealt with directly in the text of the Critique.¹⁴ It then seems possible that one can go too far in distancing Kant from skepticism, as Guyer has charged Ameriks with doing. If Kant is to be interpreted as a common sense philosopher, his relationship to the problem of skepticism will require a more nuanced treatment.

The third, and perhaps most significant, problem is that there is a difference in methodology between the two philosophers that has been largely overlooked. Reid has a unique set of views about the limitations on philosophical explanations. Reid takes Isaac Newton's work to be the single greatest example of how to reason philosophically and presents himself as being the most authentic follower of Newton's philosophical methodology. Thus, it

¹³See Joseph Priestley. *An Examination of Dr. Reid's Inquiry into the human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense, Dr. Beattie's Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, and Dr. Oswald's Appeal to Common Sense in Behalf of Religion*. London: J. Johnson, 1774

¹⁴Paul Guyer. *Knowledge Reason and Taste*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008, pg. 28-29 fn. 10, 30-52.

is not uncommon to find a number of methodological criticisms buried in his polemical attacks on his philosophical contemporaries. Reid was particularly impressed with Newton's unwillingness to assign a cause to gravity in the General Scholium of the *Principia*. Just as Newton had refused to speculate about the underlying cause or nature of gravity and gave only a mathematical description of it, Reid restricts his discussions to what he can observe and describe without offering theoretical explanations for his observations. While both philosophers share a hostility to what Kant would call "transcendent metaphysics," Reid's methodological commitments to avoiding hypotheses are strong enough to make him appear hostile to anything like the sort of explanation that transcendental idealism is supposed to constitute in the first *Critique*. I want to suggest that neither of these attempts to contextualize Kant's methodology are successful because they partake in a common flaw: neither interpretation gives any attention to discussions of philosophical methodology taking place in eighteenth century Germany around Kant as his thought was developing. This is particularly important with respect to properly situating Kant's methodology in its proper context. As I will show, a German philosopher writing in the second half of the eighteenth century would have inherited a very specific understanding of the aims of philosophy and how it ought to be practiced from the work of Christian Wolff. Coinciding with Kant's silent decade is a renewed interest in discussion of philosophical methodology occasioned by the reception of Scottish Common Sense philosophy in Germany.¹⁵ Of particular importance is the work of Johann Nikolaus Tetens, whose major book, the *Philosophische Versuche über die menschliche Natur und ihre Entwicklung* (1777), was studied heavily by Kant in the years preceding the publication of the first *Critique*.

As I will show, Tetens was heavily engaged with Reid's philosophy and developed a sophisticated criticism of Reid's philosophical methodology. The resulting metaphilosophical approach that emerges in Tetens' thought is an attempt to fuse a predominantly

¹⁵The best treatment of this topic is Manfred Kuehn. *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1987

Wolffian theoretical explanatory project with Reid's insistence that the starting point for philosophical inquiry must come from common sense. As I will show, Tetens' discussion of philosophical methodology is insightful for two primary reasons: (1) it can provide an example of the very sort of project that Ameriks finds in Kant within the work of a German contemporary whose work Kant would have known, and (2) it can shed considerable light on the role skeptical challenges play in Kant's thought.

The rest of this chapter will proceed as follows. In the next section, I will examine two opposing views of philosophical methodology held by Christian Wolff and Thomas Reid with special emphasis on their views about the relationship between philosophy and common sense, their views on the role of explanatory hypotheses in philosophy, and the status of skepticism within their philosophical projects. Unlike Wolff, who privileges explanatory knowledge over observational knowledge and holds possession of the former to be the distinguishing feature of the philosopher from the common person, Reid will privilege observational knowledge and the dictates of common sense over any sort of philosophical speculation. I will show that this gives rise to two very different approaches to thinking about philosophical skepticism. Wolff treats skepticism as an explanatory problem which gets dissolved once an explanation is presented and Reid takes it as a position to be refuted head on. The third section will examine Tetens' discussion of common sense methodology and his attempt to fuse elements of both approaches together. Tetens, although critical of the common sense philosophers, endorses their insistence that philosophy must begin from common sense and that adequate reflection on the status of common sense knowledge can ward off the concerns about skepticism as a global threat to such knowledge. However, Tetens argues that the common sense philosophers have abandoned philosophy's most important aim: attaining knowledge of the reasons behind what we observe. In failing to appreciate the need for explanations in philosophy, the common sense philosophers have subordinated philosophy to common sense and failed to appreciate the extent to which philosophy ought to inform common sense. Rather than hold common sense to be subordinate

to explanatory knowledge as Wolff had done, Tetens opts to give them equal status and thus charts a middle path between the methodologies of Wolff and Reid. The fourth section will contain a discussion of the implications of Tetens' approach to philosophical methodology for interpreting Kant's project. There I will argue that Tetens' philosophical work provides a context that strongly supports the regressive explanatory methodology that Ameriks finds in Kant, while also accounting for the presence of skepticism throughout the first Critique and the rather "hands off" treatment that it gets.

1.2 Wolff's Philosophical Methodology

The two clearest discussions of philosophical methodology in Christian Wolff's writing are in his *Vernünfftige Gedanken von den Kräften des menschlichen Verstandes und ihrem richtigen Gebrauche in Erkenntnis der Wahrheit* (German Logic) and his *Praemittitur discursus praeliminaris de philosophia in genere* (Preliminary Discourse).¹⁶ Wolff begins his German Logic with his definitions of what he means by "philosophy" and by "science." Philosophy [*Welt-Weisheit*] is defined as "eine Wissenschaft aller möglichen Dinge, wie und warum sie möglich sind."¹⁷ Science [*Wissenschaft*] is likewise straightforwardly defined: "Durch die Wissenschaft verstehe ich eine Fertigkeit des Verstandes, alles, was man behauptet, aus unwidersprechlichen Gründen unumstößlich darzuthun."¹⁸ From these two definitions, Wolff is able to define what makes someone a philosopher. As he puts it,

§.5. Solchergestalt muß ein Welt-Weiser nicht allein wissen, daß etwas möglich sey, sondern auch den Grund anzeigen können, warum es seyn kan (§.1.2.). Es

¹⁶Christian Wolff. *Preliminary Discourse on Philosophy in General*. Trans. by Richard J. Blackwell. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1728/1963; Christian Wolff. "Vernünfftige Gedanken von den Kräften des menschlichen Verstandes und ihrem richtigen Gebrauche in Erkenntnis der Wahrheit (Deutsche Logik)". In: *Deutsche Schriften*. Ed. by Hans Werner Arndt. 14th ed. Vol. 1. Gessamelte Werke. Halle: Georg Olms, 1754/1965.

¹⁷Philosophy is a science of all possible things, how and why they are possible. *Preliminary Discourse* §.1

¹⁸By science I understand a habit of the understanding, everything that one claims to demonstrate irrefutably from uncontradicted reasons. *Ibid.* §.2

ist z.E. nicht genug, daß ein Welt-Weiser weiß, es könne regnen, sondern er muß auch sagen können, wie es zugehet, daß es regnet, und aus was für Ursachen es regnet.¹⁹

This kind of knowledge that is distinctive to the philosopher is then contrasted with the knowledge of the ordinary person:

§.6. Hierdurch wird die gemeine Erkäntniß von der Erkäntniß eines Welt-Weisen unterschieden. Nemlich einer, der die Welt-Weisheit nicht versteht, kan wohl auch aus der Erfahrung vieles lernen, was möglich ist: allein er weiß nicht den Grund anzuzeigen, warum es seyn kan. Z.E. Er lernet aus der Erfahrung, daß es regen könne, kan aber nicht sagen, wie es zugehet, daß es regnet, noch die Ursachen anzeigen, warum es regnet.²⁰

In the *Preliminary Discourse* of 1728, Wolff refines this distinction further by specifying in more detail what constitutes what he now calls “historical knowledge” and its distinction from philosophical knowledge. Historical knowledge, is “knowledge of those things which are and occur either in the material world or in immaterial substances.”²¹ The notion of “philosophical knowledge” remains unchanged, but Wolff dedicates considerably more space to fleshing it out.²²

Of special importance is Wolff’s insistence that while philosophical knowledge is to be afforded a higher status than historical knowledge and offers distinct practical advantages

¹⁹In such a way, a philosopher has to not only know that something is, but also be able to reveal the reason it can be. (§.1.2) It is not enough that a philosopher knows that it can rain, but he must also be able to say how it happens that it rains, and the causes for it raining. Ibid. §. 5.

²⁰By this means, the common knowledge is distinguished from the knowledge of a philosopher. A person who does not understand philosophy can learn what is possible from experience: alone he doesn’t know how to reveal the reason, why it can be. For example, he learns from experience that it can rain, but can not say how it happens that it rains, let alone show the causes for why it rains.

²¹*Preliminary Discourse* §. 3.

²²This includes both Wolff’s providing several new examples of historical and philosophical knowledge being distinguished (§6-8.) and also his application of the distinction to less clear cases such as historical knowledge of another person’s philosophical knowledge (§8.-9.).

over it (§41-45), historical knowledge is not to be neglected. Since being able to give a reason for something being the case requires one to first know what it is the case, Wolff argues that historical knowledge is the foundation of philosophical knowledge (§10-11.) Given Wolff's reputation as a rationalist philosopher who strongly embraced to a mathematical method in his philosophy, the idea that he would maintain an empirical starting point as the foundation of philosophy is perplexing to say the least.²³ Later in *Preliminary Discourse* Wolff makes the claim that "The rules of philosophical method are the same as the rules of mathematical method" (§139.), but he seems completely aware of the apparent tension when he remarks,

The identity of philosophical and mathematical method will be a surprise only to him who does not know the common source from which the rules of both mathematics and philosophy are derived. We have deduced the rules of philosophical method from the notion of certitude, which, as we have proven, must be desired in philosophy (§33). And if one searches for the reason for mathematical method, he will find that it is the certitude of knowledge which every mathematician seeks in his own field...Therefore, since the rules of both philosophical and mathematical knowledge are based upon the same reason, it is no wonder that these rules are the same (ibid).

Thus, as Wolff sees it, there is no inconsistency between a mathematical method in philosophy and an empirical starting point in investigation. Mathematics provides us with a clear account of certitude and a way to grasp it, and since philosophy is also aimed at this same certitude, Wolff thinks he is justified in claiming that mathematics and philosophy exhibit a shared methodology.²⁴

²³For instance, he claims in the preface to the German Logic that the mathematical sciences are the only place for us to learn the proper use of the understanding: "Derowegen bleiben bloß die mathematischen Wissenschaften übrig, daraus man den richtigen Gebrauch der Kräfte des Verstandes ersehen kan." *Deutsche Logik.*, pg. 106

²⁴For a more detailed discussion of Wolff's views about the use of a mathematical method in philosophy,

Once that is clarified, a clearer picture begins to emerge with respect to how Wolff thinks a philosopher ought to acquire knowledge of the reasons for things.²⁵ Through repeated observation, one can acquire historical knowledge of various facts about things in the world. After that, one can inquire into the underlying reasons and causes which provide explanations for these observations. But all too often, as Wolff acknowledges, this is no simple task: “The facts of nature are sometimes so hidden that they do not spontaneously present themselves to one who is attentive” (§20). This prompts Wolff to articulate another feature of his distinction between historical and philosophical knowledge. Without altering the distinction, Wolff now presents it in terms of epistemic availability, or as what an observer of nature is in a position to know from mere attention to observation. Some facts, “vulgar knowledge” according to Wolff (§23), are knowable simply by paying attention. Others, he claims, are hidden, and “must be brought to light by skilled investigators” and are not knowable “unless reason gives its assistance to the senses” (§21).

If philosophical knowledge is indeed hidden from us, it becomes necessary for the philosopher to be, first and foremost, an experimenter. Wolff goes through considerable effort to highlight the extent to which historical and philosophical knowledge can be brought together through experimentation. “If one knows by reason that something can occur, and by experimentation he observes that this does occur, then he confirms philosophical knowledge with history” (§26). Wolff develops a sophisticated account of how this can be accomplished with a notable emphasis on the practical problems facing the philosopher seeking explanations for observed phenomena. Since philosophical knowledge is rarely graspable by simply paying attention, it is often the case that we are unable to attain certainty with respect to explanatory knowledge. But we often find that certain propositions are useful, even if we cannot prove them to be true. When this happens, Wolff allows for the necessity

see Charles A. Corr. “Christian Wolff’s Treatment of Scientific Discovery”. In: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 10.3 (1972), pp. 323–334.

²⁵It is worth pointing out that skepticism is not a major concern of Wolff’s insofar as he thinks philosophers should pursue philosophical knowledge.

of accepting such propositions into philosophy as *probable* so long as they are clearly distinguished from propositions that are known to be certain. These assumed propositions are called *hypotheses* by Wolff:

§126. Things which are assumed in philosophy because they provide a reason for certain phenomena, even though it cannot be demonstrated that they contain the true reason, constitute a philosophical hypothesis. Hence, I define a philosophical hypothesis as an assumption which cannot yet be demonstrated, but which provides a reason.

Wolff is quite explicit that hypotheses are indispensable for philosophy, bluntly stating that “Philosophy must use hypotheses insofar as they pave the way to the discovery of certain truth”(§127). Wolff goes even further by providing an account of how this takes place. Even though a hypothesis might not be certain, the explanation it provides for an observed phenomenon can entail the presence of other phenomena which might be more directly observable. When the logical consequences of a hypothesis are consistent with experience, its probability increases. As he puts it:

Now if we can also deduce other things which are not observed to occur, then we have the opportunity to either observe or experimentally detect things which otherwise we might not have noticed. In this way we become more certain as to whether or not anything contrary to experience follows from the hypothesis. If we deduce things which are contrary to experience, then the hypothesis is false. If the deductions agree with the experience, then the probability of the hypothesis is increased. And thus the way is paved for the discovery of certain truth (ibid).

Wolff appeals to examples of actual scientific practice to bolster his account of the role of hypotheses in philosophy, highlighting that this is the way astronomy has always

proceeded.²⁶ But while Wolff thinks hypotheses are needed to make progress in philosophy, he also recognizes that they have limitations due to their uncertain nature. As a result, he argues that hypotheses should not be allowed to function as principles used to demonstrate propositions which are “admitted into philosophy as dogmas.” As he explains, “...if you use hypotheses as principles in demonstrating propositions which are admitted into philosophy as dogmas, you have used uncertain principles to prove dogmas” (§128). His example of such a hypothesis that is to be excluded from the demonstration of philosophical dogmas is none other than Leibniz’s theory of pre-established harmony. Wolff argues that since pre-established harmony is a hypothetical explanation of the relationship between the soul of the body that is uncertain, its usage should be restricted to this domain of phenomena. If we, for instance, appealed to pre-established harmony in a demonstration of some important proposition in moral or political philosophy, we run the risk of jeopardizing the status of propositions which are far more important for practical life (§129).

1.3 Thomas Reid’s Common Sense Methodology

Thomas Reid’s two most influential texts were his *Inquiry Concerning the Human Mind into the Principles of Common Sense* (1764) and his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of the Mind* (1785).²⁷ Reid is unique in many respects within this time period, but this is no more the case than with respect to his thoughts about the proper aim of philosophy and how it ought to be practiced. His writing often takes up a polemical tone as he discusses

²⁶In §126, Wolff cites the hypothesis of the earth at rest with the heavens moving above it from east to west. In the note attached to §127, Wolff discusses two examples: (1) the shift from the geocentric model of the solar system to the heliocentric model as a result of this process of testing hypotheses until the correct model was arrived at, and (2) the arithmetical example of division with a compound divisor on a Pythagorean abacus. Also see Corey W. Dyck. *Kant and Rational Psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 25-27

²⁷Since Reid’s *Essays on the Intellectual Powers* were written well after the publication of the first Critique, they cannot occupy any part in the story of how Reidian ideas were influencing German thought prior to 1781. I will therefore refrain from quoting from the later text.

what he takes to be the sad state that the philosophy of his time is in. In stressing this, he has no qualms about pointing out who is responsible for the mess: the philosophers themselves. Instead of an endorsement of any received philosophical theories, one finds in his readings near constant appeals to the “common sense” of humanity. This combination of hostility towards philosophers as a group and apparent privileging of the beliefs of ordinary people over the conclusions reached by philosophers yields a very strong first impression of Thomas Reid as a thinker. Common sense, which has the present day connotation of being a sort of knowledge that any idiot could be expected to possess, is an odd topic to defend, and Reid comes off as a sort of anti-philosophical champion of the unreflected thought of the vulgar who gets his hands dirty with philosophy only to show us all how silly it all is. This is, of course, a terrible portrayal of Thomas Reid’s philosophical project which has perpetually harmed its reception.²⁸, but it is also a useful starting position for discussing the distinctiveness of his methodology.

Reid’s reverence towards common sense and his hostility towards anyone who lacks it is clear from the very beginning of the *Inquiry*. In a passage that is outright comical, Reid polemically abuses his contemporaries for employing this sort of methodology:

Des Cartes, Malebranche, and Locke, have all employed their genius and skill to prove the existence of a material world; and with very bad success. Poor untaught mortals believe undoubtedly, that there is a sun, moon, and stars; an earth, which we inhabit; country, friends, and relations, which we enjoy; land houses, and moveables, which we possess. but philosophers, pitying the credulity of the vulgar, resolve to have no faith but what is founded upon reason. They apply to philosophy to furnish them with reasons for the belief of those things which all mankind have believed, without being able to give any

²⁸Similar sentiments are common among Reid’s commentators. See Nicholas Wolterstorff. *Thomas Reid and the Story of Epistemology*. Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. ix-xiii

reason for it. And surely one would expect, that, in matters of such importance, the proof would not be difficult: but it is the most difficult thing in the world. For these great men, with the best good will, have not been able, from all the treasures of philosophy, to draw on argument, that is fit to convince a man that can reason, of the existence of any one thing without him.²⁹

Reid's dismissive tone towards the philosophy of his contemporaries is all but guaranteed to be offensive to most philosophically minded people today, just as it was when he wrote the *Inquiry*. When we put aside the ridiculing tone of remarks like this, it becomes clear that Reid does, in fact, have a carefully considered view about the aims of philosophy and how it ought to be done. The traditional way of approaching philosophical questions by starting from a set of principles to explain what the world is like or what it is that we can know about it is utterly ridiculed, as if it is largely pointless. Reid thinks philosophers have fallen into absurdity by trying to prove simple things that no reasonable person could think to doubt, and then comically failing to do so. This is a serious problem for philosophy in two ways. First, it is monstrous waste of time to prove the obvious. Second, it is a scandalous embarrassment to continually fail to do something that seems so simple. Ordinary people, when presented with arguments like this by philosophers, are unable to take them seriously, and that is to the shame of philosophy. Ironically, Reid thinks that this is not the result of stupidity, but rather too much cleverness run astray: "It is genius and not the want of it that adulterates philosophy."³⁰

Reid's tendency towards ridicule makes these charges come off as uncharitable swipes, but it soon becomes clear that he has more sophisticated criticisms than he initially lets on. The source of these problems, according to Reid, is a fundamental misunderstanding of the relationship between philosophical inquiry and common sense. Reid diagnoses this

²⁹Thomas Reid. *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*. Ed. by Derek R. Brookes. Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997, p. I.iii.18.

³⁰*Inquiry*, I.ii.15

problem in an unwillingness on the part of most philosophers to take seriously the dictates of common sense in their inquiries, which predisposes them towards privileging their theories over the sorts of beliefs that ordinary people accept to go about their daily lives: “That the votaries of this Philosophy, from a natural prejudice in her favour, have endeavoured to extend her jurisdiction beyond its just limits, and to call to her bar the dictates of common sense.”³¹ While this comes off as a blunt assertion that philosophy should keep its dirty hands off of common sense, it quickly becomes apparent that he is drawing attention to a more serious problem with philosophical methodology. When philosophers try to prove claims that ordinary people accept on common sense grounds, they face triviality or absurdity. When they employ principles that lead to conclusions inconsistent with common sense, then they end up appearing ridiculous and worthy of mockery. The reason neither option ends particularly well for the philosopher has to do with the status of common sense as a source of knowledge. There are a number of propositions that we all accept, which we cannot help but accept if we are to function in our daily lives, which renders them self-evident. Since our acceptance of these claims is completely independent of philosophical inquiry, philosophy is neither required to support them nor capable of swaying us away from 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.³²

³¹*Inquiry*, I.iv.19

³²*Inquiry*, I.vi.21

Reid thinks that all of the problems his contemporaries face are ultimately the result of the tension between the aims of theoretically minded philosophers and the common sense beliefs of ordinary people. Philosophers, in attempting to scrutinize common sense, find themselves engaged in “open war with Common Sense” and this is a war that the philosophers are never going to win:

In this unequal contest betwixt Common Sense and Philosophy, the latter will always come off both with dishonour and loss; nor can she ever thrive till this rivalship is dropt, these incroachments given up, and a cordial friendship restored: for in reality, Common Sense holds nothing of Philosophy, nor needs her aid. But, on the other hand, Philosophy (if I may be permitted to change the metaphor) has no other root but the principles of Common Sense; it grows out of them, and draws its nourishment from them: severed from this root, its honours wither, its sap is dried up, it dies and rots.³³

Since Reid thinks philosophy must begin with common sense as its starting point, the notion of attempting to undermine common sense through philosophical reasoning is self-defeating. Philosophy, if it is to have any hope of success, must be subordinated to common sense. But only raises more questions: What is common sense and why does it have this status? Unfortunately, Reid spends far more time discussing what he means by common sense in the *Intellectual Powers*, where he dedicates the second chapter of the essay on judgment to this issue. However, there are two important passages in the *Inquiry* that exhibit most of what Reid has in 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

³³*Inquiry*, I.v.19

for them; these are what we call the principles of common sense; and what is manifestly contrary to them, is what we call absurd.³⁴

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 our reason are grounded upon them. They make up what is called the common sense of mankind; and, what is manifestly contrary to any of those first principles, is what we call absurd. The strength of them is good sense, which is often found in those who are not acute in reasoning. A remarkable deviation from them, arising from a disorder in the constitution, is what we call lunacy; as when a man believes that he is made of glass.³⁵

These two passages reveal three major things to us about what Reid is up to with his notion of common sense: (1) there are a set of principles that we are all forced to accept because they are presupposed by ordinary life, and without presupposing these principles, we would not be able to function; (2) these principles are accepted independent of our ability to furnish reasons for their acceptance; and (3) these principles arise in the form of “original and natural judgments,” which suggest that they are common in the sense of originating from a common faculty of judgment. With these three features noted, it becomes clearer how common sense can be said to have priority over philosophy in Reid’s thought. As John Greco has noted, there are two different notions of priority common sense can be said to have: methodological or epistemological priority.³⁶ Both notions can be found in the previously cited passages. Common sense can be said to have methodological

³⁴*Inquiry*, II.vi.33

³⁵*Inquiry*, VII.215

³⁶John Greco. “Common sense in Thomas Reid”. In: *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 41.sup1 (2011), pp. 142–155.

priority in the sense that it constrains philosophical inquiry. It has epistemological priority in the sense that it furnishes us with a set of principles that are not derived from anything else.

If the failings of Reid's contemporaries are all examples of brilliant people not affording common sense the status it deserves, then we are left with the question of how Reid thinks someone should go about philosophizing successfully? Fortunately for us, this is one aspect of his thought that he unabashedly wears on his sleeve from the very beginning of the *Inquiry*:

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 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.

The man who first discovered that cold freezes water, and that heat turns it into vapour, proceeded on the same general principles, and in the same method by which Newton discovered the law of gravitation and the properties of light. His *regula philosophandi* are the 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.³⁷

Reid states very clearly here that philosophy, if it is to be done right, must proceed inductively from particular observations to general rules and that any deviation from this approach will sabotage philosophical inquiry. After making this methodological pronouncement, Reid immediately appeals to Newton as the example of successful application of it.

³⁷*Inquiry*, I.i.11-212

Thus, Reid is able to point at the success of Newtonian science as support for his methodology. This aspect of Reid's thought was not lost on those closest to him. As Dugald Stewart would later put it,

I have already observed that the distinguishing feature of Dr. Reid's Philosophy, is the systematical steadiness, with which he has adhered in his inquiries, to that plan of investigation which is delineated in the *Novum Organanon*, and which has been so happily exemplified in physics by Sir Isaac Newton and his followers. To recommend this plan as the only effectual method of enlarging our knowledge of nature, was the favourite aim of all his studies, and a topic on which he thought he could not enlarge too much.³⁸

As one would expect given Reid's immediate methodological pronouncements, it is a recurring theme in Reid's methodological criticisms of his opponents is that they simply are not Newtonian enough. The specific fault Reid finds in most philosophical reasoning, the temptation to indulge in speculation beyond what can be straightforwardly observed, is something that he immediately slams in first pages of the *Inquiry*:

Conjectures and theories are the creatures of men, and will always be found very unlike the creatures of God. If we would know the works of God, we must consult them with attention and humility, without daring to add anything of our to what they declare. A just interpretation of nature is the only sound and orthodox philosophy: whatever we add of our own, is apocryphal, and of no authority.

Reid's appeal to Newton as the best example of this methodology, along with his consistent tendency to refer to "conjectures" and "theories" as "hypotheses" make it abundantly

³⁸Dugald Stewart. "Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid D.D., F.R.S.E.,". In: *The Works of Thomas Reid D.D.*, Ed. by Sir William Hamilton. Vol. 1. Maclachlan and Stewart, 1872, pp. 3–38, p. 11.

clear which aspect of Newtonian philosophy he is claiming as his own.³⁹ In the General Scholium of the *Principia*, Newton famously avoids the question of the underlying cause behind gravity, stating:

I have not as yet been able to deduce from phenomena the reason for these properties of gravity, and I do not feign hypotheses. For whatever is not deduced from the phenomena must be called a hypothesis; and hypotheses, whether metaphysical or physical, or based on occult qualities, or mechanical, have no place in experimental philosophy. In this experimental philosophy, propositions are deduced from the phenomena and are made general by induction.⁴⁰

Reid was clearly enamored with this thought, and his own prohibition against hypothesizing is largely inspired by this passage in the General Scholium.⁴¹ This is not to say that Reid's anti-hypothesizing is simply an honest restatement of Newton's own views. Shannon Dea has argued that Reid actually considerably strengthens Newton's prohibition of hypothesizing. Where Newton seemed most concerned with banishing *a priori* hypotheses in physics, he did allow for the possibility that some *a posteriori* hypotheses could function as heuristics to guide experimental research. Reid, on the other hand, significantly strengthens the prohibition so that hypotheses should be rejected outright.⁴²

This is most immediately clear in his discussions of perception in the *Inquiry*. When describing perceptual experience in cases like smelling a rose, Reid gives detailed descrip-

³⁹Sir William Hamilton points out that Reid uses these terms interchangeably in a footnote to the previously quoted passage. See Thomas Reid. *The Works of Thomas Reid D.D.*, ed. by Sir William Hamilton. 7th ed. Vol. 1. Maclachlan and Stewart, 1872, p. 97 Reid would later double down on these claims in the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers*, with a chapter titled "Of Hypothesis."

⁴⁰Isaac Newton. *The Principia*. Trans. by I. Bernard Cohen and Anne Whitman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, pg. 943.

⁴¹Wolff also seems to see his work as Newtonian, but more in line with Newton's *Opticks*. Wolff and Reid are two different conceptions of what it is to be a Newtonian.

⁴²Shannon Dea. "Thomas Reid's Rigourised Anti-Hypotheticalism". In: *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 3.2 (2005), pp. 123–138. Dea also examines Reid's much later backtracking on this issue, when pressed by Lord Kames in correspondence.

tive accounts of what takes places, but never offers a theoretical explanation for why things occur as they do. While we might be inclined to wonder why a given sensation is taken as a sign of a particular feature of an object, Reid is quite comfortable with his descriptive account, cautioning us repeatedly against trying to answer this very sort of question:

Why sensation should compel our belief of the present existence of the thing, memory a belief of its past existence, and imagination no belief at all, I believe 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.⁴³

Experience teaches us, that certain impressions upon the body are constantly followed by certain sensations of the mind; and that, on the other hand, certain determinations of the mind are constantly followed by certain motions of the body: but we do not see the chain that ties these things together. Who knows but their connection may be arbitrary, and owing to the will of our Maker? Perhaps the same sensations might have been connected with other impressions, or other bodily organs. Perhaps we might have been so made, as to taste with our fingers, to smell with our ears, and to hear by the nose. Perhaps we might have been so made, as to have all the sensations and perceptions which we have, without any impression made upon our bodily organs at all.⁴⁴

In this drama, Nature is the actor, we are the spectators. We know nothing of the machinery by means of which every different impression upon the organ, nerves, and brain, exhibits its corresponding sensation; or of the machinery by means of which each sensation exhibits its corresponding perception.⁴⁵

⁴³*Inquiry*, II.iv.28

⁴⁴*Inquiry*, VI.xxi.176

⁴⁵*Inquiry*, VI.xxi.177

It is thus abundantly clear that with respect to natural philosophy and the study of the mind, Reid thinks that we are limited to descriptive accounts of the phenomena we are investigating. Though we can formulate questions about the mechanisms underlying our observations and entertain the possibility that things might be otherwise very different than they are, Reid thinks that we have no insight into these issues beyond what we can attend to with careful observation.

