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continental point of view)

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# Reid as a pre-Kantian critical philosopher (from the continental point of view)

Bogusław Henryk Wójcik

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From the continental point of view, Thomas Reid is a minor Scottish philosopher associated with the concept of common sense.<sup>1</sup> Usually during a basic course of early modern philosophy in continental Europe there is no position 'Reid'. He is definitely not mentioned amongst such classics as Descartes, Pascal, Spinoza, Locke, Malebranche, Leibniz, Berkeley and Hume. Reid is usually briefly portrayed as a common sense philosopher, without specifying what this 'common sense' is, and which is even more important, without mentioning that in his philosophy 'common sense' works as a technical term that has different connotations than those of the ordinary language. This obviously leads to many misunderstandings. For 'an ordinary continental historian of philosophy' a statement that Reid's common sense epistemology, which predates German criticism, is similar to Kant's transcendental idealism, is absurd or implausible at best. This paper brings up several testimonies about similarities between Kant and Reid, and aims to show that in key elements constituting German criticism, both philosophers were unanimous.

However, before we can proceed further, we must devote a moment

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<sup>1</sup> To back up thesis that the continental Europe is quite ignorant when it comes to Thomas Reid's philosophy, I have conducted small statistical comparison. I have compared the numbers of monographs about Thomas Reid's philosophy published in native languages of the six most populated countries of central and western Europe that could be found in general catalogues of the best non-technical and non-medical universities, according to Webometrics Ranking of World Universities maintained by Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas in Spain. Universities of Bologna, Paris and Warsaw had each two positions matching my criteria. Universities of Berlin and Madrid had each three positions matching my criteria. A search in the general catalogue of Cambridge University returned 20 positions. The comparison was conducted on 15 March 2010. Of course this does not mean that these numbers are fully adequate. Some rare positions might not have been stored in the listed libraries or have been inadequately catalogued. Other important and influential interpretations of Reid's philosophy might have appeared as a chapter in a general philosophy book or paper in a forgotten journal. The huge disproportion can be also explained by the fact of English being the second most spoken language after Chinese. Despite all of this, however, it is safe to assume that acknowledgment of Reid in the continental Europe is extremely limited.

to establishing what the German criticism is. Like every commonly used technical term, 'criticism' has many definitions, none of which is generally accepted. In the meaning that interests us most it usually refers to Kant's philosophy after the first *Critique*, neo-Kantianism and sometimes also to Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. Therefore, in this paper by 'criticism' I will refer to the tradition of philosophy that questions the cognitive powers of man and analyses conditions, prerequisites, and limitations of cognition in general, and acknowledges their role in the process of the creation of the object of cognition. To decide whether in his epistemological beliefs Reid is a pre-Kantian criticist, we will need to compare *a priori* principles of both philosophies and analyse their role in the overall process of perception and cognition. If it turns out that the major *a priori* principles of Kant and Reid are convergent and have similar roles in the overall process of cognition and, most importantly, in the creation of perceived objects, then we will have positive argument for the main thesis of this paper.

Sir William Hamilton, last notable member of the Scottish school of common sense, was probably the greatest advocate of the conciliation between the philosophy of common sense and Kantian criticism. In an editorial footnote to Reid's *Essay on Quantity*, Hamilton wrote about their similarities.

The doctrines of both, however different in external character and in particular opinions, were of a kindred spirit: they had a common origin, as recoils against the scepticism of Hume; the same dominant result, in the establishment of certain ultimate laws of speculation and practice; and the same tendency, in restraining the intellectual pride, and elevating the moral dignity of man. Each, in a different sphere, was at the head of a great scientific determination; both were distinguished rather for philosophical originality and independence, than for the extent of their philosophical learning; and, finally, (may I add?) both were Scotchmen—Reid by birth, Kant (Cant) by proximate descent.<sup>2</sup>

Hamilton's assertion about Kant's Scottish ancestry may raise suspicions of bias, even though Kant, according to Manfred Kuehn, occasionally boasted about it.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Hamilton was enthusiastic about Kant and Reid.

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Reid, *An essay on quantity*, in William Hamilton (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Reid*, Vol. II (Edinburgh, 1872), 715–20.

<sup>3</sup> Manfred Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768–1800: A Contribution to the*

Both these philosophers were mentally close to him, and thus it might be better to hear testimony of someone more critical or even judgmental about them. German philosopher Franz Brentano, teacher of Alexius Meinong and Edmund Husserl, is ideal for this task.

Famous Kantian criticism, which, as many people think, has made philosophy strictly scientific, in fact did much less. It resulted only in philosophy of superstitions instead of scientific philosophy, or even aiming to be such. Kant is so characteristic, and in his terminology he is so different than Reid, that for many people it is impossible to see similarity of these two thinkers.<sup>4</sup>

Brentano brings up a very important point here. It is not easy to compare a philosopher who uses terms such as ‘transcendental unity of apperception’ to refer to consciousness with a common sense philosopher, who stick to ordinary language. It is even harder to see that transcendental *Formen der Anschauung* and categories are entailed in Reidian principles of common sense. Nonetheless, Brentano and Hamilton weren’t the only nineteenth century scholars who saw similarity between Kant and Reid.