Nowhere else is this more true than in Reid's diagnosis of the skeptical problems befalling modern philosophy as the result of the wide acceptance of what he thinks is the paradigmatic example of a bad hypothesis: the theory of ideas. While much of his attack rests on what he takes to be the skeptical consequences of accepting the theory of ideas, he makes it abundantly clear that he thinks it is flawed as an explanation for the features of perceptual experience. Not only does he charge it with not being supported by observation, he argues that it fails to explain the nature of the relationship between the affected sense organ and the images perceived by the brain.⁴⁶ Once again, Reid reminds us that we must be content with being aware of the constant connections between certain events, even if we have no insight into the "chain that goes between them."⁴⁷ The theory of ideas, which Reid has already attacked on the grounds that it leads to absurd consequences, is the paradigmatic example of what happens when philosophers depart from the method of observation and induction that Reid has defended.

While this strongly encourages the impression that Reid's gripe is simply with the attempt to offer explanations of what is observed, this is somewhat misleading because Reid does have an account of scientific explanation. It is therefore equally as important to understand what an explanation is for Reid as well as what it is not. For Reid, an event is explained when it can be subsumed under natural laws which describe how it takes place and it is the task of natural philosophy to discover such laws. This amounts to an deductive-

⁴⁶See *Inquiry* VI.xxii

⁴⁷*Inquiry* VI.xxii.122

nomological account of scientific explanation. In offering such an account, Reid is sidestepping the use of more metaphysically robust explanations in natural philosophy, specifically appeals to underlying causes or mechanisms which cannot themselves be observed. The Reidian answer to a “Why?” question is to point to a natural law.⁴⁸

It should be clear now that Reid’s methodological commitments run directly in contrast to Wolff’s and that these different commitments yield radically distinct visions of how philosophy ought to be pursued. While both philosophers agree that philosophy must begin with experience and observation, Reid would have chastised Wolff for his distinction between historical and philosophical knowledge, specifically for privileging knowledge of the reasons for things over observational knowledge. For Reid, this would not only involve privileging theoretical commitments over common sense, it also fuels a tendency to indulge in unwarranted speculation. Where Wolff develops a sophisticated account of how hypotheses can enable a philosopher to proceed beyond what can be gained from attention to observation and was willing to employ useful hypotheses despite a lack of observational confirmation, Reid vehemently rejects the notion that hypotheses have any place in philosophy.

1.4 Tetens’ Middle Path on Methodology

Johann Nikolaus Tetens did not overlook these features of Reid’s thought. Though Tetens comes from the broadly Wolffian tradition, he shows that he not only appreciates the distinctiveness of Reid’s philosophical approach, but also raises a number of significant criticisms of Reid’s methodology. As I will show, Tetens’s analysis of the strengths and limitations of Reid’s methodology will ultimately shape how he proceeds with his own

⁴⁸For the classic account of scientific explanation as Deductive-Nomological, see Carl G. Hempel and Paul Oppenheim. “Studies in the Logic of Explanation”. In: *Philosophy of Science* 15.2 (1948), pp. 135–175. The most detailed discussion of Reid’s account of scientific explanation is Robert Callergård. “Reid and the Newtonian Forces of Attraction”. In: *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 3.2 (2005), pp. 139–155.

philosophical project. Tetens will appropriate several aspects of Reid's views about the relationship between philosophical inquiry and common sense, but he will steadfastly reject Reid's hostility towards hypothesizing. The resulting approach that Tetens will adopt combines Reid's insistence that philosophy must begin from a the starting point of common sense belief with the Wolffian approach that Reid would have rejected. This is important, as Tetens provides a bridge point between the Scottish common sense tradition and the development of Kant's theoretical philosophy, and it is the particular version of common sense philosophy expounded by Tetens that is the closest to Kant.

Tetens' engagement with Scottish commonsense philosophy begins in his 1775 essay, *Über die allgemeine speculativische Philosophie* (On the Universal Speculative Philosophy) and continues throughout his *Philosophische Versuche über die menschliche Natur und ihre Entwicklung* (Philosophical Essays on Human Nature and its Development) (1777), with the eighth Versuch dedicated to the relationship between reason and the common human understanding.⁴⁹ In the *Speculativische Philosophie*, Tetens makes it clear from the outset that his motivations are largely of a metaphilosophical nature. He is interested in the aims and scope of theoretical philosophy as well as its methodology and how it relates to what he calls "observational philosophy" and "common human understanding." Tetens proceeds with a discussion of our sensory knowledge and the problem of skepticism as it emerges in the case of our knowledge of external objects. Since he thinks that our access to external objects is mediated by representations, he argues that there are two ways of determining the accuracy of our representations of objects: we can study objects by means of the representations of them, or we can internally investigate our representations by comparing them and assessing them in terms of their consistency amongst one another. Since we have a natural propensity to treat representations as transparent, or to act as if it were objects themselves that lie before us and not merely representations of them, we take ourselves to

⁴⁹Tetens' notion of *der gemeine Menschenverstandes* or the common human understanding corresponds roughly to Reid's "common sense."

be investigating the nature of objects when we pursue either strategy.

However, the realization that we are dealing with representations, along with possibility of confusion with respect to our representations makes it important to inquire into their correctness and their reliability. We are not really dealing with things; we are dealing with subjective modifications of our own states. This forces us to ask the question: “are our representations true and real representations—that is, do they correspond to their objects to the extent that is required to be able to compare and evaluate those objects by means of them—or are they empty semblance that misleads us?” Answering this question is not a simple task. As Tetens explains,

so können wir aus unsern eignen Vorstellungen nicht herausgehen, die Gegenstände ausser diesen und ohne diese für sich nicht betrachten, die Sachen selbst nicht gegen ihre Ideen halten, und dadurch es ausmachen, ob und in wie weit diese letztere mit jenen übereinstimmen oder nicht. Unser Verstand befindet sich unter seinen Vorstellungen, wie das Auge in einer Gallerie von Gemälden, von Sachen und Personen, die es selbst niemals gesehen hat, und die es niemals sehen wird. Ob also die Vorstellungen dem entsprechen, was sie vorstellen, das kan nur auf eine ähnliche Art, und durch ähnliche Hülfsmittel ausgemachet werden, wodurch es in einem solchen Fall möglich seyn würde, über die Aehnlichkeit der Gemählde mit ihren Objecten zu urtheilen.⁵⁰

The best that we can hope to do with our faculty of reflection is to compare ideas and representations acquired in various circumstances, consider their relations amongst each

⁵⁰We cannot go beyond our own representations, nor can we consider the objects outside them and the representations themselves without them. We cannot hold the things up against their ideas and make out whether and how well they correspond or not. Our understanding finds itself among its representations as the eye in a gallery of paintings of things and persons, which it has never seen, nor will it ever see. Whether the representations correspond to what they represent, can only be made out in a similar manner and through similar aids, whereby it would be possible in such a case to judge the similarity of the paintings with their objects. Johann Nikolaus Tetens. “Über die allgemeine speculativische Philosophie”. In: *Philosophische Versuche von Johann Nicolaus Tetens*. Ed. by Willhelm Uebeles. Berlin: Reuther and Reichard, 1913, p. 4

other, and isolate a few that have a special status of being constant and having a level of natural necessity attached to them. These can be treated as true representations of objects and other can be evaluated in terms of their relation to them.

Despite the skeptical problem posed by this worry about the correctness of our representations, Tetens is confident in saying that the common human understanding has successfully acquired a large body of correct representations, without ever needing to investigate the nature of ideas and how they arose from sensation. We are successful in making useful judgments about objects based on our sensory experience all of the time and ordinary people feel no need to question this throughout their daily lives. It is only when we become aware of numerous perceptual errors that we entertain the possibility that our senses are unreliable. This is the most striking when we come across cases of misjudging objects across sensory modalities:

Die sinnlichen Eindrücke aller Arten, und vorzüglich, die uns durch den Sinn des Gesichts zukommen, gerathen bald in Uneinigkeit mit einander, wenn ihre Sammlung nur etwas vergrößert wird. Die Urtheilskraft geräth in Verlegenheit, die, wenn sie einigen folgen will, dieselbigen Gegenstände für einerley Dinge halten soll, welche sie, andern zufolge, für unterschiedene erklären muß.⁵¹

Tetens is likely referencing the eighteenth century's "hot topic" with respect to discussions of perception. In particular, people were interested in the question of vision's relation to touch. William Molyneux famously asked John Locke if a congenitally blind man who had touched a globe and a sphere would be able to distinguish them visually if his vision were restored. This question, along with William Cheselden's published observations of

⁵¹The sensory impressions of all sorts, and above all, those which come to us through the sense of sight, soon get mixed up with each other, when their number is slightly increased. The power of judgment, which, when it wants to follow a few impressions is supposed to take the objects of various sorts of impressions as being the same, becomes embarrassed when it must declare them to be different according to other kinds of impressions. *Speculativische Philosophie*, pg. 6. Also see Johann Nikolaus Tetens. *Philosophische Versuche über die menschliche Natur und ihre Entwicklung*. Ed. by Udo Roth; Gideon Stiening. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014, p. 303

what a young boy could see after a cataract surgery, were frequently occurring topics of discussion in this time period. The most commonly held answer was negative and this seemed well supported by the empirical evidence at the time. This suggests that visual and tactile perception yield quite different experiences of objects, which likely do not map on to each other and raises the distinct possibility that our judgments about an object based on experience of one type might lead us to error when applied to experience of another type.⁵²

Even so, Tetens, like Locke, thinks that we learn to cope with perceptual error. Sometimes we find that part of an appearance is presented with more strength, so that it gains a preferential status over weaker features of the appearance. Other times, we find that our sensations from different sensory modalities support each other.⁵³ We also find that some appearance is compatible with several other representations, so that the understanding assents to the rest. Together these features of perceptual experience allow us to develop the habit of making corrective judgments when we come across an occasional perceptual error, and we can protect ourselves from being perpetually misled.

Tetens uses this discussion of perceptual error to motivate a broader philosophical question: „Ist nicht das Verfahren des menschlichen Verstandes bey seinen Gemeinbegriffen und Grundsätzen dasselbige, wie bey seinen sinnlichen Vorstellungen?“⁵⁴ Tetens argues that it does, since the common human understanding employs most of its concepts and principles successfully all of the time, without subjecting them to an inquiry into their nature or origin. This is reiterated in the *Philosophische Versuche*:

Da uns das Gefühl saget, die Sachen, die ich durch den aufsteigenden Dampf in der Nähe eines stark eingeheizten Ofens zittern sehe, rühren sich von der Stelle

⁵²See Locke's discussion in John Locke. *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. by Peter H. Nidditch. Oxford Clarendon Press, 1975, p. II.ix.8

⁵³See Locke, *Essay*, IV.xi.7

⁵⁴Does the human understanding not proceed in the same way with respect to its ordinary concepts and principles as it does with its sensory representations? Tetens, "Über die allgemeine speculativische Philosophie", p. 8

nicht, so glaube ich dem Gefühl, und nicht dem Gesicht. Es hat Überlegungen gekostet, ehe die natürliche Denkkraft zur Gewißheit hierüber gekommen ist. Das sieht man an den Kindern; sie fühlen nach der Sache; sie sehen sie wieder an, verwundern sich, vergleichen die Eindrücke, und dann kommt es erst zu einem festen Urtheile. Der Gemeinverstand berichtigt sich auf folgende Art.⁵⁵

Despite the occasional perceptual error, we know a great deal about the objects we perceive. Tetens thinks this is also true of the principles of the common understanding:

Der gemeine Menschenverstand weiß, was eine Ursache und eine Wirkung ist, was ein Thun und ein Leiden, was ein Eing und eine Beschaffenheit, was nothwendig und zufällig, was Ordnung, Zeit und Raum, u.s.w ist. Er gehet diesen Begriffen nach, denkt nach den allgemeinen Axiomen der Vernunft...⁵⁶

Like perceivers learning to use complimentary input from different senses to avoid error, professionals working within various intellectual disciplines are capable of studying various objects, employing principles within their domains, and forming connections between pieces of knowledge. Analogous to the perceptual error discussion, these systematic relationships between principles and pieces of knowledge afford us considerable protection against being globally wrong, even if we can't demonstrate the truth of each particular principle we employ. Tetens highlights scientific work, in particular, as highly successful regardless of whether anyone decides to partake in any *Grundwissenschaft* and inquire into the origin of scientific principles. But just as in the case of perception, a reflective person

⁵⁵There touch tells us that the things which I see shivering through the rising steam near a strongly heated stove do not stir from the place, I believe touch and not sight. It took some consideration before the natural power of thought came to certainty about this. This is seen in children; they touch the things, look at them again, wonder, compare the impressions, and then come to a firm judgment. The common understanding is corrected in the same way. Tetens, *Philosophische Versuche über die menschliche Natur und ihre Entwicklung*, p. 303

⁵⁶The common human understanding knows what cause and effect is, what action and passion is, what a thing and a property is, what is necessary and contingent, what order time and space are, etc. It investigates these concepts, thinking them in accordance with universal axioms of reason. Tetens, "Über die allgemeine speculativische Philosophie", p. 8.

can inquire into these concepts and principles in an effort to understand not just one's own field, but how it hangs together with other disciplines. This is reflective standpoint, Tetens calls "*transcendenten Philosophie*."⁵⁷

Tetens continues with this line of thought to discuss the role of reason in philosophy, arguing that there are a number of things that fall within the province of rational knowledge [Vernunftkenntnisse] that the common human understanding can pick up without articulating a theory of reason. It is here that he introduces the thought of the Scottish common sense philosophers as providing a model of philosophy done without any appealing to metaphysical speculation:

Es gibt eine Theorie der Vernunft, die von allen Systemen der Metaphysic unabhängig ist. Die Begriffe und Grundsätze des Verstandes werden genutzt, ohne genau bestimmt, deutlich auseinander gesetzt, und in ein System gebraucht zu sein; ohne vorhergegangene allgemine Speculationes über Substanz, Raum und Zeit, u. d. g. Reid, Home, Beattie, Oswald, un auch verschiedene deutsche Philosophen, habe dies durch ihre Raisonements und durch ihre dargelegte Proben ausser Zweifel gesetzt.⁵⁸

While Tetens praises the common sense philosophers for showing that there is a role for reason in philosophy independent of metaphysics and for showing that we can be confident that we possess a great deal of knowledge of the world without inquiring into foundational principles, he is uncomfortable with their hostility towards speculative philosophy. While he is particularly bothered by the polemical dismissal of speculative philosophy by Beattie and Oswald, Tetens questions their portrayal of speculative philosophy as opposed to

⁵⁷Speculativische Philosophie, pg. 9.

⁵⁸There is a theory of reason that is independent of all systems of metaphysics. The concepts and principles of the understanding are employed without being precisely determined, set apart distinctly from one another, and integrated into a system. In the absence of any antecedent universal speculations about substance, space and time, and so on, through their reasoning [Raisonements] and through their detailed examinations Reid, Home, Beattie, Oswald, and also various German philosophers have established this fact beyond doubt. *Speculativische Philosophie*, pg. 10.

common human understanding. Tetens objects that this is too broad. Instead of rejecting speculative philosophy altogether, which Tetens thinks is premature, he thinks that they should have targeted the principles of specific philosophers that they found problematic.⁵⁹ Their failure to do this, on his assessment, leaves their work largely incomplete because they are unwilling to inquire into the nature of knowledge and explain the claims that they accept on common sense grounds.⁶⁰

It is here where Tetens is the most different from the common sense philosophers in terms of how he views skeptical problems in philosophy. Tetens, unlike the common sense philosophers, does not feel threatened by skepticism. This is not because, as one might initially think, he simply holds an unwarranted confidence in his own abilities to vanquish the skeptical demons—he does not see the skeptic as a demon in the first place. The analogy between perception and common sense principles illustrates this. The possibility of perceptual error generates the skeptical worry that our experience of the world may not be veridical. What assuages the skeptical worries is not a proof that such worries are illegitimate, but the fact that we are successful in making perceptual judgments despite the possibility of error. Skepticism only emerges as a pressing concern when we seek to offer explanations for this success. Similarly, we successfully employ our basic concepts and principles without fearing that they might all be critically flawed. The need to inquire into their legitimacy only arises from the standpoint of offering an explanation for what we already accept on practical grounds. Skepticism for Tetens is ultimately an explanatory challenge.

Tetens' point of departure from the Scottish common sense philosophers consists largely

⁵⁹This criticism is odd when held up against Reid's philosophical writings as a whole. Reid did in fact criticize specific assumptions held by each of his major contemporaries who endorsed the theory of ideas. However, when it is taken into account that most of these discussions appear in the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers*, published nearly a decade after Tetens was writing, these remarks become less mysterious. The *Inquiry* has less detailed discussions of the work of other philosophers and it is overtly polemical in the beginning sections. Tetens is also including Beattie and Oswald, who are not known as being as precise and careful as Reid in their philosophical writings.

⁶⁰*Speculativische Philosophie*, pg. 12. Also see *Philosophische Versuche* VIII, pg. 306

in a disagreement with what he takes to be the Reidian view about the relationship between common sense and philosophical inquiry. Tetens interprets Reid and his followers as holding too restrictive a view of the relationship between common sense and philosophy, specifically about what Greco described as the methodological priority of common sense in Reid's thought. Tetens accepts Reid's view that philosophy begins from common sense as its starting point and that philosophical conclusions which run directly contrary to common sense are not to be accepted. An important example of this is Tetens' agreement with Reid that the necessity to believe in the existence of an external world will always overpower any philosophical argument for the contrary conclusion.⁶¹ But while Tetens is clear that philosophy and common sense must be consistent with each other, he thinks the common sense philosophers have gone too far in fully subordinating philosophy to common sense and that this causes them to overlook their interdependence. Where Reid argues that any clash between common sense and philosophy will result in a loss for philosophy, placing the philosopher in the precarious position of endorsing claims that are ridiculous to ordinary people, Tetens frames such philosophical work as being largely an attempt to explain, correct, and refine common sense:

Was ist denn aber diese speculativische Philosophie, und was soll sie seyn? Ohne Zweifel etwas mehr, als jene gute Reflexionen des gemeinen Verstandes, die sie nicht aufheben, sondern bevestigen und aufklären soll. Sie soll eine entwickelte, das ist, eine in Ordnung und Zusammenhang gebrachte, eine genau bestimmte, von allen falschen Nebenideen gereinigte, verlängerte, erhöhet und mehr bevestigte Vernunftkenntniß seyn; sie soll eine stärkere ueberzeugung mit sich führen, als jene; eine solche nämlich, die aus dem deutlichen Bewustseyn der Gewisheit in uns entsteht. Dies ist der wahre Geist der Philosophie, und dies ist ihr Zweck, den man bey allen Fehlritten einzelner Philosophen den-

⁶¹*Philosophische Versuche* VIII.iv, pg. 305

noch als das Ziel erkennt, wornach die systematischen Philosophen, die sich von den philosophischen Raisonneurs unterscheiden wollen, gelaufen sind.⁶²

The role of the philosopher is not, on Tetens' account, to defend common sense from subversive speculation, but rather to use common sense as a launching point for the mostly reflective activity of examining and explaining the relationship between knowledge in different areas. Tetens notes that most domains of inquiry can make progress without ever raising foundational questions about the origin and status of their fundamental concepts and principles and nowhere is this more true than in the natural sciences, where disputes are settled without delving into metaphysics. "Zu dergleichen Untersuchungen ist nicht mehr von der Grundwissenschaft erforderlich, als der gemeine Gebrauch der Augen von der Perspective nöthig hat."⁶³ There is a place for such *Grundwissenschaft*, however. As he explains:

Will er nämlich nicht blos sein eignes Feld kennen, sondern auf die Lage desselben gegen die übrigen Theile der intellectuellen Welt, so weit der menschliche Verstand sich solche bekannt gemacht hat, und die Beziehungen von jenem auf diese übersehen; so erfordert es sein Zweck, daß er sich auf einem höhern Standort hinstelle, der nur in der Region der transcendenten Philosophie lieget.⁶⁴

⁶²What, then is this speculative philosophy? What should it be? Without doubt it is something more than those good reflections of the common understanding, which it does not cancel out but should rather secure and clarify. It should be developed rational knowledge, that is, rational knowledge that is ordered and coherent, precisely determined and purified of all false associated ideas. It should be a more encompassing, elevated and more secure rational knowledge. It should lead to a stronger conviction than common understanding, one that originates from the distinct awareness of certainty in us. This is the true spirit of philosophy, and this is its purpose, which one recognizes as the goal even with all of the slip-ups of particular philosophers, a goal that the systematic philosophers, who want to distinguish themselves from philosophical reasoners, have pursued. *Speculativische Philosophie*, pg. 12.

⁶³Foundational science is not more necessary for this investigation than the science of perspective is necessary for the common use of the eyes. *Speculativische Philosophie*, pg. 9

⁶⁴[If [the reflective individual (*der Nachdenkende*)] wants to know not merely his own field but also acquire an overview of how his field is related to, and how it stands in comparison with the remaining fields of the intellectual world, to the extent that human understanding has gained knowledge of them, his goal requires that he adopt a higher standpoint which lies only within the domain of transcendental philosophy. *Ibid.*

The philosopher, in adopting this reflective standpoint, is doing something beyond the specialist working within the confines of a specific professional or scientific discipline by broadening the scope of inquiry to the study of the interrelations of various localized fields of knowledge. Since this standpoint is so different from that of an ordinary person, or even that of a specialized researcher, Tetens goes through great lengths to point out that we ought not expect the conclusions of philosophers to look anything like common sense beliefs. Such conclusions by their very nature are supposed to be different, or such inquiries serve no purpose. Philosophical conclusions “should differ from the unarticulated knowledge of the human understanding just as much as contemporary astronomy differs from that ancient knowledge of the heavens that one can still find in Seneca’s writings.”⁶⁵

Given their methodological differences, Tetens’ most consistent criticism of Reid and his followers is that while they begin their inquiries with excellent descriptions of principles that we cannot reasonably doubt, they never bother to offer theoretical explanations for why these principles are necessary and, as a result, appear to simply be lazily attributing our endorsement of such principles to instinct. When one conceives of philosophy as ultimately a reflective explanatory project, this is very dissatisfying. In his *Philosophische Versuche*, Tetens bluntly states that, “This means that the investigation is prematurely broken off, whereby the philosophical psychologist is as little satisfied as the natural philosopher when he is told that it is an instinct of the magnet to attract iron.”⁶⁶

The position that Tetens works out with respect to proper philosophical methodology occupies a middle position between that of Wolff on one side and Reid on the other. Tetens grants quite a lot to Reid with respect to common sense. He accepts straightforwardly that the proper starting point of philosophy has its origin in common sense, and he accepts

⁶⁵*Speculativische Philosophie*, pg. 12.

⁶⁶*Philosophische Versuche*, V. pg. 200. Also see *Versuche*, VIII. pg. 306 for Tetens’ charge of enthusiasm [*Schwärmerei*] aimed at the common sense philosophers for privileging common sense over reason. Compare with Kant in the preface to the *Prolegomena*: “To appeal to ordinary common sense when insight and science run short, and not before, is one of the subtle discoveries of recent times, whereby the dullest windbag can confidently take on the most profound thinker and hold his own with him” (4:259).

the Reidian view that common sense can provide a practical justification of the concepts and principles presupposed by ordinary life against the threat of skepticism. But Tetens rejects, Reid's insistence that common sense should constrain philosophical inquiry. As Tetens interprets Reid, this amounts to subordinating philosophy to common sense, which leaves us with too little room to expand our knowledge. Here, Tetens accepts the Wolffian position that the point of doing philosophy is to grasp onto explanations for the things we have observed and that failing to do this, as he thinks Reid has done, leaves the philosopher unable to adequately say how and why things are as they are. Thus, Tetens can be fruitfully seen as a common sense philosopher who carves out a role for theoretical philosophy to provide us with explanations for common sense knowledge claims.

1.5 Kant's Methodology in Context

I argued earlier that any discussion of Kant's argumentative strategy in the first *Critique* will ultimately collapse into a discussion of what his specific aims and concerns were when he wrote the *Critique*, and this in turn quickly becomes the problem of trying to contextualize his methodology. Those commentators who take Kant to be engaged in a strategy of progressive transcendental argumentation see his primary aim as the refutation of various skeptical positions and therefore situate his work into the context of the philosophical concern with skepticism in the early modern period. The opposing interpretive position, that Kant is employing regressive transcendental arguments to provide theoretical explanations for weightier scientific or common sense philosophical commitments, is a fundamental rejection of locating Kant within this tradition. As noted earlier, both positions have significant problems with respect to context. If Kant's primary concern is indeed skepticism, then it is almost never clear how any of his major argumentative moves are supposed to undercut the skeptical positions they are supposedly aimed at. If skepticism isn't a major concern for Kant, then it remains less than obvious why discussions of skepticism seem to

show up so frequently within the *Critique*.

I also highlighted a number of contextual difficulties for Ameriks and his attempt to view Kant through Reidian lenses. The fact that Kant was so quick to dismiss Reid in the *Prolegomena* and the lack of any direct link between the two philosophers is an immediate obstacle, but not nearly so much as the significant differences in their philosophical approaches. The first, as I noted, was that Reid was very much interested in undermining skepticism, and this aspect of his thought does not sit well with the notion of a “Common Sense Kant” who lacks this preoccupation. The second, and more significant problem is that Reid likely would have never endorsed anything like the sort of regressive explanatory project that Ameriks finds in Kant.

It is then clear that more context is needed if any light is to be shed on this issue. The discussion of the methodological differences between Wolff, Reid, and Tetens provides a considerable amount of useful context. Given Wolff’s enormous influence in eighteenth century Germany, his methodology is a natural starting point for gleaning insight into the way in which German philosophers in this period would have conceived of their task, as philosophers. Here, two features of Wolff’s approach are worth reiterating: (1) the starting point for philosophy is with observation, and (2) the knowledge with which we ought to aspire to possess is explanatory knowledge. Philosophy, in this tradition, aims to provide theoretical explanation for what can be observed.

Reid’s distinctive methodology turns much of this on its head. The philosophers in this period, according to Reid, run afoul of common sense when they privilege theoretical considerations over the beliefs and principles that must be presupposed in ordinary life. Philosophy, if it is to have any hope of avoiding triviality or absurdity, must take its cues from common sense and stay within its bounds. Reid thought that philosophers get themselves into trouble when they entertain explanatory theories that are not immediately evaluable in terms of observations. Such “hypotheses” or “conjectures” have no place in philosophy. The common sense philosopher proceeds carefully from making observations

of particular phenomena and then inductively generalizing over them to discover natural laws which govern these phenomena.

It is in Tetens that these two very different methodological positions converge. Tetens incorporates several aspects of Reid's views about common sense and its relation to philosophy into the broadly Wolffian approach to philosophy. Tetens shares Reid's insistence that philosophical investigation must begin with common sense, and he grants common sense a limited methodological priority over philosophical inquiry. However, Tetens resists fully subordinating philosophy to common sense, as he interprets Reid as doing. In opposition to this, Tetens argues that philosophical conclusions should diverge from received common sense, and that this divergence is both necessary and allows for philosophical insights to correct and refine what was accepted on common sense grounds. Tetens is particularly critical of Reid's hostility towards hypothesizing, as he sees it a sort of intellectual laziness on the part of common sense philosophers. It is here that the Wolffian dimension of his methodology most clearly emerges. For Tetens, to merely have observational knowledge of phenomena and generalizations derived from it, is to stop short of a genuine explanation of why something is as it is.

Tetens' discussions of philosophical methodology are interesting on their own merits, but with respect to Kant they are particularly valuable for two reasons. First, they provide a clear example of the influence of common sense philosophical methodology in Germany during the 1770's. This makes it at least possible that Kant might have absorbed a considerable bit of common sense philosophical thinking from the German philosophical scene in this period, regardless of whether he knew Reid's work directly or not. Tetens' tendency to address the common sense philosophers as a group and to charge them with enthusiasm very possibly expresses a similar view to Kant's dismissal of them as a group in the *Prolegomena*. Second, Tetens embodies the very sort of philosophical project that Ameriks claims to have found in Kant. Tetens, like the "Common Sense Kant," can easily be described as having a philosophical project that begins with common sense knowledge claims

and then proceeds to give a sophisticated account of how such knowledge claims are possible. When Kant is interpreted as a common sense philosopher in Tetens' specific sense instead of Reid's, the notable differences between Reid and Kant on methodology are no longer threatening.

Even more importantly, situating Kant's methodology in this particular context allows us to draw on Tetens' attitudes towards skepticism to better understand the role that discussions of skepticism might be playing in Kant's work. Tetens thinks that the common sense philosophers as a group are particularly insightful when it comes to warding off skepticism by showing that skeptical positions are fundamentally inconsistent with propositions that must be presupposed in practical life. Tetens spends a considerable amount of time pointing out that significant progress can be made in most areas of inquiry without anyone really needing to take skepticism seriously as a problem to be dealt with head-on. However, this is not to say that skepticism is irrelevant. Since it is the job of the philosopher, according to Tetens, to take a reflective step back and to try to provide a theoretical framework which explains how our common sense presuppositions hang together, skepticism emerges to challenge the philosopher attempting such a feat, and this is the context under which the two skeptical challenges in *Über die allgemeine speculativische Philosophie* occur. Skepticism represents the possibility that we cannot provide an adequate explanation for some claim that we already accept for independent reasons. It is not something that threatens us in our daily lives, but rather is a challenge for an explanation which simply gets discharged when a suitable explanation can be given.

Hume through Tetensian Lenses: Kant's “Answer” to Hume in Context

In the previous chapter, I examined Tetens' sustained criticism of the philosophical methodology employed by Reid and the Common Sense philosophers along with his attempt to incorporate elements of their approach into that of the broadly Wolffian tradition. While Tetens thought that Reid and his followers successfully demonstrated how successful philosophy can be without delving into speculative metaphysics, Tetens was sharply critical of how Reid construed the relationship between philosophy and common sense and his general unwillingness to offer the sorts of theoretical explanations that constitute “philosophical knowledge” in the Wolffian sense. In an attempt to preserve what he saw as important in both traditions while avoiding their shortcomings, Tetens articulates his own vision of “transcendent philosophy.” This is a uniquely reflective activity that aims, not towards knowledge of particular facts within a specific domain of inquiry, but towards a broader explanatory knowledge of how these domains of inquiry are interrelated.

Where the previous chapter aimed to lay out the methodology to be found in the work of both Tetens and Kant, this chapter aims to examine its application in a particular case: Hume's discussion of causation. The aim will be to examine Tetens' commentary on and criticisms of Humean causality so that further light can be shed on the issue of Kant's relationship to Hume. This turns out to be a very complicated discussion, if only because we know very little about when and how Kant interpreted Hume at certain points in his career, specifically in the 1770's when he was working on what would become the *Critique*. This makes it extremely difficult to see just how Kant's discussion is supposed to line up

with Hume's, and this has led to very different interpretations of their relationship.

There are two primary ways of construing the Kant-Hume relationship. The first takes Kant to be seeking a refutation of Humean causation and the second takes Kant to be interested in the more modest goal of providing a successful alternative to it. More recently, a dispute over this issue has occurred between Eric Watkins and Brian Chance, specifically about what would count as a "refutation" of Hume. Watkins argues that since Kant does not share Hume's fundamental assumptions, his starting point is too different from Hume to ever be in a position to refute him. As a result, we should avoid interpreting Kant as attempting to do something that he would not be able to do. Brian Chance has rejected this argument on the grounds that Watkins has far too narrow a notion of a refutation, and that there are good textual and contextual reasons to think that Kant would have thought it necessary to refute Hume. Since Tetens' critique of Hume has been invoked by both sides in this dispute, I will spend considerable time on an examination of Tetens' discussion of Hume and its implications for interpreting the Kant-Hume relationship.

Tetens' discussion of Humean causality in the fourth essay of the *Philosophische Versuche* is important for interpreting Kant's relationship to Hume for three reasons. First, Tetens will give us some insight into how Hume was being interpreted by a philosopher somewhat close to Kant, at a time in which Kant's thought was developing. Second, the details of Tetens' discussion and critique of Hume will provide us significant context for interpreting some of Kant's remarks about Hume. As I will show, Tetens provides both a positive and a negative response to Hume. The negative involves a common sense objection to Humean causation which charges it with inadequacy insofar as it fails to live up to our ordinary ways of speaking about causes. The positive side involves an attempt to provide an alternative to Hume's account, one which locates necessary connection in the activity of the understanding and not in the imagination. Tetens gives us an account of how necessary connection is established by the application of the concept of a cause. In doing this, however, Tetens is forced into trying to make sense of what kind of necessity is involved in

causation. This leads him try to give an account of subjective necessity and to rethink the notion of objectivity in general. Ultimately, a generalized version of “Hume’s problem” arises in Tetens before it does in Kant.

The examination of Tetens’ critique of Hume will allow for Kant to be interpreted in line with what Tetens did before him. This makes it possible to distinguish a positive and a negative side of Kant’s response to Hume. Kant seems to accept much of Tetens’ negative critique of Hume and several of his comments mirror this. Where they differ is in their attempts to offer positive alternatives to Hume. As I will show, Kant would have found Tetens’ own account of causation to be both insightful and frustrating for different reasons. Kant would have found Tetens’ general strategy to be useful, but he would have been very dissatisfied with Tetens’ execution of it. In light of this, Kant can be interpreted as attempting to correct and improve upon the type of alternative to Hume that Tetens offers.

The major interpretative implication is that insofar as Tetens allows us to recognize that there are both positive and negative sides to Kant’s response to Hume, the dispute over whether or not he is refuting Hume or providing an alternative to him turns out to oversimplify Kant’s relation to Hume. Kant’s refutation of Hume is in line with Tetens’ objections to Hume, but Kant goes beyond Tetens when it comes to his own alternative. Watkins and Chance turn out to both be partially correct, in a sense, but only because they each latch on to different halves of the dynamic between Tetens and Hume, and later Kant and Hume.

I will begin by examining Hume’s discussions of causation in both the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*. Next, I will examine the wider difficulties with interpreting Kant’s relationship to Hume. Third, I will examine Tetens’ criticism and response to Hume, which is followed by a discussion of Tetens’ account of objectivity. Finally, I will return to the issue of interpreting the Kant-Hume relationship and argue that Tetens makes it possible to carve out a more nuanced appreciation of that relationship.

2.1 Hume's Discussions of Causation in the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*

The *Treatise*

Hume's discussion of causation in the first book of the *Treatise* can be largely taken as an attempt to answer three different sort of questions. The first question, which I will label as (A) to avoid confusion, is about the meaning of the concept of causation. In line with his copy principle from the first section of the *Treatise*, which states that "all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent" (I.i.1, 9), Hume tells us that "To begin regularly, we must consider the idea of causation, and see from what origin it is deriv'd" (I.iii.2, 53). Hume asks us to consider two objects, one taken to be a cause and the other taken to be an effect, and to "turn them on all sides, in order to find that impression, which produces an idea of such prodigious consequence" (ibid). Upon doing this, he notes that we do not find this impression among those of the particular qualities of either object because, for any such quality, there will always be an object which lacks it and still gets counted as a cause or an effect. Even further, there is nothing in the world which cannot be considered as either a cause or an effect, and no particular quality possessed by all objects that makes them causes or effects. From this, Hume concludes that the idea of causation does not have its origin in any quality of particular objects, but rather must be found in a relation between objects.

In examining the relations between objects said to be causally related, Hume notes that, in all cases, they are contiguous in time and place. He proceeds further to note that it appears essential to causes and effects that there is a temporal priority which exists between them and offers an argument to show that causes must precede effects. However, upon uncovering contiguity and succession as essential for causation to obtain, Hume re-

marks, “I am stopt short, and can proceed no farther in considering any single instance of cause and effect.”¹ Although contiguity and succession are necessary for causal relations to obtain, Hume thinks that they are not sufficient for them. There is a third condition, a “NECESSARY CONNEXION to be taken into consideration...” and this relation “...is of much greater importance, than any of the other two above-mentioned.”² Once again, Hume proposes to “turn the object on all sides” in order to find the impression which is the source of our idea of necessary connection. This time he finds not only the particular qualities of objects, but also the relations of contiguity and succession to be unable to account for the origin of our idea of necessary connection. Although he cannot at this point locate the source of the idea of necessary connection, Hume does not conclude that the idea is ungrounded in any impression and remarks that such a conclusion would be too strong. In light of this difficulty, he proposes to examine the idea of necessary connection indirectly by posing two further questions which he believes can resolve the difficulty if answered:

(B) “First, For what reason we pronounce it *necessary*, that every thing whose existence has a beginning, shou’d also have a cause?”

(C) “Secondly, Why we conclude, that such particular causes must *necessarily* have such particular effects; and what is the nature of that *inference* we draw from the one to the other, and of the belief we repose in it?”

Hume takes up the first of these two questions in I.iii.3 by examining the proposition “whatever begins to exist, must have a cause of existence.” Very quickly, Hume argues that the apparent certainty of this proposition, which is accepted by most philosophers, cannot be accounted for by comparing ideas and discovering unalterable relations between them. Since the proposition does not rest on any of the relations which he accepted earlier in I.iii.i as “depending entirely on the ideas” such as relations of resemblance, proportion in

¹*Treatise* I.iii.2, 54

²*Treatise* I.iii.2, 55

quantity and number, degrees of any quality, and contrariety, he argues that it cannot be accepted as *intuitively certain*. But Hume does not stop there and continues with an argument that he thinks undermines any claim that the proposition might have to *demonstrative certainty* as well. In order to demonstrate that every existence must have a cause, we must be able to demonstrate that it is impossible for anything to exist without some “productive principle” which gives rise to it. But Hume thinks we can offer no such demonstration because all of our ideas are separable from each other and ideas of causes and effects are no exception. Since we can separate ideas of causes from ideas of effects, we can imagine uncaused events and this is entirely conceivable without contradiction or absurdity. As a result, Hume concludes that this proposition “is therefore incapable of being refuted by any reasoning from mere ideas; without which ’tis impossible to demonstrate the necessity of a cause.”³ After taking himself to have established this, Hume attacks various arguments offered in support of the proposition by philosophers such as Hobbes, Locke, and Clarke.⁴

Since reason is clearly not up to the task of securing the necessity of a cause for every effect, we are left without an account of how we come to accept such a proposition. While Hume acknowledges that the natural question to ask upon this realization is, “How experience gives rise to such a principle?” he does not directly offer an answer to it. Instead he believes it will be beneficial to sink the question into another one, “Why we conclude, that such particular causes must necessarily have particular effects, and why we form an inference from one to another?” which is (C) above.

After digressing for three brief sections, Hume picks this question up in I.iii.6, titled “Of the inference from the impression to the idea.” After repeating his observations from I.iii.3 that distinct ideas are separable, that this separability implies the possibility of uncaused objects, and that no examination of the objects themselves will suffice to account for necessary connection, Hume now offers an account of how this connection comes about: “’Tis

³*Treatise* I.iii.3, 56.

⁴*Treatise* I.iii.3, 56-58

therefore by EXPERIENCE only, that we can infer the existence of one object from that of another.”⁵ Hume’s example which illustrates how we come to draw connections between causes and effects is the presence of flames and the sensation of heat. We observe multiple times that the sensation of heat occurs alongside fire and that this occurs “in a regular order of contiguity and succession with regard to them.”⁶ When their constant conjunction in all past instances is brought to our attention, we begin to call one the cause (the flames) and the other the effect (the sensation of heat). With this connection in mind, we begin to infer the presence of one from the observation of the other.

With this example on the table, Hume is able to point to a third condition which is required to account for necessary connection: constant conjunction. While Hume highlights the uncovering of constant conjunction as the immediate advantage of setting aside the “direct survey” of the issue from earlier, he immediately makes it clear that any celebration about resolving the issue would be premature:

There are hopes, that by this means we may at last arrive at our propos’d end; tho’ to tell the truth, this new-discover’d relation of a constant conjunction seems to advance us but very little in our way. For it implies no more than this, that like objects have always been plac’d in like relations of contiguity and succession; and it seems evident, at least at first sight, that by this means we can never discover any new idea, and can only multiply, but not enlarge the objects of our mind.⁷

So while this account can explain how it is that we take a particular cause to be linked to a particular effect, it is insufficient to furnish us with any other ideas. As a result, we are still left without an account of how the idea of necessary connection arises. Noting that this appears to be a dead end, Hume reminds us that we still have not examined the nature of the

⁵*Treatise* I.iii.6, 61.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Treatise* I.iii.6, 62

inference which is based on constant conjunction and that doing so might lead to a surprising conclusion: “Perhaps ’twill appear in the end, that the necessary connexion depends on the inference, instead of the inference’s depending on the necessary connexion.”⁸

With the focus shifted to the nature of the inference, Hume poses a new question: “whether experience produces the idea by means of the understanding or imagination; whether we are determin’d by reason to make the transition, or by a certain association and relation of perceptions?”⁹ Hume considers the possibility that it is reason which is responsible for this inference, but he quickly concludes that reason is incapable of bridging the gap between past experiences and unobserved events without presupposing a principle which states, “that instances, of which we have had no experience, must resemble those, of which we have had experience, and that the course of nature continues always uniformly the same.”¹⁰ This is where Hume famously raises the problem of induction. As Hume bluntly points out, no demonstration can be given for this principle because its opposite is easily conceivable and its conceivability implies its possibility. Though we might seek to account for this principle by appealing to past experiences of it holding, Hume immediately counters that experience is only capable of informing us that it has held in the past, not that it will continue in the future. This would require another principle, which in turn would require another, *ad infinitum*. What this shows us is not only reason’s inability to account for causal inference, but also that experience cannot justify inferences from past occurrences of constant conjunction to future ones.

Nevertheless, we do make such inferences and we do it even though reason (or the understanding) cannot accomplish the task, even with the help of past experience. Since reason is not capable of accounting for this inference, Hume argues that it is grounded in the imagination:

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

Reason can never show us the connexion of one object with another, tho' aided by experience, and the observation of their constant conjunction in all past instances. When the mind therefore, passes from the idea or impression of one object to the idea or belief of another, it is not determin'd by reason, but by certain principles, which associate together the ideas of these objects, and unite them in the imagination. ¹¹

At this point, Hume abruptly changes the direction of his inquiry towards giving an account of the nature of belief. Three features of this discussion are highly relevant. The first is his definition of belief as "A LIVELY IDEA RELATED TO OR ASSOCIATED WITH A PRESENT IMPRESSION."¹² The second is that the force and vivacity of an impression can be communicated to an idea that is associated with it and that this happens forcefully when there are relations of resemblance and contiguity.¹³ The third is that when we experience impressions which are "constantly conjoin'd together," we are automatically carried from the appearance of one to the idea of the other and that this transition is something that happens at an unconscious level as a result of custom.¹⁴

After giving us an account of how it is that we form beliefs about particular causes being linked to particular effects, Hume finally returns to the issue of accounting for our idea of necessary connection which led him to pose the two questions in *Treatise* I.iii.3. Hume begins by restating his commitment to the principle that all of our ideas are derived from impressions and noting that we must be able to point to an impression that corresponds to the idea of necessity if we are to accept that we really possess such an idea. Revisiting his account from earlier, Hume notes that causes and effects are contiguous in time and place and that the cause precedes the effect. Attending to either object furnishes us with

¹¹*Treatise* I.iii.6, 64

¹²*Treatise* I.iii.7, 67

¹³*Treatise* I.iii.8, 69-70

¹⁴*Treatise*, I.iii.8, 72

no information about the other and we cannot point to a third relation which they share.¹⁵ While this was a moment of pessimism about the results of his investigation in I.iii.6, Hume is now in a position to offer us a different description of these observations which is informed by his account of belief:

At first sight this seems to serve but little to my purpose. The reflection on several instances only repeats the same objects; and therefore can never give rise to a new idea. But upon farther enquiry I find, that the repetition is not in every particular the same, but produces a new impression, and by that means the idea, which I present examine. For after a frequent repetition, I find, that upon the appearance of one of the objects, the mind is *determin'd* by custom to consider its usual attendant, and to consider it in a stronger light upon account of its relation to the first object. 'Tis this impression, then, or *determination*, which afford me the idea of necessity.¹⁶

In I.iii.6, Hume was forced to accept the pessimistic conclusion that no further amount of experiencing like impressions conjoined with like later impressions would ever be able to furnish us with any new information beyond knowledge that a particular cause is connected to a particular effect. This offers us no insight into necessary connection. But now that he has an account of belief that can account for how the mind transitions between related ideas, he now has the ability to account for a difference between a single observation of conjoined impressions and multiple observations of them. After repeated experience of constantly conjoined impressions, the mind, as a matter of custom or habit, is determined to relate the impressions as they have been experienced previously, and this determination yields an impression which is the source for our idea of necessity:

¹⁵This remark echoes a passage quoted earlier from *Treatise* I.iii.6 where Hume points to constant conjunction as a third condition which is needed to account for necessary connection and then points out that constant conjunction amounts to saying that objects have simply appeared with the same relations of contiguity and succession. Constant conjunction is therefore not a third relation between the objects.

¹⁶*Treatise* I.iii.14, 105

Tho' several resembling instances, which give rise to the idea of power, have no influence one ach other, and can never produce any new quality *in the object*, which can be the model of that idea, yet the observation of this resemblance produces a new impression *in the mind*, which is its real model. For after we have observ'd the resemblance in a sufficient number of instances, we immediately feel a determination of the mind to pass from one object to its usual attendant, and to conceive it in a stronger light upon account of that relation.¹⁷

It is here that Hume repays the promissory note he offered us at I.iii.6 where he remarked that necessary connection might depend on the inference instead of the inference depending on necessary connection. His brief suggestion has now been sufficiently expounded. It is the determination of the mind to direct our thought from one object to another which gives rise to this "internal impression" and leads us to the ideas of power or necessity. As he puts it, "The necessary connection betwixt causes and effects is the foundation of our inference from one to the other. The foundation of our inference is the transition arising from the accustom'd union. These are, therefore, the same."¹⁸ To put it slightly differently, "necessity is something, that exists in the mind, not in the objects; nor is it possible for us ever to form the most distant idea of it, consider'd as a quality in the bodies."¹⁹

By this point, we now have answers to question (A) and both aspects of question (C), but we still lack an answer to question (B), which asks why we think it is necessary that every event has some cause. Hume's return to this question happens later in I.iii.14, where he ties his discussion of causation together by drawing a set of three corollaries from it which he thinks run counter to the widespread discussions of causation by other philosophers. The first is that he thinks he has eliminated the grounds for distinguishing between the

¹⁷*Treatise* I.iii.14, 111

¹⁸*Treatise* I.iii.14, 111

¹⁹*Treatise* I.iii.14, 112

four Aristotelian causes. The second is that he thinks there is no longer any support for the common distinction between physical and moral necessity. The third corollary is where Hume brings his discussion back to the issue of the necessity of every event having a cause:

Thirdly, We may now be able fully to overcome all that repugnance, which 'tis so natural for us to entertain against the foregoing reasoning, by which we endeavour'd to prove, that the necessity of a cause to every beginning of existence is not founded on any arguments either demonstrative or intuitive. Such an opinion will not appear strange after the foregoing definitions. If we define a cause to be, *An object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are plac'd in a like relation of priority and contiguity to those objects, that resemble the latter*; we may easily conceive, that there is no absolute nor metaphysical necessity, that every beginning of existence shou'd be attended with such an object. If we define a cause to be, *An object precedent and contiguous to another, and so united with it in the imagination, that the idea of the one determines the mind to form the idea of the other, and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other*; we shall make still less difficulty of assenting to this opinion. Such an influence on the mind is in itself perfectly extraordinary and incomprehensible; nor can we be certain of its reality, but from experience and observation.²⁰

This appears to be an expansion on his argument that the principle that every event has some cause is incapable of being proven either demonstrably or intuitively. Not only can the principle not be proven, but the only support it might gain—consistency with experience—is unable to ground it. Experience can support the principle that particular effects have particular causes, but we are never in a position to experience all possible events. Experience cannot lend support to such a principle.

²⁰*Treatise* I.iii.14, 115-116

The Enquiry

The major difference between the discussions of causation in the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* is stylistic. In the *Treatise*, Hume poses a set of guiding questions about causation which are only answered after he develops an account of the limitations of reason in deciding the issue, a highly sophisticated account of the nature of belief, and an account of the role of the imagination in the production of the impression of necessary connection. Along the way he makes use of numerous observations and experiments which support his reasoning as he proceeds. In the *Enquiry*, Hume writes with the aim of a more streamlined presentation of his conclusions and his use of examples serves to exhibit his conclusions rather than to support them. Though the two discussions are largely consistent, the *Enquiry* discussion differs most notably insofar as it lacks the two questions that Hume poses in *Treatise* I.iii.6 and the discussion does not touch on the principle that every event must have some cause, focusing instead on the account of our belief that particular effects have particular causes and the nature of causal inference.

The discussion of causation in the *Enquiry* begins in section IV, which is titled “Sceptical Doubts Concerning the Operations of the Understanding.” After sketching out his distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact as the two kinds of knowledge we can attain, Hume notes that “All reasonings concerning matter of fact seem to be founded on the relation of Cause and Effect. By means of that relation alone we can go beyond the evidence of our memory and senses.”²¹ With the importance of our knowledge of cause and effect on the table from the start, Hume tells us that we must inquire into how we arrive at such knowledge. Immediately, he sets out to demonstrate that such knowledge can never be *a priori* and depends entirely on experience. We find particular objects conjoined with each other in experience, and no consideration of either object alone can provide us with

²¹EHU IV.i.26

any knowledge of its causes or its effects. This forces us to admit that “causes and effects are discoverable, not by reason but by experience.”²²

Hume illustrates this with an example that he presented as an “experiment” in the *Treatise*: a billiard ball striking another. Though we might think that we could infer the transfer of motion from one billiard ball to another by simply examining the first moving ball, this is actually the result of custom, which operates so strongly that we do not even take notice of it. Since motion in the first ball is entirely distinct from the second, Hume argues that there is nothing about it which alone suffices to let us infer anything about the second ball. Hume notes that any number of consequences are entirely conceivable. Both balls might suddenly be at rest, the first ball might strike the second and return to its original path, or they both might veer off into any number of different directions. Hume’s point is that if any consequence is conceivable, we are left with the question of why we give preference to one over the others. The arbitrary nature of constantly conjoined causes and effects makes it impossible to reason about them without appealing to experience.²³

The second part of *Enquiry IV* contains an extended discussion of the problem of induction. Hume begins by noting that when we inquire into the nature of our reasoning based on matters of fact, we appeal to the foundation of the relation between cause and effect. But when we inquire into this relation, our answer is experience. A third question, which is murkier than the other two arises: what is the foundation of all conclusions from experience? It is here that Hume adopts a skeptical position:

Philosophers, that give themselves airs of superior wisdom and sufficiency, have a hard task when they encounter persons of inquisitive dispositions, who push them from every corner to which they retreat, and who are sure at last to bring them to some dangerous dilemma. The best expedient to prevent con-

²²EHU IV.i.28

²³EHU IV.i.30

fusion, is to be modest in our pretensions; and even to discover the difficulty ourselves before it is objected to us. By this means, we may make a kind of merit of our very ignorance.²⁴

Hume proposes to offer only a negative answer to this question, which is that even after we have experience of cause and effect, our knowledge is not based on reasoning or the understanding. We can know about previously observed objects by experience, but that only informs us about those particular objects at that particular time. It does not tell us why we should believe that these objects will behave similarly in the future, or that other objects which we have not observed would also conform to their past behavior. There is, as Hume notes, a huge gap between the proposition which states, “I have found that such an object has always been attended with such an effect,” and the one that states that “other objects, which are, in appearance, similar, will be attended with similar effects.”²⁵ Hume allows that the second proposition might be inferred from the first, but he questions whether or not there is anything which supports the inference: “There is required a medium, which may enable the mind to draw such an inference, if indeed it be drawn by reasoning and argument. What that medium is, I must confess, passes my comprehension; and it is incumbent on those to produce it, who assert that it really exists, and is the origin of all our conclusions regarding matter of fact.”²⁶ Once again, he notes that appealing to experience to support this principle leads to circularity.²⁷

In *Enquiry* V.i, Hume returns to discussing causation, but he prefaces his discussion with a discussion about philosophical skepticism and the harsh reaction it evokes from those who feel threatened by it. Hume makes a point to push back against these worries that skepticism undermines any aspect of common life. Referencing his discussion of cause

²⁴EHU IV.ii.32

²⁵EHU IV.ii.34

²⁶Ibid

²⁷EHU IV.ii.35-36

and effect, he makes a point to claim that it does not undermine our knowledge claims:

Though we should conclude, for instance, as in the foregoing section, that, in all reasonings from experience, there is a step taken by the mind which is not supported by any argument or process of the understanding; there is no danger that these reasonings, on which almost all knowledge depends, will ever be affected by such a discovery.²⁸

Even without it being the case that we can offer an argument to support the inference from cause to effect, this principle still governs our lives and such a principle will influence human nature “as long as human nature remains the same.”²⁹ Hume then gives us two examples of the role that this principle plays. In line with his claim in the *Treatise* that it is repeated experience of conjoined impressions which leads the understanding to convey the impression of necessity as it transitions from cause to effect, Hume offers an account of one’s ability to make causal inferences after an observation of a single event, which is contrasted to what this person would be able to do after more experience of similar objects or events constantly conjoined. In the former case, one cannot reach causal connection; in the latter case, “he immediately infers the existence of one object from the appearance of the other.”³⁰ This principle which is operative in these examples, is a powerful case of custom or habit, which is to say that “For wherever the repetition of any particular act or operation produces a propensity to renew the same act or operation, without being impelled by any reasoning or process of the understanding, we always say, that this propensity is the effect of Custom.”³¹ With this laid out, Hume can conclude that inferences that we make from experience are the result of custom, not reasoning.

²⁸EHU V.i.41

²⁹EHU V.i.42

³⁰Ibid

³¹EHU V.i.43

2.2 The General Problem of Kant's Relation to Hume

If there is any one thing that Kant's readers have been able to agree on, it is that Hume's philosophy—specifically his discussion of causation—was tremendously important to Kant's intellectual development in the period of time between the publication of the Inaugural Dissertation of 1770 and the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781. Most of Kant's interpreters would go even further and say that the primary aim of the Transcendental Analytic is to provide a refutation of Humean skepticism about causation.³² The reason this seems so uncontroversial is that Kant explicitly remarks on this influence in the preface to his *Prolegomena* in 1783 and presents his own theoretical philosophy as an expansion upon what was a distinctively Humean insight. Hume, according to Kant,

started from a single but important concept in metaphysics, namely, that of the *connection of cause and effect* (and of course also its derivative concepts, of force and action, etc.), and called upon reason, which pretends to have generated this concept in her womb, to give him an account of by what right she thinks: that something could be so constituted that, if it is posited, something else necessarily must thereby be posited as well; for that is what the concept of cause says. He undisputably proved that it is wholly impossible for reason

³²This was true from the beginning of the reception of Kant's critical philosophy and continues today. Notable early examples include Johann Schultz. "Review of J.H.A. Ulrichs Institutiones Logicae et Metaphysica". In: *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung* 295 (Dec. 1785), pp. 297–299; Dietrich Tiedemann. "Über die Natur der Metaphysik; zur Prüfung von Hrn Professor Kants Grundsätze". In: *Hessische Beiträge zur Gelehrsamkeit und Kunst* (1785), pp. 113–130; Karl Leonhard Rheinhold. *Ueber das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens*. Jena: Widtman und Mauke, 1791, pp. 135-138; Gottlob Ernst Schulze. *Aenesidemus, oder über die Fundamente der von dem Herrn Prof. Reinhold in Jena gelieferten Elementarphilosophie, nebst einer Verteidigung gegen die Anmaßungen der Vernunftkritik*. Jena, 1792, pp. 131-180 These texts are available in translation in Brigitte Sassen. *Kant's Early Critics: The Empiricist Critique of the Theoretical Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press, 2000; George di Giovanni; H.S. Harris, ed. *Between Kant and Hegel*. 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000. Further classic examples include Hans Vaihinger. *Commentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Vol. 1. Stuttgart: W. Spemann, 1881, pp. 3-11; Norman Kemp Smith. *A Commentary to Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason"*. 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan Press, 1923, pp. xxv-xxxiii

to think such a connection *a priori* and from concepts, because this connection contains necessity; and it is simply not to be seen how it could be, that because something is, something else necessarily must also be, and therefore how the concept of such a connection could be introduced *a priori*. From this he concluded that reason completely and fully deceives herself with this concept, falsely taking it for her own child, when it is really nothing but a bastard of the imagination, which, impregnated by experience, and having brought certain representations under the law of association, passes off the resulting subjective necessity (i.e., habit) for an objective necessity (from insight). From which he concluded that reason has no power at all to think such connections, not even merely in general, because its concepts would then be bare fictions, and all of its cognitions allegedly established *a priori* would be nothing but falsely marked ordinary experiences; which is as much as to say that there is no metaphysics at all, and cannot be any. (4:257-258)

While Kant immediately makes it clear that he thinks Hume's conclusions are incorrect, he goes out of his way to say that Hume's investigation into this matter was extremely valuable and even remarks that it was his remembrance of Hume which "first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave a completely different direction to my researches in the field of speculative philosophy" (4:260). The "spark from which a light could well have been kindled" in Hume's inquiry into causal connection was his happening upon a more general problem. Causal connection, as it turns out, is not the only example of a concept whereby the understanding thinks connections between things *a priori*. There are numerous others, and just like the concept of cause, they cannot be derived from experience. Since metaphysics consists exclusively of concepts like this, this problem extends to that of explaining the very possibility of metaphysics itself. Continuing his brief autobiographical account, Kant tells us that once he had laid out Hume's objection in a generalized form, he sought to determine the number of these concepts and to carry out their deduction,

which fully assured him that their origin is not in experience, but in the pure understanding. This deduction is presented by Kant as the solution to “the Humean problem,” not simply in the case of causal connection, but with respect to the “entire faculty of pure reason” (4:260-261).

So while it is abundantly clear that Kant, for better or worse, wants to be understood as following in Hume’s footsteps, the finer details of Hume’s influence on him have actually been very difficult to pin down. There are two primary reasons for this. The first is the broader historical problem of isolating when and in what manner this influence took place. While Hume’s *Enquiry* appeared in a German translation edited by Johann Georg Sulzer in 1755, the *Treatise* was not translated into German until 1792 and therefore would not have been fully available to Kant until well after his Critical philosophy had been largely laid out. For this reason, it has commonly been supposed that Kant’s understanding of Hume was limited to just the *Enquiry*. This further complicates the issue because, as the previous section hopefully made clear, the discussions of causation are somewhat different in the two texts and Kant’s discussions of causation seem closest to issues touched upon in the *Treatise*, but left out of the *Enquiry*. Kant, as he is commonly read, is concerned more with establishing that every event has some cause than he is in establishing the connection between particular causes and particular effects, which makes it less than obvious that Kant was thinking exclusively of the Hume of the *Enquiry*. It also turns out that the supposition that Kant would have only known Hume’s *Enquiry* might simply be incorrect on the grounds that Kant likely would have known Book I of the *Treatise* through Hamann’s translation which appeared in the *Königsberger Zeitung* in 1771 and he also might have encountered passages of *Treatise* I.iii excerpted in James Beattie’s *An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth* which was translated into German in 1772.³³

³³James Beattie. *Versuch über die Natur und Unveränderlichkeit der Wahrheit*. Copenhagen und Leizig: Heinck und Faber, 1772. Two classic discussions of this problem are Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant’s “Critique of Pure Reason”*, pp. xxv-xxxiii and Vaihinger, *Commentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, pp. 347-348. Also see Manfred Kuehn. “Kant’s Conception of ‘Hume’s Problem’”. In: *Journal of the*

This of course forces us to speculate about not just the nature of the Hume-Kant relationship, but also the timing of it. It is well documented that Kant was interested in Hume in the period after the *Enquiry* arrived in Germany.³⁴ But even if Kant had been aware of Hume for several years before the 1770's, it is not clear when his *awakening* actually took place. Manfred Kuehn discusses two possible timelines for when Kant might have awakened. One is that Kant came to appreciate Hume's problem between 1770 and 1772. This timeline is suggested by a letter written to Johann Bernoulli in November 1781, where Kant refers to 1770 as the year he became aware of the critical problem and Kant's 1772 letter to Herz.³⁵ But as Kuehn notes, Kant also suggests in the *Prolegomena* that the discovery of Antinomies occasioned his awakening.³⁶ When this is paired with the famous *Reflexion* where he talks about his "great light" that took place in 1769 where he tried to prove propositions and their opposites to discover what was hidden by an illusion of the understanding, this time line becomes very attractive.³⁷ But this note doesn't tell much. It doesn't suffice to establish that Kant had really grasped the Antinomies at this stage. Moreover, the "great light" is easily taken to be the discovery of the distinction between sensibility and understanding which appears in the *Inaugural Dissertation*. So even if we can pin down Kant's Humean awakening to some point between 1770 and 1772, whether it be his reading of Hamann's translation in 1771 or excerpts of Hume in Beattie's *Essay* in 1772, we still know very little about the awakening event itself.

History of Philosophy 21.2 (1983), pp. 175–193 for a discussion of Kant potentially receiving Hume through Hamann.

³⁴See Benno Erdmann. "Kant und Hume um 1762". In: *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 1.1 (1888) for a discussion of Kant's grasp of Hume in the early 1760's. Although Erdmann documents an awareness of Hume in 1755-56, he resists ascribing too much Humean influence on Kant in the early 1760's. It is commonly thought that Kant takes up a Humean attitude in *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* (1766); Lewis White Beck calls this phase of Kant's thought "quasi-Humean." See Lewis White Beck. "A Prussian Hume and a Scottish Kant". In: *Essays on Kant and Hume*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978, pp. 111–130, 65n. Kuehn concurs with Beck, and argues that Hume's influence on Kant can be felt earlier than Erdmann will allow. See Kuehn, "Kant's Conception of 'Hume's Problem'", p. 180.

³⁵See Immanuel Kant. *Correspondence*. Ed. and trans. by Arnulf Zweig. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 132-138, 185-187.

³⁶Kuehn, "Kant's Conception of 'Hume's Problem'", pp. 182-183.

³⁷See R5037, (18:69).

Granting that Hume is responsible for Kant's awakening, we might still ask—pushing the metaphor a step further—if this awakening was a sudden jolt of the kind one feels upon hearing an alarm clock, or if it was more like the slow crawl out of bed that happens the morning after a night of hard drinking? It is entirely possible, as Kuehn points out, that Kant's shift in thought was not “a radical conversion from dogmatism to criticism” but rather “a gradual reassessment of philosophical doctrines and a slow realization that there was a much more fundamental problem than the indifferentists thought.”³⁸ Waking up is not always instantaneous—it often involves a prolonged period of grogginess. Even if we can pinpoint the time frame in which Kant would have come across the passages of Hume's *Treatise* which are relevant to his own project, it is not clear how long it took for Hume's influence to be felt. What makes this even more complicated is that our window into Kant's thought in the 1770's is particularly hazy due to the lack of any published texts to examine, leaving us largely relying on unpublished *Reflexionen*, which are often difficult to date, and some short manuscripts. Even the more complete manuscripts from the middle of the 1770's, which contain early drafts of elements of the *Transcendental Analytic*, such as the *Duisburg Nachlass* and Manuscript B12, do not contain any explicit references to Hume.

The closely related second problem with pinning down Hume's influence on Kant pertains to the relationship between their philosophical positions: we still know very little about how Hume was being interpreted by Kant. Though Hume's discussions of causation are clearly on Kant's radar in both the *Transcendental Deduction* and the *Second Analogy of Experience*, the way in which the two accounts relate to each other has been anything but obvious. Kant has traditionally been interpreted as attempting to refute Hume's skeptical conclusions with respect to causation. The *Second Analogy* in particular is taken to establish, against Hume, that there are grounds to accept the principle that every event has some cause by showing that this principle is presupposed in the very act of perceiving an

³⁸Kuehn, “Kant's Conception of ‘Hume's Problem’”, pp. 184-185.

event itself. Thus, by showing that the principle is entailed by a commitment that even Hume shared, the argument would provide a refutation of his denial of the causal principle.³⁹ Unfortunately, commentators have not been very successful in reconstructing this line of argumentation in a way that it would suffice as a convincing refutation of Hume.⁴⁰

One of the major difficulties involved is that the starting point for Kant's discussion is not identical to Hume's, so it is difficult to see how such an argumentative strategy is exhibited by the text. Hume and Kant seem to have very different targets. Hume never disputes that necessary connection is a necessary component of causation; he is interested in giving a descriptive account of the origin of this idea and he gives us such an account. His skepticism is not aimed at the legitimacy of our concept of a cause, but rather the view that reason can account for it. This is very different from Kant, who is very interested in defending the legitimacy of this concept by establishing it as an *a priori* condition of cognition. His complaint against Hume is twofold. First he thinks that empirical association is incapable of establishing the necessary connection which is so essential to the concept of a cause:

...the very concept of a cause so obviously contains the concept of a necessity of connection with an effect and a strict universality of rule that it would be entirely lost if one sought, as Hume did, to derive it from a frequent association of that which happens with that which precedes and a habit (thus a merely subjective necessity) of connecting representations arising from that association.
(B5)

Second, Kant thinks that a merely empirical concept of a cause would be inadequate to our purposes:

³⁹The classic formulation of this is Lewis White Beck. "Six Short Pieces on the Second Analogy of Experience". In: *Essays on Kant and Hume*. Yale University Press, 1978, pp. 130–166

⁴⁰See Lorne Falkenstein. "Hume's Answer to Kant". In: *Nous* 32.2 (1998), pp. 331–360; James Van Cleve. *Problems From Kant*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 122-133.

On such a footing this concept would be merely empirical, and the rule that it supplies, that everything that happens has a cause, would be just as contingent as the experience itself: its universality and necessity would then be merely feigned, and would have no true universal validity, since they would not be grounded *a priori* but only in induction. (A196/B241)

Together these are both charges that Hume's account of causation is inadequate. The first is that Hume cannot actually establish necessary connection. The second is that without necessary connection firmly established, the concept of a cause is illegitimate. But are either of these claims true? It's hard to see Hume being especially moved by either of these charges. Hume clearly does not deny that necessary connection is an essential feature of causation and he clearly thinks he has provided us with an account of where that idea comes from: it is derived from an impression which is produced by the imagination as a consequence of repeatedly observing objects being constantly conjoined. If Kant's argument which aims to remedy both of these alleged defects is intended as a refutation of Hume, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that it simply misses the point.

In light of these sorts of difficulties, some commentators have opted to take Kant as offering not a refutation of Hume but an alternative to his account of causation.⁴¹ Eric Watkins has recently defended a very different interpretation of Kant's account of causation which takes him to be committed to a causal powers model instead of an event-causal model. One of Watkins' central claims is that Kant's model of causation is so different from Hume's that a refutation of Hume would be nearly impossible. In light of this, interpreting Kant as attempting to do something that he could not hope to accomplish would be uncharitable, and should be resisted. To this end, he argues that Kant would have seen Hume, not

⁴¹See Eric Watkins. "Kant's Model of Causality: Causal Powers, Laws, and Kant's Reply to Hume". In: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 42.4 (2004), pp. 449–488; Watkins, *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality*, pp. 4-5, 381-390; Gary Hatfield. "What Were Kant's Aims in the Deduction?" In: *Philosophical Topics* 31 (2003), pp. 165–198

as an adversary, but as an ally with shared philosophical goals of curbing dogmatism, and that several of Kant's German contemporaries had already provided philosophical refutations of Hume, making the case that Kant would have not felt the need to do so himself. To develop this latter point, Watkins examines discussions of Hume by Sulzer, Mendelssohn, and Tetens.

Watkins' attempt to distance Kant from being interpreted through the lens of a refutation of Hume has been met with several objections. First, if Kant did not see Hume as an adversary, one must explain away passages which seem to indicate a concern for the very sort of skeptical positions which Hume is typically taken to exemplify about causation.⁴² Kant does seem quite concerned with Humean causation and if it is not Hume who is the target of at least the Second Analogy, but other German discussions of causal metaphysics, we are left scratching our heads as to why Kant has so much to say about Hume and virtually nothing to say about other German discussions of causation. Second, the contention that a shared set of philosophical commitments would make a refutation impossible has also been questioned.⁴³ It is far from obvious that this is a requirement that is commonly held in philosophical disputes when we think of what it would take for a philosophical position to be refuted. Although demonstrating that one's commitments are inconsistent or entail some sort of absurdity would definitely suffice, a refutation may not always have to take on that sort of form. The third major objection that Watkins' has faced is that he draws the wrong conclusion from his examination of the discussions of Hume by Kant's contemporaries. Brian Chance has argued that, when taken from the perspective of Kant's mature philosophy, the previous attempts to offer refutations of Hume would have appeared to Kant as inadequate, making a refutation of Hume even more pressing in light of them.⁴⁴

⁴²Guyer, *Knowledge Reason and Taste*, Introduction and Chapter One; Brian Chance. "Causal Powers, Hume's Early German Critics, and Kant's Response to Hume". In: *Kant Studien* 2.104 (2013), pp. 213–236

⁴³Henry Allison. *Custom and Reason in Hume*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 354–355; Guyer, *Knowledge Reason and Taste*, pp. 17–20; Chance, "Causal Powers, Hume's Early German Critics, and Kant's Response to Hume"

⁴⁴Chance, "Causal Powers, Hume's Early German Critics, and Kant's Response to Hume".

Regardless of which conclusion turns out to be correct, it would seem that the implications to be drawn from these discussions of Hume are anything but obvious if directly contrary conclusions can be drawn from them.

What all of this makes clear is that there are serious problems to be worked out with respect to understanding Kant's relationship to Hume, both with respect to articulating the timing and the way Hume's influence is felt by Kant, and with respect to grasping the details of Kant's answer (or lack thereof) to Hume. I am going to argue that there are elements of truth to both sides in this overall dispute and that there is a way to mediate between them, but it requires a further look at the context under which Kant would have been reading Hume. There are two obvious questions which we must contend with and the answers to them must not simply be assumed. How would a German philosopher in the 1770's respond to a skeptical position? and what sort of response to a skeptic would be adequate to such a philosopher?

While both Watkins and Chance are highly engaged with the German context surrounding Kant's work, they each approach the text with very different assumptions and, as a result, emphasize different elements of Kant's discussions of Hume. There is a long history of English scholarship that takes for granted that Kant's primary aims were refutations of skeptical positions and that the chief merit of Kant's supposed answer to Hume was that it began from assumptions that not even Hume himself could deny.⁴⁵ It was on these grounds that Kant's answer to Hume was analyzed, reconstructed, and evaluated. It is here that a methodological problem begins to emerge: why would Kant be beholden to twentieth century expectations for a discussion of skepticism, or to our contemporary standards of

⁴⁵The classic example of this is Beck, "Six Short Pieces on the Second Analogy of Experience". The chief merit of Kant's answer to Hume, on Beck's reconstruction of it is that it begins from propositions that even Hume was committed to at some basic level and demonstrates that the acceptance of these propositions requires the principle of the second analogy to be presupposed. It is also worth noting that Beck explicitly criticizes regressive interpretations of Kant's response to Hume, and goes through great lengths to show that Kant's starting point is shared by Hume, specifically to avoid objections raised towards regressive interpretations of Kant and their alleged inability to refute Hume. For an example, see Wolff, *Kant's Theory of Mental Activity*, pp. 47-49.

adequacy? While Watkins makes it clear that he is very aware of these difficulties, he is not entirely safe from them.⁴⁶ Though one might outright deny that Kant has anything in mind like the sort of refutation of Hume that dominated much of the earlier English Kant scholarship (as Watkins has), the primary motivation for interpreting Kant along the lines of offering an alternative instead of a refutation—that Kant has no hope of accomplishing the former—still involves assuming a set of success conditions for Kant’s task. These success conditions are supposed to be more modest in line with the principle of charity. But the effort to be charitable can also lead us astray, particularly when our sense of the most viable interpretation does not necessarily have to line up with the aims and motivations of the author we are interpreting. The effort to distance Kant from Hume falls prey to the very same sort of worries that the attempt to interpret him as refuting Hume does (in the sense that Watkins rejects).

Though Watkins and Chance both discuss Tetens as a critic of Hume, neither of them spend very much time examining any aspect of Tetens’ philosophy beyond his brief commentary on Hume in the fourth essay of the *Philosophische Versuche*. This is particularly unfortunate because, as the previous chapter has established, Tetens’ discussions of philosophical methodology have the potential to provide us with the most useful context for how Kant would have viewed philosophical skepticism and what would constitute an adequate response to it. In the next section, I will seek to remedy this by examining Tetens’ and Kant’s responses to Hume specifically with this context in mind. I will show that what is missing from this dispute is an appreciation of the extent to which Tetens’ discussion and critique of Hume is an application of the methodology he lays out in the 1775 *Über die allgemeine speculativische Philosophie* and that appreciating this lets us navigate between the two divergent interpretations of Tetens’ relevance to the Kant-Hume relationship. Since Kant’s discussion of Hume mirrors Tetens in important ways and can be seen as expanding

⁴⁶He discusses this sort of problem in his Introduction. See Watkins, *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality*, pp. 3-5.

upon it, we can appeal to Tetens to gain significant insight into the lens through which Kant was reading Hume and to give us some idea of what would have been a suitable response to Hume. The advantage of interpreting Kant in line with Tetens' critique of Hume is that it allows us to recognize that there are two sides to the Kantian response to Hume: a negative side where he criticizes and rejects Hume's position and a positive side where he attempts to offer an alternative. Kant largely accepted the criticisms that Tetens had of Hume's position, but he would have taken issue with several elements of Tetens' own account which is offered in response to Hume. This allows us to recognize both a sense in which Kant is refuting Hume and also a sense in which he is providing his own alternative account to him.

2.3 Tetens' Commentary and Critique of Hume

Tetens' commentary and critique of Hume takes place in the fourth essay of his *Philosophische Versuche*, which is titled "Über die Denkkraft und über das Denken" (On the Power of Thought and on Thinking). Hume appears in the context of an earlier discussion about the origin of relational concepts in *Versuche* III.ii which gets restated in *Versuche* IV.iii. In both discussions, Tetens makes the case that it is not sensations themselves, but an act of awareness [*Gewahrnehmen*] that is the source of relational concepts.⁴⁷ The thought that two things are related to each other is something added by the soul, and is not to be confused with sensations [*Gefühle*] of things:

In der Untersuchung über das Gewahrnehmen ist es gezeiget, daß der Gedanke, der alsdenn entstehet, daß das Gewahrgenommene eine besondere Sache ist, ein Gedanke von einer Relation sey, der durch eine Aktion der Seele hinzukomme, und mit dem Gefühl des Absoluten in den Dingen nicht verwechselt werden

⁴⁷For a more detailed discussion of this, see Falk Wunderlich. *Kant und die Bewusstseinstheorien des 18. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005, pp. 71-73.

müsse.⁴⁸

Tetens thinks this can be best illustrated by the concept of cause of causal connection, and of course, there is no better place to begin a discussion of this topic than Hume's account. However, Tetens prefaces his discussion of Hume by making it clear from the start that he thinks Hume's discussion rests on a mistake and that making this mistake led Hume to make an identical mistake with respect to cognition in general.⁴⁹ The result of Hume's investigation, according to Tetens, is the discovery that causal connection is nothing other than an effect of the imagination [*eine Wirkung der Einbildungskraft*] and that its origin can be accounted for entirely according to the law of the association of ideas. But while this is insightful, Tetens thinks that Hume himself would have found his own explanation for causal connection insufficient, had he not focused on one aspect of the understanding and overlooked the others.⁵⁰

What follows is Tetens' brief summary of Hume's account. We find two objects constantly conjoined in our impressions and we call the first one the cause and the second the effect after numerous repeated experiences. Tetens repeats Hume's examples: one ball moves towards another, strikes it, and then the second ball begins to move; the sun rises and there is light. After enough experience of constantly conjoined objects, the ideas of them become so closely linked together by the imagination that the experience of one automatically makes us think of the other. As a result of habit, the transition from one idea to the other becomes necessary for us. We then transfer the succession of ideas to the objects outside of us with the thought "if one of those objects is actually present, the second will also follow it."⁵¹

With a very brief summary of Hume's account laid out, Tetens begins his critique by

⁴⁸Philosophische Versuche IV.iii, pg. 165

⁴⁹Philosophische Versuche IV.iv.1, pg. 169.

⁵⁰Philosophische Versuche IV.iv.1, pg. 169-170

⁵¹„wenn Eins von jenen Gegenständen wirklich vorhanden ist, so werde auch das zweyte vergesellschaftet daseyn,“

immediately remarking that there is a lot that is correct in the Humean explanation. The thought that one thing is the cause of another requires that the ideas of cause and effect have already been conjoined so that one leads back to the other. When thinking of one, we are forced to think of the other, with some level of necessity. Even further, Tetens notes, we actually do use constant succession [*beständige Folge*] of things as a sign of their causal relation. Causal reasoning begins with our noticing that impressions are constantly conjoined with one succeeding the other. When, after enough observations, we can isolate something which always precedes a given effect, it gets taken to be the cause so long as it is uniquely sufficient to bring about the effect. Hume's account is fully consistent with this.⁵²

But while he thinks Hume accomplished at least this much, it does not take him long to find features of Hume's account that he finds less than satisfying. Tetens raises what might be fairly thought of as "common sense objections" about the consistency of Humean causation with our ordinary ways of speaking about causation. The first is that constant succession of one event after the other, though necessary, is not sufficient to derive an adequate concept of causation. A non-negotiable feature of causation, according to Tetens, is that we represent an effect as though it *depended* on its cause, were *produced* by it, and made actual *through* it.⁵³ This presents a difficulty: doesn't this representation of causal relation contain more than just ideas of constant succession? The second complaint that Tetens raises is that we take effects to be intelligible [*Begreiflich*] on the basis of their causes and this feature of intelligibility seems to be something beyond constant conjunction.

This brings Tetens to question the adequacy of the association of the imagination [*Association der Einbildungskraft*] for accounting for causation altogether. The dependence which is so essential to causal connection is more than just the association of ideas and conjunction [*Mitwirklichkeit*] of their objects. Tetens appeals to the example of warmth

⁵²Philosophische Versuche IV.iv.1, pg. 171.

⁵³„Wir stellen es uns doch so vor, als wenn die Wirkung von der Ursache abhängt, von ihr hervorgebracht, und durch sie wirklich gemacht werde.“ Philosophische Versuche IV.iv.2, pg.171.

causing bodies to expand. Though constant conjunction of the warmth and the expansion of bodies is the ground [*Grund*] for asserting this, and it might well be the case that it is a habit that compels us to think of one when we think of the other, we nevertheless presuppose a real connection which exists between objects. We assume that there is a necessary connection corresponding to the connection between our ideas in the objects. It is here that Tetens thinks he has found the major difficulty with Hume's account:

Die nothwendige Verknüpfung der Ideen in ihrer Folge in uns ist eigentlich unsere Vorstellung von der verursachenden Verbindung. Denn sobald wir einsehen, daß jene Verbindung der Ideen nichts mehr ist, als eine Association der Einbildungskraft, und daß es eine blos subjektivische Nothwendigkeit sey, womit Eine auf die andere folget, so fällt das Urtheil des Verstandes weg, wodurch die Objekte selbst für abhängig von einander erkläret werden.⁵⁴

This is the charge that Humean causation cannot truly account for necessary connection by locating it in the function of the imagination. Tetens thinks that this amounts to reducing necessary connection to the subjective necessity of relations between mental states, which cannot explain or account for the objective causal relation between objects [*der objektische ursachlichen Beziehung der Gegenstände*]. With merely subjective necessity accounting for the relationship between cause and effect, Tetens thinks we cannot make sense of the status of natural laws. He draws specific attention to Newton's first law, which specifies that objects in motion remain in motion as long as no other force acts upon them.⁵⁵ What is it that allows us to go from observations of objects acting according to it along with observations which seem to depart from it and conclude that this is to have the status of being

⁵⁴The necessary connection of ideas in their succession is actually our representation of the causal connection. Since as soon as we accept that this connection of ideas is nothing more than an association of the imagination and that it is a mere subjective necessity whereby one thing follows another, the judgment of the understanding, through which the objects themselves are declared to depend on each other, is discontinued. *Philosophische Versuche*, IV.iv.2, pg. 172.

⁵⁵*Philosophische Versuche* IV.iv.3, pg. 173.

a law? Though Tetens thinks induction is how we discover a law like this, he is unwilling to accept that induction grounded on associations of the imagination can ever bestow lawful status on any collection of observations. There is no amount of observing that transforms observations of bodies behaving a certain way into Newton's first law. There is something further, a different kind of connection between ideas, which makes this possible. Tetens then tips his hand: this relationship is the product of the power of thinking [*Denkkraft*] which combines them as a subject and a predicate. Necessary connection, then, is not grounded in custom or habit, but in the understanding by an act of thought.

Along these lines, Tetens returns to the issue of the intelligibility of causes, arguing that Hume's account cannot accommodate several of the features of our common ways of talking about causes. As Tetens notes, we often speak of understanding consequences from their principles. Our ways of speaking about causes involves *deriving*, *drawing conclusions*, and *inferring* one truth from another.⁵⁶ Tetens thinks this suggests that this is evidence of a different sort of connection being involved in causal relations than association and that this is an essential difference. As a result, Hume cannot do justice to our ordinary way to speaking about causality.

With his objections to Hume on the table, Tetens reiterates that he does not believe that we can derive the concept of a cause from constantly conjoined impressions. He returns to the view he has previously gestured towards: the application of the concept of a cause is what establishes the relation of necessary connection through action on the part of the understanding. But since he has rejected constant conjunction as the source of this concept, he appeals to quite a different account of the origin of this concept. We form this concept from our own feelings of striving and the effects that go with it.⁵⁷ Once this concept is formed by abstracting from these feelings of striving, we apply the concept to objects which allows

⁵⁶Philosophische Versuche IV.iv.4, pg. 174

⁵⁷Here, Tetens seems to be drawing on Locke. See Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II.xxi.1

us to judge them to be causally related.⁵⁸ The necessary connection which holds between objects which are said to be causally related is established by the understanding, through the application of the concept of a cause. Once causation is grounded in the understanding, Tetens thinks we can do justice to the intelligibility of causes in a way that Hume could not.⁵⁹

Now that we have seen both Tetens critique of Hume and his briefly sketched out alternative, a very interesting question about his account remains. The flaw of Hume's account seems to be that he cannot actually account for the "necessary" part of "necessary connection" because association cannot give rise to this. Instead, Tetens insists that it is the understanding which accomplishes this feat of producing the necessary connection between causally related objects. This suggests that the understanding produces the objective (as opposed to merely subjective) necessity that we need for causal laws. But we do not really get an account here of what kind of objectivity this is, but only that causal relations are always going to be contingent and that the laws governing the understanding's acts of combination are not on the level of truths of reason. Merely subjective necessity is not enough, but it is not clear how shifting the responsibility for necessary connection to the understanding does fares much better. Tetens makes it abundantly clear that he does not see his view as simply a retreat into the very sort of rationalist account that Hume criticizes and rejects: „Ich will damit nicht behaupten, daß man irgend eine der allgemeinen Grundsätze der Naturlehre in seiner völligen Bestimmtheit a priori, aus bloßen Begriffen erweisen könne.“⁶⁰ For Tetens, causal laws are contingent truths [*zufällige Wahrheiten*] and the connection formed in the understanding which is responsible for them does not determine them in any absolute sense. The understanding follows a habitual law in combining the subject and the predicate, but the necessity governing this law is not on the level of

⁵⁸Philosophische Versuche IV.iv.5, pg. 175

⁵⁹Philosophische Versuche IV.iv.5, pg. 175-176

⁶⁰“I do not want to thereby claim that one can prove any one of the universal principles of the doctrine of nature in its complete determination *a priori*, from mere concepts.” *ibid.*

the laws determining the understanding when it thinks of truths of reason, such as in the case of the principle of contradiction. In section five, Tetens explicitly attacks Leibniz for attempting to reduce relations to identity and diversity, and identifies causal relations as an important counterexample.⁶¹

So it is clear that Tetens is deeply concerned with trying to capture the necessity that is a non-negotiable feature of causation and that he thinks neither merely subjective necessity nor logical necessity can capture it. But if the necessity involved in causation is not of either of these sorts, what kind of necessity is it? Clearly the understanding is responsible for it, but it is not obvious that the understanding can supply necessity to relations in a way that is no less subjective than the imagination. The problem Tetens has awkwardly stumbled into is that of explaining the necessity which must accompany laws of thought without granting them *a priori* status, and Tetens is attempting to carve out space for a third kind of necessity which can account for causation.

2.4 Tetens and the Problem of Objectivity

While Tetens does not offer us an answer to the problem of accounting for the necessity which underlies causal connection in this discussion, he is already committed to a certain strategy for offering such an answer with his suggestion that it is the concept of cause that establishes the relation of necessary connexion. Though he gives us a less than satisfying account of the origin of this concept when he attempts to base it on abstraction from our feelings of striving, there are significant implications to such an account. Not only is Tetens suggesting that the concept establishes necessary connection, he is also suggesting that the concept itself is formed from feelings that we have, and not relations which are there to be experienced in the world considered in a mind-independent sense. His discussion of

⁶¹Philosophische Versuche IV.v.2, pg. 178-179

causation is thus an attempt to ground necessary connection, and the status of everything that depends upon it, in the activity of the understanding.

This problem is not simply limited to causation, however. In the fifth essay, Tetens broadens this approach to cover to a wider group of similarly problematic relational concepts which together are taken to be concepts of objects in general. He gives an account of how such concepts are required for the representation of an object to be possible and he also attempts to show how they can be abstracted given that there are reasons to think that sensation does not provide us with sufficient material to form them. Since this discussion is the topic of the next chapter, I will not go into it in more detail here. For now, it suffices to point out that the problem of accounting for necessary connection in causation gets widened considerably once Tetens attempts to work out a wider theory of representation.

What is most important about these two discussions is not so much what they are, but what they are not. In both of these discussions, Tetens accepts that impressions or sensations alone do not present us with the requisite material to form the concepts which govern the activities of the understanding as we represent something. In the context of causation, he accepts Hume's view that experience presents us with constantly conjoined events, but no impression corresponding to necessary connection. Tetens also expresses agreement with Reid that sensations do not resemble objects.⁶² Together, the acceptance of these positions makes it very hard to appeal to the world, considered as it is in itself, in order to explain any feature of our representation of it. The traditional picture of objectivity—that there simply is a way that the world is and that knowing something about it is a matter of having thoughts which reflect “the way things are”—is not what Tetens is adopting. What we actually find, is a sustained effort to avoid appealing to things in themselves to explain or ground any features of our representation.⁶³

⁶²See *Philosophische Versuche* IV.vi, pg. 184. Tetens can also be included in the group of philosophers who thinks that sensations are non-intentional. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

⁶³See Henry Allison. *Kant's Transcendental Deduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 150-151 for a discussion of this.

Though Tetens sets aside the problem of explaining the sort of necessity that can apply to our representations, he returns to it from a very different angle in a brief, but highly dense discussion in the seventh essay. Here, Tetens is interested primarily in giving an account of the necessity underlying the acceptance of various common sense claims in the sense of the sort of theoretical explanation that the common sense philosophers fail to provide. His point of departure is an acknowledgment that common sense judgments are necessary in the sense of being necessary for us and he aims to inquire into the status of this kind of necessity.⁶⁴ He notes that we can all observe that there is a set of laws governing our thoughts which we cannot violate, and this is the basis for our thinking that the source of these laws is outside us:

Die subjektivische Nothwendigkeit nach den allgemeinen Gesetzen des Verstandes zu denken, erkennen wir aus der Beobachtung. Wir empfinden es, daß wir keine viereckte Zirkel uns vorstellen, und kein Ding für unterschieden von sich selbst halten können. Auf diese subjektivische Nothwendigkeit gründen wir die objektivische: Die Unmöglichkeit, die Dinge anders zu denken, wird den Dingen außer dem Verstande beygelegt. Unsere Ideen sind nun nicht mehr Ideen in uns; es sind Sachen außer uns. Die Beschaffenheiten und Verhältnisse, die wir in jenen wahrnehmen, stellen sich uns als Beschaffenheiten und Verhältnisse der Sachen selbst vor, die diesen auch ohne unser Denken zukommen, und von jedem andern denkenden Wesen in ihnen erkannt werden mußten. So bringet der Instinkt es mit sich. Es ist dieß eine Wirkung des gemeinen Menschenverstandes, und die alte Metaphysik hat in diesem Ver-

⁶⁴Three discussions of this are Giuseppe Motta. “Der siebente Versuch: Über Tetens Begriff der subjektivischen Nothwendigkeit”. In: *Johann Nikolaus Tetens (1736-1807): Philosophie in der Tradition des europäischen Empirismus*. Ed. by Gideon Stiening; Udo Thiel. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014, pp. 169–180; Nele Schneider. “Einheit der Vernunft und subjektivische Nothwendigkeit: Tetens’ Version einer Common Sense-Philosophie”. In: *Johann Nikolaus Tetens (1736-1807): Philosophie in der Tradition des europäischen Empirismus*. Ed. by Udo Thiel; Gideon Stiening. De Gruyter, 2014, pp. 84–109; Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800*, pp. 135-140

fahren etwas richtiges erkannt, und zum Axiom angenommen, daß die Wahrheit etwas objektives sey.⁶⁵

Here Tetens acknowledges the appeal of the traditional notion of objectivity, but it does not take him long to point out that things are not as simple as the traditional notion takes for granted. We do not have access to objects as they are in themselves, and this renders the standard correspondence theory of truth problematic. This is the position of Lossius, who just a few years earlier argued in his *Physische Ursachen* that truth is subjective and without foundation. Tetens cites Lossius, and makes it clear that Lossius is who he has mind.⁶⁶ If we cannot compare our representations with their objects, we lose the ability to ground anything in the objects themselves. With the aforementioned problems in mind, Tetens poses the question of what it means to talk about objectivity:

Die zwote vorläufig abzumachenden Sache ist, was eigentlich die Objektivität unserer Erkenntniß sagen wolle? Diese oder jene Verhältnisse kommen den Objekten zu, sind in ihnen außer dem Verstande, und sind hier dasselbige, was die Beziehungen der Ideen im Verstande sind. Diese Ausdrücke, was bedeuten sie nach der Natur unsers Verstandes und unserer Begriffe, und nach den Erklärungen der Philosophen, welche die Wahrheit für etwas Objektives ansehen? Was heißt es: die Sonne ist so ein Ding, wie die sind, welches leuchten; die viereckte Figur meiner Stubenhür ist für eine andere als die ovale Figur eines alten Kirchenfensters? In der Idee des gemeinen Verstandes, die

⁶⁵We know from observation the subjective necessity of which we think of universal laws of the understanding. We sense it that we cannot represent a square circle and cannot hold a thing distinguished from itself. On this subjective necessity, we ground the objective: the impossibility to think things differently is attributed to the objects outside the understanding. Our ideas are no longer ideas in us; they are things outside us. The properties and relations, of which we are aware, are represented as properties and relations of the things themselves, which belong to them apart from our thinking, and which any different thinking being would have to be able to recognize. This is the result of instinct. It is an effect of common understanding and the old metaphysics has recognized something correct in this experience and taken it for an axiom that the truth is something objective. *Philosophische Versuche* VII.v.1 pg. 279.

⁶⁶See Johann Christian Lossius. *Physische Ursachen des Wahren*. Gotha, 1774. Also see Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800*, pp. 86-102, 135-136.

wir haben, wenn wir etwas für ein Objekt und für objektivisch ansehen, und die wir ausdrücken, wenn wir sagen: „die Sache ist so,“ liegt eigentlich der Gedanke, daß die Sache auf der Art, wie wir uns sie vorstellen, von jedem andern würde und müßte empfunden werden, der einen solchen Sinn für sie hat, als wir.⁶⁷

There is an important sense in which Tetens is posing a novel question to be answered: what is it about the world that makes it the case that all of us are capable of knowing a set of facts about it? Here the answer is that, each of us, to some degree, encounter the world in the same ways. On the old picture, we encounter objects in the way that we do because of the way those objects are. But Tetens, in abandoning this picture, has to ground objectivity in a set of facts about perceiving subjects. His proposal is to abandon traditional objectivity in favor of differing notions of subjectivity:

Man schließe hieraus nicht, die Frage habe vielleicht gar keinen Sinn und gehöre zu der alten Scholastik. Man setze an statt der Wörter, objektivisch und subjektivisch, die Wörter unveränderlich subjektivisch und veränderlich subjektivisch, so ist es nicht nöthig auf die Denkkräfte andere Wesen Rücksicht zu nehmen, von denen wir keine Begriffe haben, und dennoch zeigt es sich, wie viel sie bedeute?⁶⁸

⁶⁷The second thing to settle in advance is what objectivity of our cognition really means. These relations are connected with the objects, which are outside of the understanding, and are here the same as the relations of the ideas in the mind. What do these expressions mean by the nature of our understanding and our concepts, and by the discoveries of the philosophers who regard the truth as something objective? What does it mean to say that the sun is such a thing as are those that shine; the square figure of my parlor door is different from the oval figure of an old church window? In the idea of the common understanding that we have when we look at something as an object and as objective, and which we express when we say “the thing is so,” the idea is that the thing is of the sort that we would have to represent it, as it would be felt and felt by every other person who has such a sense for them as we do. *Philosophische Versuche* VII.v.2 pg. 281-282.

⁶⁸One does not conclude that the question has perhaps no meaning, and belongs to the old scholasticism. If we replace the words objective and subjective with the words unchangingly subjective and changingly subjective, then we do not have to take into account the faculties of thought of other beings, of which we have no concepts... *Philosophische Versuche* VII.v.3 pg. 284

Tetens argues that we are in a position to make claims about objects, not because we have any sort of direct access to them, but because these objects must appear to each of us in roughly the same ways. This amounts to reducing traditional objectivity into necessary features of subjectivity. If we return to issue of accounting for causal necessity, Tetens has actually expanded on his “neither nor” answer from the fourth essay where he stumbled between the unattractive options of grounding causal necessity in logical necessity or the merely subjective necessity established by association. By making the distinction between types of subjectivity, he carves out something of a middle category which lets him steer between them.

While Tetens does pose an important question and sketch out a novel solution to it, it must be admitted this his answer is somewhat unsatisfying. Tetens was dealing with the problem of trying to explain why there are features of representation which cannot be other than what they are. The notion of unchanging subjectivity simply expresses this in different language without really picking out anything more fundamental; an *explanans* cannot simply be a restatement of an *explanandum*. So while it must be concluded that Tetens fails in this endeavor, there is a considerable amount to be learned from this failure.⁶⁹

Tetens’ attempt to ground necessity in the activity of the subject by rethinking what it means to use the language of objectivity is extremely useful as a transitional position between the thought of Hume and Kant. Though he does not solve the problem, Tetens clearly articulates it and sketches out a model of what a solution would have to look like. Kant, like Tetens, goes to incredible lengths to avoid the traditional notion of objectivity and also has to replace it with one that is grounded on necessary features of subjectivity. But Tetens would have provided Kant with a very good demonstration that subjective necessity, without being grounded in something more fundamental, would still be ultimately contingent and not worthy of being called necessary. Thus, Tetens struggle to carve out a new kind of

⁶⁹I am in full agreement with Kuehn on this point. See Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800*, pp. 138-139.

necessity would not be realized until Kant articulated the possibility of synthetic *a priori* necessity.

2.5 Kant's Answer to Tetens' Hume

It should now be clear that Tetens' critique of Hume is an application of the method he laid out in *Über die allgemeine speculativische Philosophie*, particularly with respect to the discussion of skepticism. Tetens takes for granted what can be called a common sense position about causation, identifies what he takes to be the non-negotiable features of such a position, and then critiques the Humean account in terms of whether or not it can accommodate those features. It is only after he concludes that Hume's account does not succeed in this regard and diagnoses its failures that he offer his own alternative, which he presents to the reader as being capable of meeting the challenges that Hume's account failed to meet. Tetens' account, regardless of whether it is successful, is presented as a better theoretical explanation for our common sense commitments with respect to causation. Tetens uses Humean causation to illustrate the problems facing an explanation of causation along with what he takes to be a tempting, yet flawed solution, and then uses it to motivate his own alternative explanation. Hume is not to be refuted in the sense that Kant is classically thought to answer him, but rather the problem Hume articulates is to be explained away with a better alternative. Tetens thinks he offers such an alternative.

Now that Tetens' discussion, critique, and alternative to Humean causation is on the table, we are in a position to approach the issue of Kant's relationship to Hume from an entirely different angle. At the bare minimum, Tetens provides us with significant context through which Kant's discussions of Hume can be read. Since Kant and Tetens are both philosophers working on similar issues in the 1770's, studying the work of one will give us a sense of the sorts of issues that seemed pressing to philosophers in Germany in this

period as well as a sense of how these issues are to be dealt with.⁷⁰ It is hard to deny that there are significant similarities between the two philosophers, and this makes a comparison between their discussions potentially useful for clarifying the more opaque aspects of Kant's argumentation. In particular, Tetens presents us with significant insight into what the German philosophical community in the 1770's thought was interesting and problematic about Hume's account and this suggests that the Kant-Hume relationship is actually somewhat more complicated than it is traditionally framed as being.

Instead of accepting either of the horns that make up the dilemma of interpreting Kant's response to Hume as an outright refutation or denying that Kant is remotely interested in responding to Hume altogether, Tetens provides context for a more nuanced position. Tetens begins with common sense objections to Hume's account, acknowledges a genuine philosophical problem to resolve which is exhibited by it, proceeds to a diagnosis of its inadequacies, and then offers an alternative which attempts to correct those shortcomings. Interpreted through this lens, Kant's seemingly odd objections to Hume can be understood and appreciated as features of an ongoing discussion of Hume going out around him. But more importantly, it shows us that there can be both a *positive* and a *negative* side to a Kantian response to Hume where Kant can be read as offering both a criticism of Hume's position as well as an alternative to replace it.

Several aspects of Kant's discussion of Hume are extremely similar and were likely borrowed from the discussion of Hume in the *Philosophische Versuche*. It is Tetens who first treats the representation of objects in general as a generalization of the problem touched upon by Hume's discussion of causation. Kant raises inadequacy objections to Hume's account of causation which mirror Tetens', he diagnoses a set of inadequacies for the Humean

⁷⁰I do not claim to be unique in pointing this out, as both Watkins and Chance appeal to Tetens in this way. Watkins appeals to Tetens as evidence that Kant would be unconcerned with refuting Hume, and Chance points to Tetens inadequacies as evidence that Kant would have felt a need to refute Hume. As I will make clear, I differ from them insofar as I want to approach Kant through Tetens, not simply treating Tetens as being engaged in an entirely distinct project, off to the side of Kant and to be contrasted with Kant's project.

account which are similar to Tetens' diagnoses, and he offers his own alternative account which shares some major features with the one put forward by Tetens. The two passages quoted above, B5 and A196/B241, provide a clear illustration of this insofar as Kant objects that Hume cannot account for necessary connection and that association of the imagination, in virtue of being merely subjectively necessary, is inadequate for this. These are by no means the only places where Kant's discussion of Hume reminiscent of Tetens. Another example is the beginning of the Transcendental Deduction, in the unnumbered section titled "Transition to the transcendental deduction of the categories":

But since [Hume] could not explain at all how it is possible for the understanding to think of concepts that in themselves are not combined in the understanding as still necessarily combined in the object, and it never occurred to him that perhaps the understanding itself, by means of these concepts, could be the originator of the experience in which its objects are encountered, he thus, driven by necessity, derived them from experience (namely from a subjective necessity arisen from frequent association in experience, which is subsequently falsely held to be objective, i.e., **custom**); however he subsequently proceeded quite consistently in declaring it to be impossible to go beyond the boundary of experience with these concepts and the principles that they occasion. The **empirical** derivation, however, to which both of them resorted, cannot be reconciled with the reality of the scientific cognition *a priori* that we possess, that namely of **pure mathematics** and **general natural science**, and is therefore refuted by that fact. (A95/B127)

Though this passage clearly describes "Hume's problem" while looking backward from the solution of the Transcendental Deduction, the criticisms raised against Hume are once again identical to those that Tetens raised. We once again find that Hume is faulted with trying to derive causation from the merely subjectively necessary associations found in experience, and for failing to recognize that it is the understanding itself which makes

the experience of causes possible. But this passage exhibits another of Tetens' objections to Hume: that we cannot account for the status of natural science with this account of causation. Tetens had argued that induction is unable to establish the necessity of the natural laws discovered in natural science.⁷¹ Mostly importantly, after asserting that Hume, through empirical derivation of the concept of cause, cannot account for the *a priori* status of pure mathematics and natural science, Kant claims that his approach is refuted. When it is taken into consideration that Tetens did not hold Kant's views about pure mathematics and did not agree that universality and necessity required *a priori*, they both argue that Hume's inability to adequately explain the success of natural science is sufficient to refute him.

Here it is worth returning to the problem of what would constitute a "refutation" of Hume and reconsidering it in light the revelation that these objections to Hume likely originated in Tetens. The last sentence of the passage above is not particularly illuminating by itself when it comes to advancing our understanding of the notion of a philosophical refutation for Kant and considering the paragraph as a whole does not help us much either. Though Kant lists several problems he has with Hume's account, the only thing they all seem to have in common is that they each touch on Hume's failure to appreciate the synthetic *a priori* status that the concept of a cause must possess, and this suggests that the claim of having refuted Hume's approach simply follows this. There is nothing incorrect about reading this passage in this manner, but that does mean that its full significance is worn on its sleeves. When this passage is held up against Tetens' discussion of Hume, the criticisms Kant raises immediately stand out as having the same underlying thrust as the common sense objections that Tetens more overtly raises. The point is that the Humean account of causation runs afoul of our common sense commitments with respect to causation,

⁷¹See *Philosophische Versuche* IV.iv.3, pg. 173. Also compare with A196/B241, where Kant specifically mentions induction.

and showing that amounts to a refutation and this is the negative side of Kant's response.⁷² This is not to say that any Humean would be satisfied with these objections or that successful Humean responses could not be given; the point is that there are solid contextual reasons to think that what we would consider a satisfactory response to Hume may, and in fact does, differ considerably from what was the case in this very different context.

Since I have been arguing that Kant shares a set of methodological commitments with Tetens and that Kant's response to Hume very closely mirrors the structure and content of Tetens' critique and response to Hume, the next question to consider is whether or not Kant's account of causation embodied in the Transcendental Deduction and the Analogies of Experience is likewise an extension of the account of causation that Tetens offers. I will now argue that there are strong reasons to think that Tetens is very important to Kant's own account of causation, but a major qualification about this influence must first be made. Several elements of Kant's views on causation were at least roughly in place before Tetens' *Philosophische Versuche* was published in 1777. The general idea that the relational categories are necessary for cognition is fully present along with several elements of the arguments that will later become the Analogies of Experience in the *Duisburg Nachlass*, which is believed to have been written around 1775.⁷³ It must therefore be taken for granted that most of the core ideas that would eventually find their way into the Transcendental Analytic are present in Kant's thought before he would have encountered Tetens' work.

The interesting question to ask is what Kant would have found useful in Tetens' discussion. By this time, Kant was committed to the general idea that space and time, as forms of intuition, are not the only conditions that must be satisfied for cognition to be possible and a fuzzy argument that attempts to establish that the concepts of the understanding (then

⁷²Neither Kant nor Tetens ever thinks this needs demonstration; the basic principles underlying the sciences are presuppositions of everyday life. On this point, See Ameriks, *Kant and the Historical Turn*, pp. 116-117

⁷³See especially R4680 and R4681, (17:65-66). For a detailed discussion of Kant's argument in the *Duisburg Nachlass*, see Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Deduction*, pp. 111-119; Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*. Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 34-36.

called “titles of the understanding”) are further conditions is in place. Kant is also firmly committed to these concepts being *a priori*.⁷⁴ As we have seen, Kant would have found quite a lot which is relevant to this general argument beyond Tetens’ criticisms of Hume. After even a brief skim of the fourth essay of the *Philosophische Versuche*, Kant would have appreciated that Tetens was not only working on roughly the same problem, both in the particular level of accounting for the concept of a cause, but also on the more general level of accounting for relational concepts.

Tetens makes the case that (1) sensation and feeling alone are not sufficient for accounting for the relational concepts, and (2) these concepts are required for objective cognition. His own position, that these concepts originate in acts of awareness [*Gewahrnehmen*], entails that the understanding must play an active role in our forming these concepts. His criticism of Hume, as I have already argued, very likely provided Kant with a concrete example of why appealing to the faculty of imagination to ground necessary connection would be an explanatory dead end. After providing significant reasons to reject the imagination as the operative faculty in accounting for necessary connection, Tetens argues that the understanding is the faculty that is responsible for this through the employment of the concept of a cause. It is the concept of a cause that accounts for the relation of necessary connection. Perhaps even more important is Tetens discussion of the problems of empirical association, its inadequacy when it comes to accounting for causation, and the difficulties with trying to make sense of the specific kind of necessity which is contained in the concept of a cause. This attempt to provide an alternative to Hume’s account constitutes a positive response, and Kant would have been presented with a fairly detailed discussion of the need

⁷⁴Here I must disagree with Kuehn, who cites the two *Reflexionen* where Kant mentions Tetens from the late 1770’s (R4900 and R4901, 18:23) and then says, “This is interesting, for only a short period before he wrote this, he also was much more interested in the origin of concepts and empirical analysis, as is revealed by the reflections of the Duisburg Nachlass.” See Manfred Kuehn. “Hume and Tetens”. In: *Hume Studies* 15.2 (1989), pp. 365–375, p. 373 I have found no textual evidence in the Duisburg Nachlass to support a claim like this. However, as I will make clear, I do agree wholeheartedly with Kuehn that Kant uses Tetens to differentiate himself from a very similar approach to the same general problems he is attempting to solve, and that this helps him distinguish what is novel about his own approach.

for an alternative account of necessity to the ones offered by both Hume and Leibniz, and the pitfalls associated with trying to reduce this necessity to either analytical necessity or trying to account for it empirically. Tetens' discussion of objectivity would have provided an example of how this could be accomplished through working out a notion of subjective necessity as well as the need to ground this necessity in something further. In this context, Kant's account of causation can be seen as an attempt to improve upon the sort of *positive* alternative that Tetens provides.

Recognizing that there is both a positive and a negative side to Kant's response to Hume is important. Kant seems to have agreed with Tetens' objections to Hume on causation, but he would have been dissatisfied with the flaws in Tetens' attempt to offer an alternative to Hume. The disagreement between them is located on side of the positive response—Kant's account of causation is very much an attempt to not only provide an alternative to Hume, but to do it in a way that does not fall into the traps that Tetens was led into. There is an important sense in which both Watkins and Chance are partially correct about the Kant-Hume relationship, but they both miss the two-sided aspect of the Kantian response. Watkins picks up on the positive attempt to provide an alternative to Hume and Chance focuses on the negative side. As a result, the relationship between Kant and Hume is oversimplified in both cases.

Eighteenth Century Sensationism: Tetens versus Reid

In the second chapter, I examined Tetens' discussion and critique of Hume on causation with the aim of showing that it provides useful context for appreciating Kant's relationship to Hume. I argued that Tetens' critique of Hume is significant, not merely for the content of his criticism, but as an application of the methodology he lays out in *Über die allgemeine speculativische Philosophie*. Tetens raises a set of objections to the Humean account and argues that it ultimately cannot accommodate our common sense notion of what it means for one thing to cause another. While this is sufficient for a refutation in Tetens' eyes, he does not simply dismiss Hume; he accepts that Hume has uncovered a deeply important problem, attempts to diagnose what he believes to be Hume's misstep, and then offers his own alternative account of causation which he believes can resolve those difficulties. The philosophically interesting features of Tetens' own account are the attempt to establish the relationship of necessary connection through the employment of the concept of cause, the reallocation of this function to the understanding instead of the imagination, and the discovery of the need for a new kind of necessity for causation. With this context in mind, Kant's discussion of Hume and his approach to Hume's problem can be understood as following that of Tetens while attempting to improve upon it.

The aim of this chapter is to examine Tetens' extremely perplexing engagement with Thomas Reid's theory of perception. However, in order to make sense of it, I will first have to discuss theoretical problems facing theories of perception in this period. I begin by discussing a doctrine that was commonly held by philosophers discussing perception in

the eighteenth century which holds that sensations are non-intentional mental states. This means that sensations, though occasioned by our interaction with objects, do not refer us to them. After giving a brief overview of a set of problems with the Cartesian account of mental representation which motivate the shift toward thinking of sensations as non-intentional, I will discuss the shared set of problems faced by those who followed this path. I will briefly discuss Malebranche's account of vision in God, Condillac's struggle to explain how we can be sure that objects have the features we think that they have, and then Reid's direct perceptual realism as a solution.

Once this context is in place, I will discuss Tetens' engagement with Reid's account of perception. Reid is most famous for his criticism of the "theory of ideas" which holds that our perceptual access to objects is mediated by ideas conceived of as representations and for developing a direct realist account of perception in opposition to it. Tetens was heavily influenced by Reid's views on perception, but his discussion of Reid is downright strange when considered on its own. There are two issues which obscure his discussion of Reid. The first is that Tetens discusses Reid on the perception of hardness immediately after concluding his discussion of Humean causation, as if there were an obvious connection between the two topics. Second, Tetens bluntly rejects Reid's direct realism despite accepting the thrust of Reid's criticisms about the theory of ideas, and he does so without providing any sort of argument. Together, these issues make Tetens' discussion of Reid appear superficial and insignificant.

This no longer remains the case when it is appreciated that Tetens views Reid in much the same way that he views Hume: as raising an explanatory problem which needs to be solved. With this in mind, Tetens' transition from Hume to Reid becomes comprehensible and a seemingly unrelated discussion in the fifth essay of the *Philosophische Versuche* begins to stand out as an attempt to solve this problem. In Reid's philosophy, specifically the *experimentum crucis* thought experiment, Tetens finds an even wider explanatory challenge than he found in Hume: accounting for the object concepts which seem to be required for

perception and yet seemingly cannot be abstracted from mere sensations. To solve this problem, Tetens develops an account of synthesis whereby the understanding unifies sensations in such a way that they are more easily apperceived and their relations can furnish us with the material for these concepts to be abstracted. As with his discussion of Hume, Tetens will once again brush up against the problem of the Transcendental Deduction.

This chapter will conclude with a discussion about what exactly Kant would have been able to gain from this extremely convoluted discussion which covers parts of the fourth and fifth essays in the *Philosophische Versuche*. I will suggest that Tetens anticipates the larger project of the Transcendental Analytic by attempting to explain the possibility of object representation by appealing to a set of object concepts and that his discussion of each of these transcendent concepts would have provided Kant with a useful sketch of how this might be accomplished.

3.1 The Problem of Sensationism Before Reid and Tetens

While the aim of the chapter is to examine Tetens' engagement with Reid, some historical background is needed to appreciate the underlying problem about perception and mental representation which motivates the various discussions of perception taking place in the eighteenth century. Driven by a set of problems about the representational status of sensations in Cartesian discussions of perception, a new conception of what it is for a perceiver to have a sensation emerges. This view has been dubbed "sensationism" in the literature following Rolf George's attribution of this label to a number of eighteenth century philosophers.¹ Sensationism, as a doctrine underlying an account of perception, is simply the

¹See Rolf George. "Kant's Sensationism". In: *Synthese* 47.2 (1981), pp. 229–255. Also see discussion of George's view in Patricia Kitcher. *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 68-69; Kenneth Westphal. *Kant's Transcendental Proof of Realism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 44-45; Kitcher, *Kant's Thinker*, pp. 108-109. Tim Jankowiak discusses this problem. See Tim Jankowiak. "Sensations as Representations in Kant". In: *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 22.3 (2014), pp. 492–513. Lucy Allais disputes the importance of sensationism for Kant. See

defining of sensation as a non-intentional mental state which is the result of the perceiver's state being modified in some way through interaction with an object. As George forcefully points out, this was not an uncommon view in the eighteenth century—Malebranche, Condillac, Reid, Tetens, and Kant all subscribe to this understanding of what it is to have a sensation.²

While attributing this label to a number of philosophers is simply a matter of comparing their stated definitions of sensation, appreciating the significance of it to a larger picture of mental representation is far more difficult. To say that a kind of mental state is non-intentional is to deny that it has the property of being about anything. Subscribing to sensationism is to hold the position that sensations, as mere modifications of the perceiver's states, are fundamentally non-intentional. They do not resemble, refer to, or represent anything in the world—they are simply raw feelings. The adoption of this position has a number of significant implications, the most significant of which is that the mere possession of sensations, though necessary for perception, is not sufficient for it. Sensations alone are only capable of informing us that our mental states are being modified in some basic sense. This raises an obvious problem. It seems uncontroversial that perceptual experience is about the things we perceive, which is to say that our perceptions are *of* things. When I look out the window and see a tree, there is a basic sense in which the experience I am having is *of* the tree. If the most basic components of perceptual experience, our sensations, are not intentional, how can we explain the basic phenomenological fact that perception itself is intentional?

An analogous problem emerges with a more epistemological flavor. It is a basic fact about perception that it furnishes us with knowledge about the objects which populate our

Lucy Allais. *Manifest Reality: Kant's Idealism and His Realism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 161.

²Malebranche, Condillac, Reid, and Tetens will each be discussed in detail below. Tetens endorses Reid's view of sensation. In the Aesthetic, Kant says that a sensation "is the effect of an object on the capacity for representation, insofar as we are affected by it" (A20/B34). Kant offers another definition in the Stufenleiter passage: "A **perception** that refers to the subject as a modification of its state is a **sensation** (A320/B376).

world. When I perceive something, I am now in a position to know some set of facts about it. More importantly, when two or more people perceive an object, they are each capable of knowing the same things about it. Perception is somehow capable of yielding objective knowledge of the publicly perceivable world around us. One might be inclined to think that our sensations resemble the objects that cause them and that such a resemblance might serve to facilitate an inference from the kind of sensation to the kind of object it is a sensation of. But the sensationist denies not only the resemblance relation, but also the very possibility that sensation can be a sensation *of* something.³ As a result, the sensationist is faced with the difficulty of explaining the possibility of object perception itself, and how it can yield objective knowledge of the world around us. More specifically, the pressing question is this: how is it that our most basic mental states, which are themselves non-intentional, can ever furnish us with representations that are intentional? Sensationism thus creates a new set of explanatory problems by barring any appeals to the straightforward picture sketched out above.

If the mere possession of sensations is not sufficient for perception to take place, then it follows that something else (i.e., some other mental faculty) must play a role in perception. As we shall soon see, it is not merely a coincidence that apart from their shared understanding of sensation, the sensationist philosophers of the eighteenth century all abandon the conception of perception as something that can be accounted for in terms of passive activity on the part of the mind. As a result, these philosophers saw perception as an active process—something to be accomplished—rather than something that just happens to the mind. Among them we see increasingly sophisticated attempts to draw distinctions between active and passive ingredients in perception, and to give increasingly sophisticated accounts of what the mind does with the sensations it receives to bring about perceptual experience. In the next section, I will examine the extent to which several eighteenth cen-

³As Kitcher points out, none of the philosophers in this group think that causation is sufficient to establish intentionality. Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*, p. 68.

tury philosophers were engaged with the problems posed by sensationism and their various attempts to resolve them.

Malebranche and the Cartesian Problem with Sensations

While sensationism is a major force in many discussions of perception in the eighteenth century, its emergence is something that should be explained. To understand its significance to discussions of perception in the time period, it is necessary to put it in context so that the motivations behind it can be appreciated. The notion that sensations are incapable of representing objects was first clearly articulated by Nicholas Malebranche in *The Search After Truth*, but the problems that led him to this view are to be found in the work of Descartes.

There are two different sets of issues within Descartes' philosophy that make Malebranche's account of sensation quite attractive. The first has to do with a set of tensions in Cartesian ontology about ideas as modes of thought, and the second has to do with the representational status of sensations themselves. Let's begin with the problem rooted in Cartesian ontology. In defining 'substance' as "nothing other than a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence" (Principles 51, CSM 210), Descartes is forced to admit that there is only one entity that truly does not depend on anything else, namely God. But Descartes goes on to say that the term 'substance' does not apply univocally to God and created things. When we recognize that all created things equally depend on God, we can flesh out a different sense of the word 'substance' that can apply to everything else. He tells us that, "in the case of created things, some are of such a nature that they cannot exist without other things, while some need only the ordinary concurrence of God in order to exist. We make this distinction by calling the latter 'substances' and the former 'qualities' or 'attributes' of those substances." Since "nothingness has no attributes," we can come to know substances by means of their attributes (Principles 52, CSM 210). Since everything in the world is either a substance or an attribute of a substance

(i.e., a quality or mode), it follows that we have a criterion for determining the principal attribute of a substance: we can examine attributes and discard any that depend on any other substance, with the result being the principal attribute of each substance. When this criterion is applied, we have but two substances: mind (which has the principal attribute of thought) and body (which has the principal attribute of being extended) (Principles 53, CSM 210) He makes this point more directly later, “Thought and extension can be regarded as constituting the natures of intelligent substance and corporeal substance; they must then be considered as nothing else but thinking substance itself and extended substance itself—that is, as mind and body” (Principles 63, CSM 215).

Of course, to say that the principal attribute of a body is to be extended is not to say that is extended in any particular way, and Descartes points out that “one and the same body, with its quantity unchanged, may be extended in many different ways” (Principles 64, CSM 215). Different shapes or orientations of a body are different ways of being extended. Similarly, Descartes has to maintain that there are different ways for a mind to think, which is to say “that the same mind is capable of having many different thoughts” (ibid). Analogously to the case of the body, the mind can be said to be thinking in different ways, insofar as it has different thoughts. This presents an immediate difficulty. Thinking of something seems to require thought taking on the properties of the thing thought about. When I think of the glass of bourbon, my mind as a substance is modified by the glass of bourbon. But nearly all of the properties of the glass of bourbon are properties of extended things and cannot be possessed by the mind, as an unextended substance. Thinking about an object seems to entail the mind taking on the properties of the object and this generates a number of absurdities.

There is a way to stave off this seemingly absurd consequence. One can insist that the thing being modified is not the mind itself, but an awareness of the object, understood as a kind of act with the object as its content. The mind does not take on the properties of the glass of bourbon when thinking about it. The relevant mode of the mind here is not the set

of properties possessed by the glass of bourbon, but an idea with objectivity reality, which is to say an idea that represents the glass of bourbon. Thus, one solution to this problem is to take ideas, considered as acts of thought, to be what is modified.⁴ As Falkenstein notes, this is how Berkeley tries to avoid this problem in *Principles* §49:

[It] may perhaps be objected, that if extension and figure exist only in the mind, it follows that the mind is extended and figured; since extension is a mode or attribute, which...is predicated of the subject in which it exists. I answer, those qualities are in the mind only as perceived by it, that is, not by way of mode or attribute, but only by way of idea; and it no more follows, that the soul or mind is extended because extension exists in it alone, than it does that it is red or blue, because those colors are on all hands acknowledged to exist in it, and nowhere else.⁵

Unfortunately, this raises new questions, the most pressing of which has to do with the nature of sensations. From his early writings, Descartes is quick to point out that sensations do not resemble the objects that cause them. For instance, he begins *The World* with this issue in mind, telling us, “For although everyone is commonly convinced that the ideas we have in our mind are wholly similar to the objects from which they proceed, nevertheless I cannot see any reason which assures us that this is so. On the contrary, I note many observations which should make us doubt it” (AT XI 3, CSM 81). He goes on to pose a question: “Now if words, which signify nothing except by human convention, suffice to make us think of things to which they bear no resemblance, then why could nature not also have established some sign which would make us have the sensation of light, even if the sign contained nothing in itself which is similar to sensation?” (AT XI 4, CSM I 81).

⁴See Walter Ott. “Malebranche and the Riddle of Sensation”. In: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 83.3 (2014), pp. 689–712, p. 698 and Lorne Falkenstein. “Condillac’s Paradox”. In: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 43.4 (2005), p. 4, pp. 403-405 for brief discussions of this issue.

⁵George Berkeley. *Philosophical Works*. Ed. by M.R. Ayers. David Campbell Publishers Ltd., 1975, p. 107.

Similarly, Descartes cautions us in the *Optics*: “we must not think that it is by means of this resemblance that the picture causes our sensory perception of these objects...” (AT VI 130, CSM I 167).

It is here that two very important problems emerge. The first has to do with the nature of Cartesian ideas. Across Descartes writings, one finds three seemingly distinct conceptions of what it is to be an ‘idea.’ Ideas can be immediate objects of thought or perception, mental acts, or mental dispositions. Later Cartesians are mostly split between the first and second understanding of idea, most notably with Malebranche opting for the first and Arnauld treating ideas as mental acts or operations. Unsurprisingly, there is a long history of commentators being divided about whether or not Descartes holds a representational (indirect) realist account of perception, or a direct realist account. The second problem has to do with sensations themselves and their status as ideas. If sensations bear no resemblance to the things that cause them, can they truly be representations of anything? Descartes is once again less than clear on this issue, with two possible answers being suggested by different passages in his writings: (1) sensations are confused perceptions or (2) they are non-intentional states.⁶

It is Malebranche’s answers to both of these questions that are the most influential of the later Cartesians. Malebranche both interprets Descartes as holding the representational realist view that ideas are the direct objects of thought that mediate our thoughts of objects and endorses this position himself. In a passage that is perhaps the clearest statement of this, he tells us how he understands ‘idea’:

We see the sun, the stars, and an infinity of objects external to us; and it is not

⁶For instance, there are passages which favor both readings. In the sixth Meditation, Descartes talks about sensations as “confused modes of thinking” (AT VII 81, CSM II 56) *Principles* I.71 suggests that sensations are non-intentional: “...sensations of tastes, smells, sounds, heat, cold, light, colours and so on—sensations which do not represent anything located outside our thought” (AT VIII, CSM I 219). For a discussion of this topic, see Alison Simmons. “Are Cartesian Sensations Representational”. In: *Nous* 33.3 (1999), pp. 347–369.

likely that the soul should leave the body to stroll about the heavens, as it were, in order to behold all these objects. Thus, it does not see them by themselves, and our mind's immediate object when it sees the sun, for example, is not the sun, but something that is intimately joined to our soul, and this is what I call an idea. Thus, by the word idea, I mean here nothing other than the immediate object, or the object closest to the mind, when it perceives something, i.e., that which affects and modifies the mind with the perception it has of an object.⁷

There is a sort of distance between the soul and objects which is gestured at by his remark about the soul walking around; this is not physical distance, but rather an attempt to gesture at an ontological difference between the soul and objects and their lack of interaction. The point is that when we perceive something such as the sun, the immediate object of our perception is something which can actually “be joined” with the soul—an idea. In a passage in his *Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion*, Malebranche goes so far as to suggest that the objects themselves are completely superfluous. Theodore asks Aristes to imagine what would happen if God annihilated all of the objects in the world except their bodies:

Let us further suppose that God impresses on our brains all the same traces, or rather that He presents to our minds all the same ideas we have now. On this supposition, Aristes, in which world would we spend the day? Would it not be in an intelligible world? Now, take note, it is in that world that we exist and live, although the bodies we animate live and walk in another. It is that world which we contemplate, admire, and sense. But the world which we look at or consider in turning our head in all directions, is simply matter, which is invisible in itself and has none of those beauties we admire and sense in looking at it.⁸

⁷Nicholas Malebranche. *The Search After Truth*. Trans. by Thomas Lennon and Paul Olscamp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 217.

⁸Nicholas Malebranche. *Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion*. Ed. by Nicholas Jolley. Trans. by

When Aristes objects that we could no longer see the room around us if it were destroyed, Theodore replies by explaining that the room itself is not actually what we perceive: “I repeat, Aristes: speaking precisely, your room is not visible. It is not actually your room that I see when I look at it, because I could certainly see everything I see now even if God had destroyed it.”⁹

In the *Search*, Malebranche quickly makes it clear that ‘ideas’ for him are not in any way modes of mental substance, and argues that they must be located in the divine intellect. Malebranche’s initial defense of vision in God is given through an argument by elimination in the second part of book three of the *Search*, where he lays out what he thinks are five possible accounts of how the mind can be acquainted with objects:

1. Bodies transmit resembling species to the soul (III.ii.2).
2. The soul has a power to produce ideas when triggered by non-resembling bodily impressions (III.ii.3).
3. Ideas are created with our soul or produced in it successively by God (III.ii.4).
4. Our soul sees both the essence and the existence of bodies by considering its own perfections (III.ii.5)
5. The soul is joined with God, who contains ideas of all created beings (III.ii.6)

He provides arguments against the first four options, leaving the fifth—that we see all things in God—on the table as the only explanation left standing.¹⁰ Though this argument was less than fully persuasive for most of his readers, Malebranche did not abandon it and

David Scott. Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 10-11.

⁹Malebranche, *Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion*, p. 11. This argument is also discussed by Van Cleve. See James Van Cleve. *Problems From Reid*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 75-81.

¹⁰For further discussion of Malebranche’s argument in the *Search*, see Steven Nadler. *Malebranche and Ideas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 108-140; Tad M. Schmultz. “Malebranche on Ideas and the Vision in God”. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche*. Ed. by Steven Nadler. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 59–86

spent considerable time clarifying his position against objections and formulating further arguments to support the position.¹¹

For present purposes, the problem that Malebranche is trying to solve with the account of vision in God and the implications of the theory are more important than the soundness of his defense of the position. Vision in God is an attempt to account for the intentionality of thought given that we have good Cartesian reasons for believing that sensations, as modes of thought, are unable to represent anything. If mental states are fundamentally non-intentional, then something above and beyond mental states must be involved in the thought and perception of objects. Malebranche, invoking Augustine, believes the best explanation for this is that ideas in the mind of God are what performs this function.

Vision in God requires Malebranche to distinguish ideas from mere modifications of the mind, both in terms of their ontological status and their ability to represent. Sensations are the result of the mind being modified by God on the occasion of an encounter with an object, but they themselves do not represent anything. It is only when a sensation is joined to an idea that we are capable of perceiving something:

When we perceive something sensible, two things are found in our perception: sensation and pure idea. The sensation is a modification of our soul, and it is God who causes it in us... As for the idea found in conjunction with the sensation, it is in God, and we see it because it pleases God to reveal it to us. God joins the sensation to the idea when objects are present so that we may believe them to be present and that we may have all the feelings and passions that we should have in relation to them.¹²

Malebranche never seems to pass up opportunities to point out how limited our sen-

¹¹Locke famously criticized Malebranche for not demonstrating that the options presented were exhaustive. See John Locke. "Examination of P. Malebranche's Opinion of seeing all Things in God". In: *Works of John Locke*. Vol. 8. Thoemes Press, 1997, p. 212. Also see Malebranche's later account in Elucidation 10.

¹²Malebranche, *The Search After Truth*, p. 234.

sations are and one particularly noteworthy place is in the *Dialogues*. The third dialogue is entirely dedicated to hammering away at this point. It begins with Theodore cautioning Aristes not to mistake his sensations for ideas. Theodore tells Aristes:

Created reason, our soul, the human mind, the purest and most sublime intellects...They can discover the eternal, immutable, necessary truths in the divine Word, in the eternal, immutable, necessary Wisdom; but in themselves they can find only sensations, often quite lively but always obscure and confused, only modalities full of darkness.¹³

Here it is worth pointing out that Malebranche is acutely aware of the Cartesian problem of the mind's modification by perceived objects raised earlier. If what is being modified in perception is the soul itself, then it follows that the soul actually takes on the properties of the things that it perceives. In the case of sensation, Malebranche fully accepts this consequence of his position:

You even make a fool of yourself before certain Cartesians if you say that the soul actually becomes blue, red, or yellow, and that the soul is painted with the colors of the rainbow when looking at it. There are many people who have doubts and even more who do not believe, that when we smell carrion the soul becomes formally rotten; and that the taste of sugar, or of pepper or salt, is something belonging to the soul.¹⁴

Thus, having a sensation is not a matter of having an obscure or confused representation of something because, on this view, there's no such thing as a sensation of anything; having a sensation is simply the soul having its state modified in some way.¹⁵

¹³Malebranche, *Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion*, pp. 32-33.

¹⁴Malebranche, *The Search After Truth*, Elucid. 10, 634.

¹⁵This has led Nicholas Jolley to argue that Malebranche is advocating a form of adverbialism. Nicholas Jolley. "Malebranche on the Soul". In: *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche*. Ed. by Steven Nadler. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 31-58, pp. 37-42. Walter Ott argues against this. See Ott, "Malebranche and the Riddle of Sensation".

Condillac's Sensationism

The next major philosopher to engage with the problems posed by the doctrine that sensations are non-intentional states was Etienne Bonnot, Abbe de Condillac. Condillac is noteworthy as a philosopher who, while enthusiastically rejecting the Malebranchian theory of vision in God, fully accepts the sensationist assumptions which generate the problem vision in God was supposed to solve. But unlike Malebranche, Condillac does not seem to have appreciated the gravity of this problem initially. This is exhibited by a noticeable contrast in two of his works, the *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge* and the *Treatise on the Sensations*.

Condillac dedicates the bulk of the *Essay's* first section to sensation. Immediately, he sets his sights on rejecting the thesis of innate ideas and the Cartesian worries about the reliability of the senses. Granting that the senses can deceive us and that they occasionally yield uncertain knowledge of the properties of objects, Condillac raises the question of whether or not flawed senses might well still be capable of yielding ideas. He gives an example of looking at a figure that is judged to be a pentagon, though one of its angles is imperceptible from that particular perspective. Even though our senses might be deceptively presenting the object to us as a pentagon when it may in fact not be a pentagonal figure, the senses are still capable of yielding the idea of a pentagon.¹⁶ But of course, the Cartesian distrust of the senses is not aimed at the origin of our ideas, but of their accuracy, and Condillac acknowledges that we often have reason to doubt that the features we perceive in objects are genuine properties of those objects. Thus, he argues, we must distinguish the following in our sensations: (1) The perceptual state itself, (2) The reference that state has to something external, and (3) the judgment that the properties we attribute to objects based on our sensations really belong to the objects.¹⁷

¹⁶Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, I.ii.9, pg. 15.

¹⁷Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, I.i.11, pg. 16. (George, "Kant's Sensationism",

Condillac raises the problem of knowing which properties can be said to belong to objects, bluntly stating that what has been said about extension and shape will apply more widely to resolve the issue with respect to other properties. But then his discussion quickly becomes very strange. Just paragraphs earlier, he was interested in the issue of how we acquired ideas of extension and shape, and was content to point out that even if our perceptions weren't veridical, they could still give rise to these ideas. Here, the issue is not whether or not the deceptive senses could yield certain ideas, but whether or not we are justified in saying that certain ideas represent actual properties of objects, and nothing said previously about extension or shape has any bearing on this question. Condillac wants to explain why it is that we are so eager to attribute secondary qualities to objects based on the properties of our sensations, just as we do in the case of extension. His answer is that, if we attend to the idea of extension, we will see "that it is nothing but the idea of several beings that appear to us as being outside one another" and that this is not true in the cases of scents and colors.¹⁸

In giving this sort of answer, Condillac subtly shifts the discussion away from the problem of knowing the actual properties of objects to the much simpler problem of explaining why it is so natural for us to attribute scents and colors to objects. While they appear to be similar, these are two very different questions, the first being normative in nature and the second being answerable with a descriptive account. Unfortunately, he has no answer to the question that he has pushed aside, and the answer he does give is simply irrelevant. The Cartesian worries about the reliability of the senses in yielding knowledge of the world cannot be answered by appealing to the character of the very sensations that are in doubt. This is a devastating problem, as he employs the distinction between primary and secondary qualities as if the resemblance between sensations and objects were unproblematic, and of course, he has already granted the possibility that our sensations might not resemble

pp. 236,244) suggests that Kant may have been influenced by Condillac's view.

¹⁸Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, I.i.12, pg. 17.

objects accurately in his discussion of shape and extension.

Sensations need to function as representations of objects if he is avoid this problem. His definition of sensation, however, does not lend itself well to this role. This presents a difficulty, as “whatever is occasioned by something can occur without it, for an effect does not depend on its occasional cause...”¹⁹ and it is entirely possible that the sensations are nothing like the objects that occasion them, or even that there are no such external objects. Condillac dismisses the skeptical worries, but his position is on the verge of collapsing into idealism if it is to be anything but a skeptical position. Condillac, failing to appreciate the problem he has passed over, proceeds to the next part of the *Essay* as if this were a settled matter. He would not be able to avoid this problem for very long, however. Diderot, in his *Letter on the Blind*, raises this very objection toward Condillac:

The author of the *Essay on Human Knowledge* should be invited to examine this work as it would give him the material for some useful, agreeable and subtle observations, in a word, for observations of the kind he does so well. It is well worth accusing him of idealism too, and this claim is liable to excite him owing less to its singularity than to the difficulty of refuting it according to his own principles, which are exactly the same as Berkeley’s.²⁰

Condillac was forced to return to this issue later on and confront it more directly. In the *Treatise on the Sensations*, Condillac continues his project of explaining the development of all of our mental faculties from the awareness of sensation. He introduces a thought experiment where a statue is invested with various sensory modalities one at time, allowing him to discuss the emerging capabilities and awareness the statue would acquire with each additional sensory modality. In part IV, Condillac revisits the issue of whether or not bodies actually have the properties that we suppose them to have based on our sensations, this

¹⁹Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, I.i.8, pg. 13.

²⁰Denis Diderot. “Letter on the Blind for the Use of Those Who Can See”. In: *Blindness and Enlightenment*. Ed. and trans. by Kate E. Tunstall. Continuum, 2011, pp. 196-197.

time without any deception. He titles the fifth chapter in part IV “On the Uncertainty of Judgments that we Make about the Existence of Sensory Properties” and directly addresses the issue:

Our judgments on the existence of sensory properties can be absolutely false. Our statue, I presume, remembers that it was itself sound, taste, smell, color: It knows how much trouble it had to become accustomed to externalizing these sensations. Are there, therefore, sounds, tastes, odors, colors in objects? What can assure it of that? Certainly not hearing, nor smell, nor taste, nor vision: these senses by themselves can only inform it about the changes it experiences. . . . Touch is therefore no more believable than the other senses: and since we recognize that sounds, tastes, odors, and colors do not exist in objects, it could be that extension does not exist there any more so.²¹

He finally gives up trying to avoid the skeptical conclusion that objects may not have any of the properties we attribute them and grants it as a serious possibility. But if the objects occasioning our sensations aren't extended, can we really say that there even are external bodies? To this Condillac professes agnosticism, stating that he awaits a proof for either answer.²²

So while Condillac gives us a very rich account of our mental operations and their foundation in sensation, he is never able to offer an account of the intentionality of perceptual experience. We are, however, in a position to learn a lot from Condillac's failure here because it very clearly exhibits the features of the problems facing an account of perception which accepts the sensationist doctrine that sensations are non-intentional states. He needs sensations to be representational, but his definition of sensation, as modification of the state of a perceiver occasioned by action of an object, leaves him unable to say that sensations

²¹Etienne Bonnot de Condillac. *Philosophical writings of Etienne Bonnot, Abbe de Condillac*. Trans. by Franklin Phillip. Vol. 2. Hillsdale NJ: L. Erlbaum, 1982, p. 323

²²Ibid. fn 38

are *about* objects, let alone whether or not they can resemble them. As a result, any of our higher level thoughts or mental faculties, which are all derived from sensation, are ruled out as having any bearing on the world, in virtue of being derived from states that are not representations of anything.²³

3.2 Reidian Direct Realism as a Solution

The next significant attempt to provide a solution to the problems posed by sensationism takes place in the work of Thomas Reid, beginning with his *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*. Much like Condillac's *Treatise*, Reid's *Inquiry* is structured around the various sensory modalities, beginning with what he takes to be the simplest ones to analyze (smelling and taste) and then proceeding to the more complicated ones (touch and vision).²⁴ Along these lines, Reid begins his discussion of smelling in the *Inquiry* with a very brief discussion of the physiology of smelling (II.i), and then proceeds to analyze the experience of smelling a rose (II.ii): "Suppose a person who never had this sense before, to receive it all at once, and to smell a rose—can he perceive any similitude or agreement between the smell and the rose? or indeed between it and any other object whatsoever?"²⁵ Reid's answer is blunt: "Certainly he cannot. He finds himself affected in a new way, he knows not why or from what cause."²⁶ Further, "[The Sensation] has no similitude to anything else, so as to admit of a comparison; and, therefore, he can conclude

²³For an extended discussion of Condillac on sensation, see Lorne Falkenstein and Giovanni Grandi. "Étienne Bonnot de Condillac". In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Winter 2017. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2017. URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/condillac/>.

²⁴The similarities between Reid's discussion of perception and Condillac's have led some commentators to speculate that Reid must have read Condillac. In particular, Reid's *experimentum crucis* discussion in the chapter 'Of Touch' shares several similarities with Condillac's discussion of the statue. See Ryan Nichols. *Thomas Reid's Theory of Perception*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 97n; Van Cleve, *Problems From Reid*, 47n.

²⁵Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, p. II.ii.26.

²⁶ibid

nothing from it, unless, perhaps, that there must be some unknown cause of it.”²⁷

It is striking that from the very outset, Reid accepts the definition of sensation that caused Condillac so much trouble, along with the conclusion it directly entails, and which Condillac was fighting to resist in the *Essay*. Sensations do not resemble anything, and so we cannot infer anything about objects from their features. However, there is more to this than just a blunt denial of the resemblance thesis as it might be found in Locke’s philosophy; the denial of the resemblance thesis is presented as a consequence of the non-intentional character of sensation. Going even further, Reid points out that a sensation, as a mental state of the perceiver, depends on a sentient mind for its existence. This marks a further difference between sensations and the objects of perception: sensations lack mind-independent status, whereas the object of a perception “may exist whether perceived or not.” Sensations and the objects of perception are two different kinds of entities which are incapable of having any common features. A tree has a set of physical properties (a trunk, leaves, branches, etc.) which are not properties that sensations can possess, making the comparison presupposed in any notion of resemblance a dubious one. Talking about sensations as if they can have the features of a physical object is ultimately a category mistake.

Reid argues later in the *Inquiry* that the features of the expressions “I feel a pain” and “I see a tree” are very similar, but the similarities are superficial. While both sentences have grammatical objects, there is a crucial difference between a pain and a tree. Pain can function as a grammatical object, but it isn’t a thing being picked out; the tree, however, is a real object. When I have a pain, the feeling communicates nothing to me other than its presence and this is crucially different than seeing a tree, where my *seeing* brings me into a relation to something else. The difference between feeling a pain and seeing a tree is then a difference in kind between two sorts of mental activities, one that is fundamentally non-

²⁷ibid

intentional and one that is fundamentally intentional. Reid takes the difference between these two cases to be the ground of his distinction between sensation and perception as distinct acts.²⁸

Another feature that follows from this account is that sensation, as a mental state of the perceiver, depends on a sentient mind for its existence. This marks a further difference between sensations and the objects of perception: sensations lack mind-independent status, whereas the object of a perception “may exist whether perceived or not.” On these grounds, Reid launches his attack on the resemblance thesis. Sensations and the objects of perception, as radically different sorts of entities, are incapable of having any common features. A tree has a set of physical properties (a trunk, leaves, branches, etc.) which are not properties that sensations can possess, making the comparison presupposed in any notion of resemblance dubious. Together, Reid’s account of sensations as non-intentional states and his attack on the resemblance thesis mark a two pronged attack on the representationalist model of perception, targeting the viability of sensations as the sorts of states that could serve as the basis for perceptual inferences about the features of the world. Sensations, as non-intentional states, are not the sorts of entities that could perform this function. But even if one were to resist this move, one still has to contend with the problem that sensations, as mental states, would have to take on the properties of external objects to truly be said to “resemble” them, and this is counterintuitive enough to question the coherence of the notion of resemblance that one would need to secure access to external objects on the representationalist model.

Since sensation alone will never be adequate to account for the intentional character of perceptual experience something above and beyond the mere possessing of sensations is required to explain how sensations make us aware of objects, and Reid explicitly acknowl-

²⁸Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, p. IV.xx.168. For further discussion of Reid’s distinction between sensation and perception, see Van Cleve, *Problems From Reid*, pp. 9-12; Nichols, *Thomas Reid’s Theory of Perception*, pp. 83-86, 143-160.

edges this:

However these things may be, if Nature had given us nothing more than impressions made upon the body and sensations in our minds corresponding to them, we should, in that case, have been merely sentient, but not percipient beings. We should never have been able to form a conception of any external object, far less a belief of its existence.²⁹

Perception for Reid is a process; it requires the mind to establish a relation between the non-intentional sensations that are occasioned by some sort of interaction from an external object and that external object. For Reid, this happens through a process of signification, where a sensation functions as a sign of an object. Reid takes it to be a brute fact about our nature that our minds take things as signs for other things; a sign directs the mind to pass over it for the object of the sign. He cites three major examples of this: smoke is a sign of fire, a set of facial features can be signs of anger, and words are signs of thoughts. This relation between sign and object signified can obtain in three different ways: “by original principles of our constitution, by custom, and by reasoning.”³⁰ In each of these cases the transition from sign to object signified does not occur as an inference from resemblance. Reidian signs do not have to resemble their objects, and in most circumstances they do not.³¹ Further, the appearance of the sign is always followed by the conception and belief in the existence of the object of the sign. For Reid, sensations are natural signs of external objects and this is not something that we are capable of explaining in terms of anything more basic:

We are inspired with the sensation, and we are inspired with the corresponding perception, by means unknown. And, because the mind passes immediately

²⁹Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, p. VI.xxi.176.

³⁰ibid.

³¹The exception is visible figure.

from the sensation to that conception and belief of the object which we have in perception, in the same manner as it passes from signs to the things signified by them, we have, therefore, called our sensations *signs of external objects*; finding no word more proper to express the function which Nature hath assigned them in perception, and the relation which they bear to their corresponding objects.³²

Once again, sensations are not the sorts of entities that ideas were taken to be; they bear no relationship to objects and cannot resemble them. This generates what I have called the problem of sensationism: while having sensations might be necessary for perception to take place, the mere having of sensations alone is not sufficient to account for the major phenomenological and epistemological features of perception. Reid cleverly takes several steps to dissolve this problem, even though he doesn't ever explicitly acknowledge it as a problem to be solved.³³ By introducing the distinction between sensation and perception, Reid is able to carefully draw a line between the functions that sensations can and cannot perform, and allocate much of the tasks sensations perform in the theories of many of his contemporaries to perception, understood as a higher level process of bringing about a signification relation between sensations and external objects.

³²Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, p. VI.xxi.177.

³³Here I must disagree with (Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*, p. 68) who claims that that Reid "did not really offer a solution to the problem" but simply introduces the sensation-perception distinction to "blunt the force of skepticism." This suggests that the distinction gets him out of the problem only by way of a technicality. Reid is faced with the problem in virtue of accepting sensationism, regardless if he acknowledges it. If he genuinely does not have an answer to it, then his entire account of perception is a failure. But Reid does have answer insofar as he has an account of how perception is accomplished through sensations functioning as natural signs of their objects.

3.3 Decoding Tetens' Puzzling Discussion of Reidian Perception

Just as he commented on and critiqued Hume, Tetens also discusses the work of Thomas Reid. His discussion of Reid, however, is significantly less transparent and presents readers with several difficulties. Tetens, like Reid and the other sensationist philosophers discussing perception, holds sensations to be non-intentional mental states. This alone would make it the case that we would expect to find fairly strong affinities to the work of the other sensationist philosophers in the period when it comes to accounts of perception and mental representation. The same general problem of accounting for the intentionality of mental representations given that their most basic components are non-intentional is shared by all of these philosophers and they each attempt to solve this problem in their own way. Tetens is certainly no exception in this regard, but his engagement with this problem does not simply occur in a single discussion within the *Philosophische Versuche*, but rather occurs in fragments in the context of several seemingly distinct discussions.

The one thing that is clear about Tetens' engagement with Reid is that he was clearly well acquainted with Reid's account of perception and his assessment of it is largely positive. In general, it seems fair to say that Tetens accepts the descriptive aspects of Reid's views on perception. Tetens explicitly endorses Reid's definition of sensation and his harsh rejection of the resemblance thesis. He accepts Reid's distinction between sensation and perception, he agrees that sensations are basic and incapable of being analyzed in terms of any sort of more fundamental mental state, and he makes it abundantly clear that he wants his term *Idee* to be understood as equivalent to Reid's use of the term *perception*.³⁴ Perhaps even more striking is his incorporation of Reid's view that sensations function as natural

³⁴For a discussion of the elements of Reid's account of perception that Tetens takes up, see Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800*, pp. 121-127

signs of objects into his own account of representation:

Dieß erschöpfet noch nicht die ganze zeichnende Natur der Vorstellungen. Sie sind nicht bloß solche Veränderungen, welche wir wegen ihrer Analogie mit andern Dingen, mit Bequemlichkeit als Zeichen und Bilder dieser Dinge gebrauchen können, und besser gebrauchen können, als jedes andere in uns; das nicht allein, sondern sie haben über dieß etwas an sich, was uns so zu sagen, von selbst die Erinnerung giebet, daß sie Zeichen von andern Dingen sind, uns auf andere von ihnen selbst unterschiedene Sachen, als Gegenstände hinweist, und diese durch sie und in ihnen sehen läßt. Hier, in dieser Beschaffenheit der Vorstellungen lieget der Grund von unserm natürlich Hang zu glauben, nicht, daß wir mit Bildern und Vorstellungen von Sachen zu thun haben, wenn wir an diese denken, sondern daß es die Sachen selbst sind, die wir erkennen, vergleichen, und mit welchen wir beschäftigt sind.³⁵

However, Tetens' acceptance of Reidian doctrines into his own account of perception is not what it seems. Since Tetens enthusiastically accepts Reid's criticisms of the theory of ideas and the motivations for his direct realist account of perception, one would expect Tetens to follow Reid down this path. Strangely, this is not what Tetens actually does; he bluntly dismisses Reid's attack on the theory of ideas and proceeds as if this the matter had already been settled:

Die von Hr. Reid sogenannte Ideenphilosophie oder der Grundsatz: alle Urtheile über die Objekte entstehen nur mittelst der Eindrücke oder der Vorstel-

³⁵This does not exhaust the full significative nature of representations. They are not merely such alterations, which, due to their analogy with other things, can easily be taken as signs and pictures of them, and can be better taken than others different in us; they have something about them which reminds us that they are signs of different things and refers us to things as objects which are themselves different from representations, and this allows objects to be seen through representations and in them. Here, in this feature of representations lies the reason for our natural inclination to believe that we are not dealing with pictures and representations of things when we think of these, but that it is the things themselves which we cognize, compare, and which we are occupied with. *Philosophische Versuche* I.iii. pg. 25.

lungen von ihnen; ein Grundsatz, den dieser Britte nach seiner sonstigen Einsicht in der Naturlehre nicht hätte leugnen sollen, ist gewiß hieran ganz unschuldig.³⁶

Since the claim that the theory of ideas is the unwarranted assumption underlying the skeptical problems associated with perception is Reid's central claim in the *Inquiry*, it is strange and dissatisfying to see it bluntly dismissed in a sentence, with no argument made against it. When it is taken into account that Tetens accepts the majority of Reid's objections to the theory of ideas, it raises two awkward questions: (1) Why does Tetens think the theory of ideas is unproblematic, especially in the face of acknowledged difficulties? and (2) Why would he think this to be so obvious as to not need to be argued? The text itself offers almost nothing in the way of answers to these questions, leaving Manfred Kuehn to speculate that Tetens' silence here is either the result of being fully confident in the theory of ideas or simply not having any arguments against Reid. Kuehn even takes a step further and suggests that Tetens might be trying to convince himself that the theory of ideas and idealism have nothing in common.³⁷

Another puzzling discussion of Reid arises in the fourth essay of the *Philosophische Versuche*, after the discussion of Humean causation. Tetens brings up Reid's discussion of the perception of hardness, expresses agreement with the Reidian view that sensations have nothing in common with objects, and then appears to take issue with what he takes to be Reid's view about the relationship between sensations and perception:

Diese Empfindung der Härte, sagt Reid, hat nichts ähnliches mit der Härte in dem Körper, und das hat sie freylich nicht. Sie ist etwas subjektives in der Seele, da die Härte des Körpers etwas objektives in den Dingen ist. Aber

³⁶The philosophy of ideas, so called by Mr. Reid, or the principle: All judgments about objects come to be only by means of impressions or representations of them, is certainly without guilt; a principle that this British writer, according to his usual insight in the doctrine of nature, should not have denied. *Philosophische Versuche* V.ii.201.

³⁷Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800*, p. 121.

diese Empfindung hat auch nichts ähnliches setzt er hinzu, mit der Perception oder mit der Idee von der Härte, welche uns die objektivische Beschaffenheit als im Bilde vorhält. Ich antworte, das Gefühl is hier allerdings von der Idee unterschieden; aber ist jenes dewegen nicht der Stoff zu dieser?³⁸

This passage is strange for a number of reasons apart from the obvious awkwardness of Tetens using the language of ideas to describe Reid's view. In terms of context, it isn't obvious what role the discussion of Reid is playing here and how it fits in with the discussion of Humean causation that immediately precedes it or with the overarching concern about the origin or relational concepts which occupied the earlier part of the fourth essay. Unlike Hume, Reid is not typically thought of as engaging with this sort of problem. This aside, Reid's discussion of hardness as a quality takes place in the *Inquiry* chapter "Of Touch" and it is not particularly noteworthy insofar as Reid seems to simply reiterate claims he had made about perception in previous chapters. It is also odd that his gripe with Reid is a denial that sensations of hardness make up the content of the perception of hardness, which is not something that Reid ever clearly asserts. This is likely obscured by Tetens' using the word "idea" interchangeably with "perception." Reidian perception is the result of a process by which sensations function as natural signs of objects and signify their features. This makes it particularly odd to appreciate what Tetens could be objecting to given that there is a sense in which Reid would not deny that sensations are the material for perception. This leaves us ultimately wondering why Tetens thought Reid was an interesting or useful target here.

While these difficulties make it very hard to see exactly what function either discussion

³⁸This sensation of hardness, says Reid, has nothing in common with the hardness in the body, and it certainly does not. It is something subjective in the soul whereas the hardness in the body is something objective in things. But he adds to this that the sensation has also nothing in common with the perception or idea of hardness, which represents the objective quality to us, as in a picture. I answer that the feeling is indeed different from the idea; but does this mean that the feeling is not the material for the idea? *Philosophische Versuche* IV.vi, pg. 184.

of Reid plays in Tetens' thinking on perception, I want to suggest that there is a way to clarify their relationship. Tetens' criticisms of Reid's methodology are once again very relevant. As I argued in the first chapter, one of Tetens' primary complaints against Reid and the common sense philosophers is that while they perform excellent descriptive analyses of various phenomena, he thinks they stop short of providing philosophically interesting explanations for them. This is a defect Tetens seeks to remedy by insisting that while philosophy must begin from a common sense starting point, it ultimately consists in the attempt to provide theoretical explanations for what was presupposed on practical grounds. The point of doing philosophy, for Tetens, is to seek out the very sort of explanations that he believes the common sense philosophers fail to provide. As I have argued, this yields a very specific view about the nature of philosophical skepticism and how it is to be dealt with: skeptical positions are challenges for explanation and they are not to be refuted, but rather explained away.

With this in mind, Tetens' unwillingness to accept Reid's conclusions about the theory of ideas and his direct realism can be explained on methodological grounds. Tetens is never particularly threatened by skepticism in the way that Reid seems to be. Since the principles which are inconsistent with skepticism are presupposed successfully in our daily lives, this furnishes us with the practical justification we need to accept them. It is only when we take a reflective step back from our common sense presuppositions and seek out theoretical explanations for them that we face the prospect that we might actually lack such explanations, and this is the way skeptical concerns arise. Rather than see the theory of ideas as a faulty assumption underlying skepticism which needs to be dissolved, Tetens would have seen it as an attempt at an explanation for various phenomena surrounding perceptual experience—a theory or hypothesis in the very sense that Reid wished to banish from natural philosophy. Reid, from Tetens' perspective, misses the point of the theory of ideas and direct realism would have appeared to Tetens as another instance of Reid ending his investigation prematurely.

The primary question that must be answered is what sort of theoretical question Tetens is trying to answer and how Reid might be thought about in a way that reveals his relevance to Tetens' concerns. Since the methodological concerns motivating Tetens provide us with at least a plausible reason to think that there is some rationale behind not responding to Reid's rejection of the theory of ideas, it becomes possible to see his acceptance of most of Reid's objections towards the theory of ideas as raising problems that the theory of ideas must overcome if it is to be successful as an explanation for perceptual experience. If this can be done, then Reid's charge that the theory of ideas gives rise to skepticism loses its force and in that case, a direct attack on Reid's position is not needed. Tetens, then, can be fairly easily interpreted as attempting to rehabilitate a version of the theory of ideas which can withstand the sort of problems which Reid raises.³⁹ This is supported by a set of questions that Tetens poses in the beginning of the fifth essay, shortly after expressing his complaint that Reid and his followers fail to give satisfying explanations for the phenomena they discuss and simply appeal to instinct:

...warum stellen wir uns denn nicht lauter Empfindungen von uns selbst vor?
Wie unterscheiden wir die subjektivische und objektivische Wirklichkeit der
Dinge, wie einige sich ausdrücken, oder wie empfinden wir Dinge Außer uns,
und stellen uns solche als äußere Dinger vor? Ist dieß Instinkt, und ist das es
alles, was man davon sagen kann?⁴⁰

Tetens' odd discussion of the perception of hardness also becomes intelligible when it is appreciated within this context. The concern that Tetens raises, that sensations are the material from which ideas are formed, is a deeply odd thing to raise in response to

³⁹I am in agreement with Kuehn on this point. See Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800*, pp. 121-122

⁴⁰Why, then, are our representations not merely sensations of ourselves? How do we distinguish the subjective and objective reality of things, as some people put it, or how do we sense things external to us, and represent external things to ourselves as such? Is this instinct, and is that all that can be said of it? *Philosophische Versuche* V.i, pg. 199-200.

a discussion about the perception of hardness. But Reid's discussion in the chapter "Of Touch" goes much further than this and contains a discussion which is much more likely to be what Tetens is objecting to. Reid's most important discussion in this chapter involves a thought experiment which he calls the *experimentum crucis*:

...suppose a blind man, by some strange distemper, to have lost all the experience and habits, and notions he had got by touch; not to have the least conception of the existence, figure, dimensions, or extension, either of his own body, or of any other; but to have all his knowledge of external things to acquire anew, by means of sensation, and the power of reason, which we suppose to remain entire.⁴¹

Reid then adds a further stipulation: "Suppose his body fixed immovably in one place, and that he can only have the feelings of touch, by the application of other bodies to it." Reid then proceeds to run through several scenarios which yield different kinds of tactile experiences, each time posing the question of whether or not the man would be able to acquire the idea of extension. There are six such scenarios:

1. The man is pricked by a pin.
2. A blunt object is pressed against him with increasing force.
3. The object applied to him touches a larger or lesser part of his body.
4. A body is drawn along his hands or face while they are at rest.
5. He makes some instinctive effort to move his head or his hand (and it fails).
6. He moves a limb instinctively.

⁴¹Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, p. V.vi.65.

In each case, Reid thinks it is clear that the tactile experience involved is not sufficient for the man to abstract the idea of extension. Reid argues that if the “ideal system” fails in this task, then it should be abandoned.⁴²

Tetens’ remark made little sense when it was considered as a response to Reid’s comments on the perception of hardness, but once it is taken into account that a discussion about the abstraction of spatial concepts from tactile experience takes place later in that chapter, such a remark is no longer as mysterious. Tetens’ statement of what he takes to be Reid’s view, that “the sensation has also nothing in common with the perception or idea of hardness,” is actually a restatement of the conclusion Reid tries to establish with the *experimentum crucis*.

In Reid’s *experimentum crucis* discussion, Tetens would have found a challenge on the level of the one he found in Hume’s discussion of causation. Hume demonstrated that there is a problem with accounting for causation given that there is nothing in experience which could account for necessary connection. Reid, similarly, would have demonstrated that there are good reasons to think that sensation alone could not furnish us with spatial concepts. While these might appear to be very different problems, the fact that Tetens adhered to the Leibnizian conception of space means that he would have considered spatial relations to be conceptual as well. A challenge to the sensory status of spatial concepts would have been viewed by Tetens as a broader form of the challenge to relational concepts presented by Hume, and this explains why he would have thought to discuss Reid in passing immediately after concluding with his discussion of Hume in the fourth essay of the *Philosophische Versuche*.

⁴²For further discussion of Reid’s argument, see Nichols, *Thomas Reid’s Theory of Perception*, pp. 77-83; Van Cleve, *Problems From Reid*, pp. 39-45. For a broader discussion of Reid’s views on the perception of hardness, see Lorne Falkenstein. “Hume and Reid on the Perception of Hardness”. In: *Hume Studies* 28.1 (2002), pp. 27-48.

3.4 Answering Reid's Challenge: The Role of Judgment and Object Concepts

There are now two major explanatory challenges on the table for Tetens in his effort to develop a theory of representation which is a viable alternative to Reidian direct realism. The big problem is that posed by sensationism. Given that our representations are all derived from sensations which do not by themselves relate us to objects or resemble them, how is it possible to represent objects? Tetens' solution, which he has hinted at in his response to Hume on causation, and which he will attempt to lay out in the fifth essay of the *Philosophische Versuche*, is that there is a set of concepts which make object representation possible. But as we have just seen, Tetens is faced with the problem of accounting for these concepts given that sensation alone is insufficient to furnish us with them. In order to show how it is that object representation is possible, Tetens must first show us how it is that the concepts required for it can be formed.

Tetens is fully aware of these difficulties and sets out to solve them in *Philosophische Versuche* V., which is titled, "On the Origin of the Fundamental Concepts of the Understanding, which are required for judgments about the existence of things. Concepts of a subject and of properties. Concept of our I as a thing." At the beginning of this section, Tetens poses the question he is attempting to answer:

Die zwote Frage, wie entstehen die allgemeinen Vorstellungen und Begriffe von einem Dinge, von Beschaffenheiten, die in einem Dinge sind, von der Substanz und von Accidenzen, von einem wirklichen Dinge oder Objekt, von unserm Ich, und von äußern Objekten, und von der Inhärenz einer Beschaffenheit in jenem oder in diesem, oder von der subjektivischen und objektivischen

Existenz? ⁴³

Unfortunately for us, Tetens tries to lower our expectations for his answer to this question, telling us that „Ich werde nicht viel mehr als die Grundlinien von dieser fruchtbaren Untersuchung hersetzen, so weit es meine Absicht erfordert; verweise aber auch im übrigen meine Leser auf Locken und Leibnitz.“⁴⁴ This immediately tips us off that what will follow is something of a model for an answer, but not necessarily a complete one. Tetens begins by stating that these fundamental concepts must be present for us to make judgments about objects:

Diese erwehnten Gemeinbegriffe müssen, wie es oben von den sinnlichen Abstraktionen erinnert ist, schon vorhanden seyn, ehe irgend eines von unsern Urtheilen über die Objektivität der Vorstellungen und über die subjektivische und objektivische Wirklichkeit der Objekte zu Stande kommen kann.⁴⁵

With this acknowledged, Tetens recognizes that the important question to ask about these concepts, is how exactly they are abstracted from sensations:

Es ist die Frage, welche Arten von Empfindungen—denn danach richten sich die Vorstellungen—den Stoff dazu ausmachen, und durch weleche Thätigkeiten der verhältnissedenkenden Kraft sie zu Ideen und Gemeinbegriffen zugerichtet werden? Was zunächst die beiden sich auf einander bezihenden Begriffe von einem Dinge und von einer Beschaffenheit eines Dinges betrifft, so läßt sich,

⁴³The second question, how do the general representations and concepts of a thing arise; of substance and of accidents; of a real thing or object; of our I; and of external objects, and of inherence of a property in the former or the latter, or of subjective and objective existence?*Philosophische Versuche* V.v, pg. 206

⁴⁴“I will not do much more than lay out the baselines for this fruitful investigation as far as my purpose requires; I refer my reader to Locke and Leibniz for the rest.” *ibid.*

⁴⁵These above mentioned [erwähnten] common concepts must, as will be recalled from sensory abstractions above, already be present before any one of our judgments about the objectivity of representations and about the subjective and objective reality of objects can come about. *ibid.*

wie ich meine, die Materie zu ihnen in den Empfindungen bald wahrnehmen.⁴⁶

Where Reid denied that certain spatial concepts like extension could be abstracted from sensation, Tetens makes it clear that he thinks that this can actually be done. But Tetens does not simply ignore the *experimentum crucis* when he takes up the opposing position; he accepts Reid's insight that the mere presence of sensations alone will never be sufficient for the abstraction of the relevant concepts. Rather than reject Reid's insight, Tetens tries to show that there are further resources available to solve this problem. When we perceive something, such as looking at a picture, we experience an innumerable number of small and fleeting sensations. Though we can always attend to different sensations within this experience and isolate them, their presence at once is a unified feeling. As Tetens puts it,

Diese Empfindung mag aus einer Menge, und aus einer unzähligen Menge von kleinern Gefühlen bestehen, die auf einander folgen; und jedes auf einmal vorhandene Gefühl mag mehrere einfachere gleichzeitige in sich enthalten, so ist es doch für mich Ein Gefühl, und Ein und derselbige Aktus des Bewußtseyns, womit ich diese Summe von Gefühlen, oder was es ist, zusammennehme, und daher als Eine Empfindung unterscheide. Ich bermerke keine Mannigfaltigkeit in diesem Aktus, und keine Folge, und keine Theile, oder wenn ich sie auch nachher bemerke, so sondere ich solche nicht von einander ab. Sie machen ein vereinigt Ganzes in der Empfindung und in der Wiedervorstellung aus, dessen Theile in Verbindung mit einander vorhanden sind.⁴⁷

⁴⁶It is the question, which types of sensations make up the material for them, and through which activities of the power which cognizes relationships are they prepared into ideas and common concepts? In the first place, concerning the interconnected concepts of a thing and of a property of a thing, I believe the material for them can be perceived in the sensations. *Philosophische Versuche* V.v, pg. 207

⁴⁷This sensation may consist in a mass of weaker feelings and any feeling present at once may contain numerous simpler, simultaneous feelings in itself, but it is nevertheless one feeling for me, and one and the same act of consciousness whereby I gather up [*zusammennehme*] this sum of feelings and distinguish it as one sensation. I notice no manifoldness in this act, and no effect, and no parts; or when I notice them afterwards, I don't separate them from each other. They constitute a unified whole in sensation and in the re-representing [*Wiedervorstellung*] whose parts are present in connection with each other. *ibid.*

This basic fact, that our sensations are presented to us as a unified experience, is something which itself requires explanation; this is not something which simply happens on its own. Rather, it is an act of consciousness which is responsible for these innumerable sensations being taken up and brought together as a single sensation. This entails that merely having sensations, or merely being affected, is not enough to have perceptual experience and that the mind is quite active in making this possible.

Tetens thinks that this provides him with a set of tools to solve the problem of the origin of these object concepts which seemingly cannot be abstracted from mere sensations. Since there is genuine difference between sensations considered on their own and sensations which have been prepared or transformed (*zugerichtet*) into the unified state that they are in when we perceive something, the process by which the mind does this may be able to account for the sorts of relations which are absent in the bare sensations. This is roughly the position that Tetens articulated in the third and fourth essays where he gestured at awareness (*Gewahrnehmen*) as the source of relational concepts.⁴⁸ Here, Tetens gives us a more detailed account of what happens to sensation in this process:

So eine Empfindung, die eine ganze ungetheilte, zugleich vorhandene Empfindung ist, und in der Ein unabgesonderter, mit dem übrigen verreinigter Zug sich vor andern an leichterem Apperceptibilität ausnimmt, ist eine solche, aus der die Denkkraft die Idee von einem Dinge und von einer Beschaffenheit macht. Auf diese Art: Sie unterscheidet das Ganze von andern. Dieß ist der Gedanke: es ist Eine besondere ganze Empfindung, oder Vorstellung. Sie unterscheidet den sich ausnehmenden Zug in diesem Ganzen.⁴⁹

⁴⁸For a more detailed discussion of Tetens on apperception, see Patricia Kitcher. “Analyzing Apperception (*Gewahrnehmen*)”. In: *Johann Nikolaus Tetens (1736-1807): Philosophie in der Tradition des europäischen Empirismus*. Ed. by Gideon Stiening; Udo Thiel. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014, pp. 103–132.

⁴⁹A sensation—which is a total, unseparated, and at the same time present sensation, and in which an unseparated feature united with the others, sets itself off from the others as being more easily apperceived—is such that it is that from which the power of thought makes the idea of thing and of a property of a thing. The power of thought (*die Denkkraft*) distinguishes the whole from others. This is the thought: it is one

When the power of thought (*Denkkraft*) unites the mass of sensations into one, this unified sensation is more easily apperceived, and the thought is formed that this unified sensation is a distinct particular with properties. This is the how the ideas of a thing and the properties of a thing are first formed. But this is not the only thought which arises from this process. Tetens thinks that this process also produces a set new set of relations. He tells us that, „Die Verbindung des unterschiedenen Zuges mit dem Ganzen, erreget den Verhältnißgedanken, ‚daß der Zug in dem Ganzen enthalten sey.‘ Dieß ist eine Beziehung, die zu den Verhältnissen aus der Mitwirklichkeit gehört.”⁵⁰ A part-whole relation between various parts of the unified sensation now emerges and this relationship is that of coexistence.

Tetens continues with his analysis of the relations produced by the power of thought in this act of awareness by returning to the concept of causal connection. After producing the relations of coexistence, the soul begins to think of causal relation [*ursachliche Beziehung*]. As a result, the unified sensation is represented as being dependent on something else—an effect which comes from elsewhere. With each new additional concept formed from these relations, we get closer and closer to representing the the unified sensation as an object. But as Tetens notes, „Aber dieser Zusatz erfordert, daß sie schon Begriffe von mehrern Dingen habe. Im Anfang kann also dieser Gedanke noch nicht vorhanden seyn.”⁵¹ Tetens makes it clear that this is not something that simply happens on its own—we must acquire each of the relevant concepts for the mind to represent the unified sensation. At this point, he summarizes what he thinks he has shown:

Da haben wir nun den Gemeinbegriff eines Dinges, als eines Subjekts, und einer Beschaffenheit, als eines Prädikats, das diesem Subjekte zukommt, und

particular, whole sensation or representation. It distinguishes the distinctive feature in this whole. *ibid.*

⁵⁰The connection of the distinguished feature with the whole gives rise to the relation thought that ‘this feature is contained in the whole.’ This is a connection which belongs to the relationships based on coexistence. *Philosophische Versuche* V.v, pg. 207-208.

⁵¹But this addition requires that [the soul] has concepts of more things already. Thus, in the beginning this thought cannot yet be present. *Philosophische Versuche* V.v, pg. 208.

in ihm ist. Aus allen Empfindungen, die einzeln genommen, ein unzertrenntes Ganze ausmachen, dessen Bestandtheile durch die Koexistenz vereinigt waren, und vereinigt vorgestellt worden sind, und in welchen wiederum etwas unterschieden wird, können die gedachten Abstraktionen von einigem Dinge und dessen Beschaffenheiten, abgezogen werden.⁵²

The idea that there is an act of awareness which unifies sensations and produces new relations from which concepts constitutive of objecthood can be abstracted is Tetens' answer to Reid, but Tetens has by no means provided us with a full account of these concepts.⁵³ After a digression where he discusses Hume's account of the self, Tetens picks this line of thought back up in the next section, appropriately titled „Fortsetzung des Vorhergehenden. Gemeinbegriffe, von einem Objekt, von der Wirklichkeit, von der Substanz.“⁵⁴ This title is important because it is the first time Tetens explicitly notes that he is dealing with concepts of an object. He begins by noting that he has not yet given an exhaustive account of the concepts required to represent something as an object:

Dieser Begriff von einem Subjekt und von einer Beschaffenheit, ist noch nicht der völlige Begriff von einem Dinge, als Objekt oder Gegenstand betrachtet, und noch weniger der Begriff von einer Substanz. Die Begriffe vom Seyn oder Wirklichkeit, und vom Bestehen oder Fortdauern, und von dem Für sich bestehen müssen noch hinzu kommen; und die Denkkraft muß den Verhältnißgedanken von der ursachlichen Verbindung hervorbringen, und ihn mit je-

⁵²There we now have the concept of a thing as a subject and as a property as a predicate, which is assigned to this subject and is in it. From all of the sensations, which taken individually make up an undivided whole whose parts were unified through coexistence and were were represented unified, and in which again something is distinguished, the conceived abstractions of a thing and its properties can be derived. *ibid.*

⁵³For a more detailed discussion of these concepts and their relationship to Kant's categories, see Alexei N. Krouglov. "Tetens Und Die Deduktion der Kategorien Bei Kant". In: *Kant-Studien* 104.4 (2013), pp. 466–489.

⁵⁴“Continuation of the Preceding. Common concepts, of an Object, of Reality, of Substance.” *Philosophische Versuche* V.vi, pg. 210. For more detail on Tetens' and Hume's theory of the self, see Udo Thiel. “Kant and Tetens on the Unity of the Self”. In: *Kant and his German Contemporaries*. Ed. by Corey Dyck and Falk Wunderlich. Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 57–75.

nen Abstraktionen vereinigen.⁵⁵

But even granting that we had these concepts, Tetens immediately makes clear that they alone are not sufficient for object representation without being joined with causal connection. Tetens highlights this by posing a question: „Wie entstehet der Gedanke von einem Objekt, das ist, von einem Dinge, welches von der Empfindung und Vorstellung von ihm unterschieden ist, und jene hervorbringt, oder hervorbringen kann?“⁵⁶ Tetens notes that as soon as we think of a thing with properties, we have the notion of a subject. We then have two components, a sensation and a subject with properties (i.e., a real thing). But what is the third thing which joins of them? Tetens answers that it is causal connection. He emphasizes that we do not take sensations and representations to be the objects these concepts refer to; we presuppose that something beyond the representations is responsible for the occurrence of sensation and that this something still has the power to produce sensations even when we are not there to experience them. This additional something which is beyond the reach of our representations is what the concept of reality [*Wirklichkeit*] picks out.

After referring the reader back to the fourth essay, Tetens continues his discussion of concepts of objects, but it becomes fairly clear that he thinks his point has already been made and he simply gestures towards the details which would be required. He suggests that each new modification of the soul leads it to represent its previous states and that this presents a set of temporal relations from which concepts of existing and persisting can be abstracted.⁵⁷ He suggests that a nearly identical account can be given for spatial concepts before concluding the section with a paragraph dedicated to the concept of substance. He

⁵⁵This concept of a subject and of a property is still not the complete concept of a thing, considered as an object or an entity, and still less the concept of a substance. The concept of being or reality, and of existing and persisting, and of existing for itself, still must be introduced; and the power of thought has to bring forth the thought of relation of causal connection and unite it with those abstractions. *ibid.*

⁵⁶How does the thought of an object originate, that is, of a thing which is distinguished from the sensation and representation of it, and which produces it, or can produce it? *ibid.*

⁵⁷Tetens actually cites Kant in this discussion, but it is not really clear what he is referencing from Kant's work. See *Philosophische Versuche* V.vi, pg. 211.

claims that the material from which the concept of substance could be abstracted must be a sensation which is a whole, and not a part of something else. Seemingly aware that he had previously helped himself to a similar account to explain our conception of a thing and a property of a thing, he stipulates that a sensation occasioning a thing with properties can only furnish us with the matter for a representation of an accident. The feeling from which a concept of substance can be abstracted, must have a certain inner completeness [*gewisse innere Vollständigkeit*] to it so that it can be present for itself [*für sich vorhanden seyn*].⁵⁸

This completes the outline of a solution that Tetens promised his readers. Presumably, Tetens thinks he has given us a complete list of the concepts required to represent something as an object. Though our sensations are non-intentional and do not resemble anything, Tetens thinks he has found a way to explain how it is that our higher level representations can be intentional, despite being derived from sensation. His proposed solution to this problem is to account for the relation between a representation and its object by grounding it in concept application. The significance of this strategy cannot be understated, as it demonstrates that Tetens was aware of the problems with attempting to ground this relation in things themselves. However, as we have seen, this presents a new difficulty, which Reid powerfully demonstrates with his *experimentum crucis*: sensations alone are not sufficient to abstract these sorts of concepts. Tetens proposes to solve this problem with a new understanding of the active role that the understanding takes on in transforming raw sensations. We do not simply experience large numbers of disconnected sensations, one after another—these sensations are presented to us as a unified singular whole, and this provides Tetens with a very powerful toolkit. The very processes by which our perceptual experience is brought together is appealed to in order to explain the presence of relations which can furnish us with these concepts which cannot be abstracted from mere sensation alone.

⁵⁸*Philosophische Versuche* V.vi, pg. 212.

Tetens and Kant's Anticipations of Perception

This chapter picks up on the previous one by examining Kant's Anticipations of Perception in light of the problem posed by sensationism, more specifically, the way in which Tetens tries to solve those explanatory problems in response to Reid. I will discuss several problems with Kant's proof which seeks to establish that the real of appearance possesses intensive magnitude. The central issue in interpreting Kant's proof is that somehow we are supposed to infer from the fact that sensations are capable of being diminished and intensified (they have intensive magnitude) to the real of appearances also having this kind of status. I will discuss the prospects of interpreting it as a causal inference between an effect and a supposed cause, and also an alternative offered by Tim Jankowiak. I raise objections to both, and argue that Tetens once again provides important context for the problem that underlies this chapter.

Tetens' account of the various object concepts in the fifth essay of the *Philosophische Versuche* provides some contextual evidence for thinking that the relationship between sensation and an object perception that is supposed to explain the intentionality of perception cannot be accounted for in terms of causation. This requires the concept of reality to represent something corresponding to our sensation. I argue that once Kant's discussion in the Anticipations is situated in this context, it becomes possible to actually make sense of a transcendental function for the category of reality and that this in turn allows us to understand what is meant by the "correspondence" between sensations and objects. This correspondence relation is established by the category of reality, and the reason that the

real of appearance has intensive magnitude is that sensation is brought into a relation with it. As a result, the same formal features of sensibility also apply to whatever is designated by the sensation, and this means that for there to be a representation of anything, it must have some level of reality that is not reducible to the extensive magnitude produced by successive synthesis of apprehension.

4.1 Kant's Problematic Proof in the Anticipations

The first two chapters of the *Analytic of Principles*, the *Axioms of Intuition* and the *Anticipations of Perception*, are dedicated to establishing that the quantity and quality categories have a transcendental function in experience. Kant labels the principles of these sections the “mathematical principles” to distinguish them from the “dynamical principles” exhibited in the *Analogies of Experience* and the *Postulates of Empirical Thought*. The mathematical principles together are supposed to guarantee the applicability of mathematics to appearances. The *Axioms of Intuition* contains a proof that establishes that “all intuitions are extensive magnitudes” (B201), which means anything represented intuitively will have dimensions where “the representation of the parts makes possible the representation of the whole” (A162/B203). In proving this, Kant is able to establish that any possible object of experience will have dimensions that can be measured. Importantly, Kant does not hold the position of many Cartesians that a mathematical description of an object’s dimensions is capable of yielding an exhaustive description of it. Kant is extremely dismissive of such “mathematical and mechanical students of nature” for holding the unwarranted assumption that the real in space is equally distributed (A173/B215). An exhaustive description of an object would have to allow for the possibility of objects having different degrees of reality—i.e., different intensive magnitudes.

Kant attempts to show this by proving the principle of intensive magnitude which states that “In all appearances the real, which is an object of the sensation, has intensive mag-

nitude, i.e., a degree” (B207). Since this proof is fairly brief, it is worth quoting in its entirety.

Perception is empirical consciousness, i.e., one in which there is at the same time sensation. Appearances, as objects of perception, are not pure (merely formal) intuitions like space and time (for these cannot be perceived in themselves). They therefore also contain in addition to the intuition the materials for some object in general (through which something existing in space or time is represented), i.e., the real of the sensation, as merely subjective representation, by which one can only be conscious that the subject is affected, and which one relates to an object in general. Now from the empirical consciousness to the pure consciousness a gradual alteration is possible, where the real in the former entirely disappears, and a merely formal (*a priori*) consciousness of the manifold in space and time remains; thus there is also a possible synthesis of the generation of the magnitude of a sensation from its beginning, the pure intuition=0, to any arbitrary magnitude. Now since sensation is in itself not an objective representation, and in it neither the intuition of space nor that time is to be encountered, it has, to be sure, no extensive magnitude, but yet it still has a magnitude (and indeed through its apprehension, in which the empirical consciousness can grow in a certain time from nothing=0 to its given measure), thus it has an intensive magnitude, corresponding to which all objects of perception, insofar as they contain sensation, must be ascribed an intensive magnitude, i.e., a degree of influence on sense. (A165/B207-208)

The argument can thus be summarized into three major moves. First, Kant lays out his definitions to show that sensation corresponds to the matter of appearance. Second, he points out that sensations are intensive magnitudes. Third, and finally, he concludes with his principle. The argumentative work is done by the inference from sensations being

intensive magnitudes to the real of appearances being intensive magnitudes in transition from the second part of the argument to the conclusion.

Unsurprisingly, this is where most commentators have taken issue with Kant's proof. The objections raised against this inference seem to come from two different angles. The first set of objections question whether an inference like this is consistent with the overall project of the *Analytic of Principles*. Most notably, Jonathan Bennett and Paul Guyer both raise the objection that this move relies on an empirical claim about our sensations to reach an *a priori* conclusion about the nature of appearances.¹ Even if it is true that our sensations possess degrees of intensity along a continuum, as an empirical claim this would be contingent, and Kant's principle of intensive magnitude would not possess the status of being a synthetic *a priori* truth. More recently, Daniel Warren has charged Kant with circularity with respect to the claim that sensations are intensive magnitudes. Warren argues that Kant supports this claim by appealing to the possibility of sensations being diminished until reaching a vanishing point in the *Anticipations*, when he had argued in the opposite direction—that since sensations are capable of being diminished they must be intensive magnitudes—in the *Schematism* (A143/B183).²

The objection from Bennett and Guyer is serious, and as we shall see in moment, it presents a significant obstacle to the most straightforward way of interpreting the inference. For the moment, I believe it will suffice to say that any interpretation that avoids construing this as an inference from an empirical premise will be considerably easier to situate within the project of the *Transcendental Analytic*. Warren's objection can be resolved by relieving the tension between the descriptions of sensations as intensive magnitudes in the *Schematism* and the *Anticipations*. It isn't obvious that Kant is really using the claim that sensations can be diminished to support the claim that sensations are intensive magni-

¹See (Bennett, *Kant's Analytic*, p. 172; Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, p. 204)

²See Daniel Warren. *Reality and Impenetrability in Kant's Philosophy of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 2001, pp. 15-16.

tudes in the Anticipations, or that he is using the claim that sensations are intensive magnitudes to support that they are capable of being diminished in the Schematism. Rather, as Tim Jankowiak has pointed out, for a sensation to be capable of being diminished simply is what is meant by saying it is an intensive magnitude. There is no circularity because neither claim is supporting the other in the form of an inference—they are equivalent statements.³

The second set of objections are about the nature of the inference itself. Since Kant has virtually nothing to say about how this inference is justified, it is not in any way obvious what kind of inference this is supposed to be. One straightforward way to interpret Kant's move here is to take it as a sort of causal inference as Lorne Falkenstein has done:

The real of appearance is a 'consequence' of the real of sensation in the sense that we ascribe a certain degree of reality (a certain attractive force or impenetrability) to the appearance corresponding to the degree of reality (the intensity of sensible quality) evidenced by the sensation. We make this ascription because we take the reality of the appearance to be the cause of the reality of the sensation, so that, in ascribing reality to the appearance as a consequence of the reality of the sensation, we are reasoning back from effect to cause.⁴

If this is how Kant is filling the gap between sensations as intensive magnitudes and the real of appearances possessing intensive magnitudes, then Kant faces a number of immediate problems. If the real in appearances possessing intensive magnitude is to explain sensation possessing intensive magnitude, then we would need some reason to think that this fact about appearances is the only thing that could cause sensations to possess this quality; if there are other plausible explanations, then this inference will never be strong enough to fill the gap in the proof. Kant was aware of precisely this problem with infer-

³See Tim Jankowiak. "Kant's Argument for the Principle of Intensive Magnitudes". In: *Kantian Review* 18.3 (2013), pp. 387–412, pp. 395-396.

⁴Lorne Falkenstein. *Kant's Intuitionism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004, p. 117. (Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, p. 200) also construes the argument as a causal inference.

ences from effect to cause, as he appeals to it in his criticism the Fourth Paralogism: “But now the inference from a given effect to its determinate cause is always uncertain, since the effect can have arisen from more than one cause” (A368). An even greater problem is that Kant allows for the possibility of explaining the different intensities of sensations by appealing to the different extensive magnitudes of their causes which is to effectively grant the existence of counterexamples.⁵ Last but not least, on this interpretation the inference would be empirical and the issue raised earlier about whether or not an argument resting on empirical premises has any place in the Analytic rightfully reemerges.

4.2 Jankowiak’s Sensory Constitution Interpretation

A more recent proposal for interpreting the problematic inference in Kant’s proof for the principle of intensive magnitude has been offered by Tim Jankowiak. Jankowiak calls this the “Sensory Constitution Interpretation” and offers it as an alternative to the problematic causal interpretation discussed earlier. What is particularly intriguing about Jankowiak’s reconstruction of the proof is the manner in which he attempts to fill the gap between sensations possessing intensive magnitudes and the real of appearance possessing intensive magnitudes. Jankowiak argues that the causal interpretation gets the dependency relation between these two claims backwards. The intensive magnitude of sensation does not depend on the intensive magnitude of appearance; the intensive magnitude of the appearance depends on the intensive magnitude of sensation.⁶ This has the potential to render Kant’s proof intelligible while sidestepping the classic objections.

Jankowiak proposes that we can clarify the sense of correspondence between sensations and the real of appearances asserted in Kant’s principle of intensive magnitude by

⁵See *Metaphysik Volckmann* (28: 424-425) quoted in (Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, pp. 199-200) along with Guyer’s discussion of that passage. Also see (Jankowiak, “Kant’s Argument for the Principle of Intensive Magnitudes”)[397-398]

⁶(Jankowiak, “Kant’s Argument for the Principle of Intensive Magnitudes”, p. 399)

appealing to Kant's discussion of empirical intuition in the Transcendental Aesthetic. In particular, he appeals to a number of claims at A20/B34, including the definition of an empirical intuition as an intuition that refers to an object "through sensation," with that object being "undetermined" and also Kant's claim that the matter of appearance is that which "corresponds to sensation." He also cites Kant distinguishing the form and matter of intuition, with "matter" including "everything that belongs to sensation" (A22/B36). Since these claims are extremely similar to what Kant says of perception in the Anticipations, Jankowiak argues that we can profitably read "empirical intuition" where we see "perception" in the Anticipations which gives us more resources to clarify the proof. The major upshot of this is that Jankowiak can offer an explanation of how sensations relate to the real of appearances as their object, particularly the mysterious claim at B208 that the objects of perception contain sensation. His reconstruction of the proof runs as follows:

1. Sensations (specifically, the qualities thereof) have intensive magnitudes.
2. The qualities of the sensations constituting an intuition are identical to the qualities represented by the intuition.
3. The qualities represented by the intuition are identical to the real in the appearance.
4. Therefore, the real of appearance has intensive magnitude.⁷

The first premise is a straightforward statement of Kant's position that sensations have intensive magnitude. The second premise asserts an identity relation between the features of the sensations contained in an intuition and the features represented by the intuition. The third premise asserts an identity relation between the features represented in intuition and the real in appearance. Thus, the argument as stated has the form "is: $a=b$, $b=c$, a is F, therefore c is F."⁸ The argument is obviously valid, and it shows a clear way to plug the hole

⁷(Jankowiak, "Kant's Argument for the Principle of Intensive Magnitudes", p. 400)

⁸Ibid pg. 403

between sensations possessing intensive magnitude and the real of appearance possessing intensive magnitude while avoiding the objections raised against the causal interpretation.

While I believe this interpretation sheds some new light on an obscure argument, I'm not convinced that it doesn't fall prey to a number of difficulties that are as serious as the ones it sidesteps. Perhaps the most immediate problem with the Sensory Constitution Interpretation is that since the gap between sensation and the real of appearance is plugged entirely with premises expressing identity relations, the conclusion becomes so trivial that it is hard to see why Kant would bother to prove it. Quite literally, we can be assured that the real of appearance has intensive magnitude because sensations do and "the real of appearance" is just another name for sensations. Where Bennett and Guyer objected that this proof had no place in the *Transcendental Analytic* because it seemed to rely on an empirical premise which prevented the conclusion from ever having the synthetic *a priori* status it should have, a corresponding worry should be raised that a proof consisting of identity relations should be equally unwelcome on the grounds that the conclusion might be analytically true.⁹

There are a number of interpretive assumptions underlying this argument that go unsupported and are anything but obvious. The most notable of these is that the texts support a clean identity relation between sensations and the matter of appearance. One of Jankowiak's major aims laid out prior to reconstructing the proof was to explain how to make sense of the "correspondence" between sensations and the real of appearances. He cites Kant's "mysterious claim" at B208 that "appearances contain sensation" which is odd because B208 does not literally say this in the Guyer-Wood translation. The phrase being referenced, as it appears in that translation is "all objects of perception, insofar as they contain sensation..." (B208). Since Kant has already said that appearances are the objects of perception at B207, Jankowiak has said nothing that is inconsistent with the text as it is

⁹This is assuming that the claim that sensations possess intensive magnitude isn't an empirical claim as Jankowiak argues fairly persuasively earlier in his paper, see pg. 394-396

translated. The problem is that this phrase, the clarification of which was a primary aim of this interpretation, has been mistranslated:

Da nun Empfindung an sich gar keine objektive Vorstellung ist, und in ihr weder die Anschauung vom Raum, noch von der Zeit, angetroffen wird, so wird ihr zwar keine extensive, aber doch eine Größe und zwar durch die Apprehension derselben, in welcher das empirische Bewußtsein in einer gewissen Zeit von nichts=0 bis zu ihrem gegebenen Maße erwachsen kann, also eine intensive Größe zukommen, welcher korrespondierend allen Objekten der Wahrnehmung, so fern diese Empfindung enthält, intensive Größe, d.i. ein Grad des Einflusses auf den Sinn, beigelegt werden muß. (B208)

The relevant part is the phrase „so fern diese Empfindung enthält,” specifically what *diese* is referring back to in the previous clause. The Guyer-Wood translation takes *diese* to refer to *Objekten*, but the verb *enthalten* in the clause is conjugated as a third person singular. Since the verb is singular, its subject cannot be a plural. Therefore, it makes far more sense to take *diese* in this clause to be referring back to *Wahrnehmung*. In terms of how this impacts an English translation, this is the difference between “insofar as the objects contain sensation” or “insofar as perception contains sensation.” This drastically alters the meaning of the passage as one rendering implies that the objects of perception are composed of sensation and the other implies that perceptions are something different from the objects of perception.¹⁰

Since so much of Jankowiak’s interpretation rests on the matter of appearance being composed of sensation, this is a major problem. But even more problematic is that Kant has a habit of speaking as if perceptions and the objects of perception are distinct from each other.¹¹ Oddly, this is most striking in this chapter. Kant does not say that the real

¹⁰Both Kemp Smith and Pluhar took *diese* to refer to *Wahrnehmung*. (Falkenstein, *Kant’s Intuitionism*, p. 107) also translates the passage similarly.

¹¹See Falkenstein, *Kant’s Intuitionism*, pp. 107-109 for a discussion of this. (Wayne Waxman. *Kant’s*

of appearances is made out of sensations; he correlates sensations with objects.¹² The principle of intensive magnitude, in both editions, is most literally read as taking sensations and their objects to be distinct from each other. Though we still don't know what Kant means by the relation of *correspondence*, it seems straightforwardly to not be *identity*.

4.3 Bridging the Gap

The central difficulty in interpreting Kant's proof is that he gives us very little insight into the nature of the problem underlying it. We know from the outset that Kant distinguishes extensive and intensive magnitudes and that he takes himself to have already dealt with the former, but this alone tells us very little about the latter. Almost nothing is obvious from either the principle or the proof itself about role the quality categories are supposed to play in the wider account of cognition offered in the *Analytic of Principles*. Unfortunately, the discussion which follows the proof is both repetitive and uninformative.

Kant does, however, appear to leave us two clues in the discussion about the importance of the proof. The first is that it seems to be closely tied to his discussion of the synthesis of apprehension, where a manifold in intuition is taken together and unified. Kant tells us that "Apprehension, merely by means of sensation, fills only an instant (if I do not take into consideration the succession of many sensations). As something in the appearance, the apprehension of which is not a successive synthesis, proceeding from the parts to the whole representation, it therefore has no extensive magnitude..." (A167/B209). Since Kant thinks

Anatomy of the Intelligent Mind. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)[82-83] also denies that sensations are identical to appearances.

¹²I know of two exceptions to this. First, there is remark in the Fourth Paralogism in A-edition that implies that appearances are representations whose objects lack existence apart from those representation (A370), which appears to grant appearances the same sort of status that sensations have. This passage is cut out entirely in the B-edition. Second, in the *Metaphysik Mrongovious*, Kant says that "The matter of all appearance is sensation, and what corresponds to it is the real" (29:829). Since these are lecture notes, Kant could easily be misspeaking here. It's also worth noting that these lectures were given in 1782-1783, before the B-edition of the First Critique.

that representations of space and time are produced through this synthesis (A99-100), it seems to follow that there must be something there to be combined in the first place which is not itself produced by combination of parts into a whole. Thus, something else remains to be accounted for beyond the extensive magnitude of intuition. But this really doesn't tell us very much that we didn't know before from either his discussion of apprehension or his discussion of extensive magnitude in the Axioms of Intuition and it yields the impression that this discussion is here merely for the sake of completeness.

The second clue is something that I mentioned briefly earlier: a discussion of the Cartesian theory of matter at the end of the chapter. Kant points out that most natural philosophers have noted a difference in the quantity of matter of various sorts even though they share the same volume, but he takes issue with the explanation they give for this, which accounts for these differences in terms of empty space within the volume. Kant tells us that, "they assume that the real in space is everywhere one and the same, and can be differentiated only according to its extensive magnitude, i.e., amount" (A173-B215). In direct opposition to this assumption, Kant states that he has given a transcendental proof which runs against it. This gives the impression that Kant's primary aim in this chapter is to carve out room for the dynamical theory of matter. Unsurprisingly, this brief discussion has encouraged commentators to take this as Kant's primary aim for the chapter and they have not evaluated him favorably. Robert Paul Wolff bluntly claims that, "[Kant's] desire to establish the dynamical theory of matter leads him to claim more than he ought, on his own view, to be able to prove."¹³

Though this is as close as we get to a statement of the motivation behind this chapter, it is still not particularly helpful. The discussion of the dynamical theory of matter takes place across two pages at the end of the chapter and does not seem particularly well connected to anything else he discusses. Oddly, the way Kant discusses the dynamical theory suggests

¹³See Wolff, *Kant's Theory of Mental Activity*, p. 238.

that it may be something of an afterthought:

My aim here is by no means to assert that this is how it really is concerning the specific gravity of the variety of matters, but only to establish, on the basis of a principle of pure understanding, that the nature of our perceptions makes an explanation of this sort possible and that it is false to assume that the real in appearance is always equal in degree and differs only in aggregation and its extensive magnitude, especially when this is allegedly asserted on the basis of a principle of understanding *a priori*. (A175/B216)

This passage suggests that Kant's aims here are actually far more modest. His "proof" is not so much a demonstration that the Cartesians are wrong about their theory of matter, but rather a demonstration that they were not entitled to simply assume that matter is evenly distributed in space because there is another possibility, which he articulates. Even then, this discussion is completely dwarfed by his repetitive statements about sensations and the real which corresponds to them possessing degrees of reality. This leaves one with the impression that the implications of the proof for the dispute over matter is a secondary concern and not the immediate one.

If making room for the dynamical theory of matter is not the primary aim of the proof, but a secondary advantage to be had once it has already been demonstrated, then the question of the primary aim of the proof still remains. Since the categories are concepts of an object in general, and each chapter of the *Analytic of Principles* aims to exhibit the transcendental role of a class of categories, then the following question must be answered: what transcendental function do the quality categories, specifically the category of reality, perform in cognition? This turns out to be a fairly difficult question. Unlike the other chapters in the *Analytic of Principles*, where it is usually clear that each of the discussed categories has a function in cognition which is at least somewhat intelligible, the quality categories are more elusive.

In the Schematism, Kant briefly defines the category of reality as the "pure concept of

the understanding that to which a sensation in general corresponds, that therefore, the concept of which in itself indicates a being (in time).” Kant says the opposite about negation: it is a concept of a non-being in time (A143/B182). This makes it clear that the notion of correspondence which is at the heart of Kant’s proof in the Anticipations is also closely linked to the categories of reality and negation, which are defined in terms of it. But while it seems obvious that this correspondence is important, it is not at all obvious what importance it has for cognition.

Fortunately, as we have seen, Kant is not the only German philosopher in this period to have a discussion of the concept of reality and its role in cognition. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Tetens gives an account of the role of object concepts in making the representation of objects possible, and then proceeds to offer a brief sketch of the contribution of each of these concepts. Reality is one of these concepts, and Tetens suggests that it is one of several which is required for us to be able to represent an object. In particular, Tetens lists reality as one of the concepts beyond that of a subject and its properties, which must jointly be employed to represent something as an object.¹⁴ What is most striking about this discussion is that Tetens makes a point to separate out reality from causation in his discussion of these concepts. Though causal connection is necessary for object representation, it is not sufficient for establishing the relation. Tetens poses the question: „Wie entstehet der Gedanke von einem Objekt, das ist, von einem Dinge, welches von der Empfindung und Vorstellung von ihm unterschieden ist, und jene hervorbringet, oder hervorbringen kann?“¹⁵ Tetens points out that we can think of a thing with properties, and that this gives us a notion of a subject. But in order to represent an object, a sensation must be brought into a relation with that thing. The concept of a cause makes it possible for us to take our sensations to be dependent on that thing, which is said to produce it. While this might seem to be enough to

¹⁴*Philosophische Versuche* V.vi. pg. 210.

¹⁵How does the thought of an object originate, that is, of a thing which is distinguished from the sensation and representation of it, and which produces it, or can produce it? *ibid.*

establish a relation between sensation and object, Tetens thinks that the concept of reality is required to represent the existence of something which is beyond our representations.

Tetens discussion of these concepts, though brief, makes two things clear that are not obvious from Kant's discussion in the Anticipations: (1) The concept of reality is involved in establishing a relation between a sensation and an object, and (2) that causation is not sufficient to establish this kind of relation. In fact, (2) seems to be held by each of the sensationist philosophers in this period. Malebranche's account of vision in *God, Condillac's* discussions in the *Essay* and the *Treatise*, and Reid's account of sensations as natural signs all take for granted that causation is not what grounds the intentionality of perception.¹⁶ This provides a further contextual reason to avoid attributing a causal inference from sensations to the real of appearances in Kant's proof. When Kant is placed in this context, the issue of the correspondence relation between sensation and the real of appearances becomes more tangible.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the fact that sensation is ever able to indicate the presence of anything is itself something that requires explanation when one holds the view that sensations are non-intentional states, as Kant does.¹⁷ On the larger scale, this problem is dealt with in the Deduction, but it persists at the level of specific categories. In thinking that the categories, as concepts of an object in general, are what enables us to represent objects, there still remains a set of questions about the function of each of these categories. The category of reality can be seen as that which establishes the relation of correspondence between a sensation and an object, which is consistent with Kant's definition of the concept in the Schematism.

When Kant's proof in the Anticipations is situated in the context of Tetens' discussion

¹⁶See my discussions of Malebranche, Condillac, Reid, and Tetens in the previous chapter. Also see Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*, p. 68.

¹⁷Kant even explicitly states this in the proof of the Anticipations: "...the real of the sensation, as merely subjective representation, by which one can only be conscious that the subject is affected, and which one relates to an object in general." (A165/B207-208)

of the concept of reality in the fifth essay of the *Philosophische Versuche*, a new interpretative option emerges with respect to the gap in the proof. Tetens makes it clear that there is not only a need for a non-causal correspondence relation between sensations and objects, but also that this relation can be accounted for by the application of the concept of reality. If Kant is interpreted along these lines, then we now have an alternative to the options of taking the status of sensations to be dependent on the status of the real of appearances or taking the real of appearances to be dependent on the status of sensation. The alternative is that both sensation and the real of appearances possess this status as a result of the relation established by the application of the category. This makes it the case that the real of appearance, through being linked to sensation in the synthesis of the manifold, must also be ordered by the forms of intuition. Just as it is the case that intuition must be represented as having some kind of reality that is not extensive (produced by combining parts into a whole), real of appearance must as well possess non-extensive magnitude if anything is to be represented.

This has the advantage of granting the category of reality a significant transcendental function in Kant's broader account of cognition, while also avoiding some of the interpretive obstacles facing the causal interpretation and Jankowiak's Sensory Constitution Interpretation. Most importantly, it contributes to a partial solution to a problem that Kant has, regardless if it gets directly in the Anticipations or not. Insofar as Kant thinks that sensations are non-intentional states, he must have an account of a process by which they can be brought into a relation to some object so that the intentionality of perceptual experience can be accounted for. And while the Deduction can be said to accomplish this with respect to the categories as a group, Kant still owes us an account of the transcendental function of particular categories and there seem to be contextual reasons to think that sensation must relate to an object in a way that is not simply reducible to sensation.

Conclusion

My aim in this dissertation has been to illustrate the importance of context for interpreting Kant's theoretical philosophy and to draw specific attention to the work of Tetens as a particularly valuable example of this context. It is important to remember that Kant is not simply difficult to interpret because his arguments are complicated; he is difficult to interpret because the problems that he is grappling with are particularly opaque to most of us reading him today. A significant part of this difficulty is that the work of Kant's contemporaries is not nearly as well known as that of Kant himself. As a result of this, the motivations and concerns driving German philosophical discussions in this time period are greatly obscured. The best way to remedy this is to take the time to examine the work of philosophers who participated in the same philosophical scene as Kant. As someone who was engaged in a similar project to Kant and who seems to have influenced Kant's development in the decade leading up to the publication of the first *Critique*, Tetens is arguably the most important of Kant's contemporaries to examine.

In the previous four chapters, I argued that several aspects of Kant's theoretical philosophy can be illuminated by viewing them in the context of Tetens' work. I began by arguing that Tetens' criticism of the methodology of Reid and the Scottish common sense philosophers, along with his subsequent attempt to articulate his own approach, gives us a model for understanding Kant's approach to philosophical problems. Tetens, as I argued earlier, develops an account of how philosophy should be done that borrows heavily from Reid and incorporates it into a broadly Wolffian approach. The result is an approach which accepts the need for a common sense starting point for philosophical inquiry while maintaining the status of theoretical knowledge as its goal. This approach, which Tetens refers

to as “transcendent philosophy,” is consistent with Kant’s methodology in the *Critique* and provides us with a useful lens through which to look at Kant. Most importantly, Tetens’ approach provides us with a way to situate Kant’s relation to skepticism which avoids the dual pitfalls of interpreting Kant as primarily interested in refuting skepticism and completely divorcing Kant from any concern with skepticism. With Tetens’ work as context, Kant is more easily seen as treating skeptical problems as explanatory problems to be solved.

This is most clearly exhibited in my examination of Tetens’ influence on the Kant-Hume relationship in the second chapter. After examining the complicated issue of trying to date Hume’s influence on Kant, I argued that Tetens’ discussion and critique of Hume on causation is particularly valuable with respect to understanding Kant’s interpretation of Hume. Tetens is useful here, not simply as evidence about prevailing attitudes about Hume’s work in Germany at this time, but as an example of a line of criticism that Kant would later take up. The examination of Tetens’ discussion of Hume makes it clear that Kant’s response to Hume is not one of a kind, as it is often treated. When Kant’s comments on Hume are recognized as being in line with those of Tetens, a certain feature of Kant’s response is thereby highlighted: it is actually double-sided. There is a negative side, where both Kant and Tetens raise extremely similar objections to Humean causation, but there is also a positive side where it is recognized that Hume’s discussion raises a genuine problem to be solved. Though they give very different accounts, Kant and Tetens both attempt to solve this problem by providing an alternative account of causation.

This is something that has been largely overlooked in the discussions of Kant’s relation to Hume, which have been dominated by controversy over what an appropriate Kantian response to Hume would amount to. As the dispute between Eric Watkins and Brian Chance illustrates, Tetens has been appealed to in order to support the view that Kant would not have felt a need to refute Hume and also the opposing view, which holds that the inadequacies of Tetens’ discussion would have made such a response all the more pressing for Kant. But what has gone unappreciated is the extent to which Kant is actually following Tetens

here and that his response to Hume is not only in line with Tetens, but is a refinement of it. Appreciating this allows us to reframe the Kant-Hume relationship in a more nuanced way than the traditional controversy has allowed.

Tetens approach is also clearly exhibited in his engagement with Reid on perception, which is the subject of my third chapter. Tetens clearly accepted a great deal of Reid's discussions on perception, including his denial that sensations resemble objects. But Tetens was not willing to abandon the theory of ideas as a result of Reid's attack on it, and engages with Reid in a way very similar to how he engaged with Hume. He treats Reid as presenting a set of explanatory challenges to be solved with a new account of mental representation. He attempts to explain how it is that representations which are derived from non-intentional sensations can be representations of objects by appealing to our judgments about objects. Tetens grounds object representation on the application of a set of object-concepts which must be employed for anything to be taken as an object.

As Tetens quickly realizes, this raises a new set of questions that must be resolved. If our sensations do not resemble anything or relate us to anything, how is it that such concepts can be abstracted from them? Once again, Tetens finds a new explanatory puzzle in Reid: the *experimentum crucis*. For Tetens, Reid's thought experiment presents a serious challenge to our ability to abstract spatial concepts from our sensations and this problem seems generalizable to other object-concepts as a group. This requires Tetens to give an account of how such concepts can be abstracted from sensations that appear to be insufficient for this task. His solution, which gets crudely worked out in the fifth essay, is that the mind, through an act of awareness, unifies masses of poorly perceived sensations and that this act produces a new set of relations which are the material for these object concepts.

This second discussion is highly relevant to Kant, even if the Reidian influences on it are not. Tetens' discussion shows that the problem of explaining how object representation is possible, is not a uniquely Kantian problem. It is a problem that is driven by the view that sensations are non-intentional mental states which cannot alone account for a perceiver's

relation to an object perceived. In the third chapter, I discussed the motivations for this understanding of sensation and the ways in which it shapes the views of Malebranche, Condillac, and Reid on perception. But it is Tetens that is the closest to Kant in terms of the formulation of the problem that Kant would take up in the Deduction and it is Tetens that presents Kant with a road map towards a solution.

Tetens very clearly picks up on a major difficulty for any theory of representation. Since our representations are derived from sensations which themselves do not resemble or relate us to objects, we cannot appeal to objects as they are in themselves to ground or explain features of representation. As a result, the notions of object and objectivity must be redefined in terms of features of the perceiver. This is clearly exhibited in both the fifth and seventh essays. The seventh essay is quite explicit about the need to do this because there Tetens attempts to redefine objectivity in terms of changing and unchanging subjectivity. Thus, Tetens can valuably be seen as providing a clear exposition of a philosophical problem that Kant would later address and also as providing a crude model of a solution to it.

In my fourth chapter, I argued that Tetens' discussion of object concepts in the fifth essay can provide us with some clues to the motivations underlying Kant's discussion in the Anticipations of Perception. In this chapter, Kant attempts to prove that the real of appearances possesses intensive magnitude. He relies on an inference from the fact that sensation possesses intensive magnitude. This is particularly problematic inference because it appears to be an inference from an effect to a cause, but it is unclear that such an inference is defensible or that it has any place in the *Analytic of Principles*. I also argued against another interpretative option which attempts to bridge the gap by holding the real of appearances to be identical to sensations on the grounds that such an identity relation does not fit the text given Kant's care in distinguishing sensations from the objects said to "correspond" to them.

As noted in my discussion, one particularly frustrating feature of this chapter is that it is supposed to exhibit the transcendental function of the quality categories, but Kant says very

little about these categories and the role that they play in cognition. It is here that Tetens can potentially be quite useful because he also discusses the concept of reality in the fifth essay. What is interesting about Tetens' discussion is that he does not think that causality is sufficient to establish a relation between a sensation and an object and presents reality as a further requisite concept. This furnishes us with a possible clue to Kant's motivations in the Anticipations. Insofar as the category of reality is supposed to be the concept of something corresponding to a sensation, Kant's category of reality appears to have the same role as Tetens' concept of reality—they establish a relation between a sensation and an object. While I do think this interpretation is imperfect, it does at least provide us with a reason to think that the quality categories are important to cognition and not simply a convenient excuse for Kant to leave room for the dynamical theory of matter.

While I hope that these chapters are useful contributions to ongoing problems in the literature, I recognize that there will always be considerable room for disagreement on any of these topics. Even so, once the range of viable reconstructions of Kant's arguments from the text alone is exhausted and a set of entrenched interpretations becomes locked in place, our best chance of mediating any of these disputes is to go beyond the text itself and to appeal to further context. With respect to context for Kant's work leading up to the publication of the first Critique, one would be hard pressed to find anyone who is more relevant to Kant's aims than Tetens.

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Fall 2015	Phil 1305F: Questions of the Day, Dr. Dean Proessel
Winter 2016	Phil 1305G: Questions of the Day, Dr. Ryan Robb
2016-2017	Phil 1020: Introduction to Philosophy, Professor Dennis Klimchuk

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Fall 2018	PHI 111: Logic and PHI 212: Ethics
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