One of the most curious testimonies is the conspiracy theory of Russian positivist Matvei Troitsky, who was professor at University of Moscow. In his book, *German psychology* published in 1867, he argued that Kant built his theory completely upon Reid’s epistemology and that German historians, because of their chauvinism, had kept this secret.<sup>5</sup> Let us consider this radical hypothesis. Reid, born in 1710, was fourteen years older than Kant. He started his philosophical career slightly earlier and published his first major work containing the core of his epistemology, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, in 1764. By comparison, Kant published his first major critical work *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* in 1781. This leaves around seventeen years in which Kant could have read Reid and could have been influenced by him, providing that he knew English at all. German historian of philosophy Karl Groos, in his paper *Hat Kant Hume’s Treatise gelesen?*, elaborates on this problem.<sup>6</sup>

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*History of Critical Philosophy* (Quebec, 1987), 169.

<sup>4</sup> Franz Brentano, *Versuch über die Erkenntnis* (Leipzig, 1925), 3–4.

<sup>5</sup> T. Gościcki, ‘Kant a Tomasz Reid’, *Kwartalnik Filozoficzny*, VII (1930), 275–95, at 278.

<sup>6</sup> In this passage Groos mentions Reinhold Bernhard Jachmann (1767–1843) and Benno Erdmann (1851–1921).

It is doubtful that Kant knew English at all.... Erdmann takes for granted Kant's ignorance of English and writes about it in *Kant und Hume um 1762*.... After 1755, Kant's writings reveal his unquestionable acquaintance with English literature. However, except works written in Latin, Kant quoted only those, which he had had translated.... Another important note is of Jachmann: 'from modern languages Kant knew only French'.<sup>7</sup>

Groos also quotes the opposing opinion of nineteenth century neo-Kantian philosopher Hans Vaihinger that 'Kant's English was quite good'. This obviously leaves our question unanswered, but it is safer to assume that Kant did not read the English original of Reid's *Inquiry* before he wrote his first *Critique*. Still we cannot rule out that Kant read one of the *Inquiry*'s translations. Although the German translation *Untersuchungen über den menschlichen Geist* was published in 1782, too late to influence Kant, the French translation *Recherches sur l'entendement humain* was published in 1768. This shrinks the gap between the *Inquiry* and the first *Critique* from seventeen to thirteen years, which is certainly enough for successful inspiration. Let us not forget that inspiration can also be passed through others. Let us listen to the testimony of the contemporary German historian of philosophy Heiner F. Klemme, who describes the reception of Scottish philosophy in Germany in the 1770s and 1780s:

Scottish Common Sense in general and Reid's philosophy in particular were widely known in Germany. Especially at Gottingen, Berlin, Erlangen and Königsberg, Reid was already a known quantity even before the *Untersuchungen über den menschlichen Geist* was published. One might speculate whether it would have made an even greater impact in Germany if the translation had been released a few years before the publication of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781. Because Kant's Critical philosophy displaced the empiricist approach in philosophy, the Scottish philosophy of Common Sense lost its foothold and eventually disappeared in the 1790s.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> K. Groos, 'Hat Kant Hume's Treatise gelesen?' *Kantstudien* V (1901), 177–81.

<sup>8</sup> H. F. Klemme, *Reception of the Scottish Enlightenment in Germany: Six Significant Translations, 1755–1782*, Volume 7 (Bristol, 2000).

The previously mentioned German historian of philosophy, Manfred Kuehn, also notes that Scottish philosophy and Reid in particular influenced such German philosophers as Johann Eberhard, Johann Feder, Christoph Meiners and Johannes Tetens.<sup>9</sup> All of them were Kant's contemporaries and were influential in German philosophy before the 1790s. In the light of this, the influence of Reid's writings on Kant's philosophy is highly possible. However, Kant himself in his *Prolegomena* gives away his attitude towards the Scottish school of common sense, when he asserts that 'one cannot, without feeling a certain pain, behold how utterly and completely his [Hume's] opponents, Reid, Oswald, Beattie, and finally Priestley, missed the point of his problem, and misjudged his hints for improvement'.<sup>10</sup> It is not without significance, that Kant counts Joseph Priestley, who was the first major critic of Beattie's, Reid's and Oswald's works, as a member of Scottish school of common sense. Further on in the *Prolegomena* Kant states that 'it is a common excuse, which these false friends of ordinary common sense (which they extol on occasion, but usually despise) are accustomed to using, that they say: There must in the end be some propositions that are immediately certain, and for which not only no proof, but indeed no account at all need be given, since otherwise there would never come an end to the grounds for one's judgments'.<sup>11</sup> It is not certain to whom Kant refers as the 'false friends', but it is possible that he had in mind Beattie, Reid and Oswald. Contexts in which Kant is usually referring to these philosophers suggests that he thought of 'Scottish common sense' as some form of *vox populi* or *opinio vulgaris*. This oversimplification is especially unfair to Reid, but can be easily explained. James Beattie's *An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth*, published in 1770 was, due to its popularity, very quickly translated into German in 1772. In this work Beattie vulgarizes and dogmatizes Reidian common sense, as he is trying to prove that faith is superior to reason. It is highly possible, that Kant read the popular *Versuch über die Natur und Unveränderlichkeit der Wahrheit* and took measure of whole Scottish school through it. Also we cannot forget that in *Inquiry* Reid himself portrays common sense as superior to reason.<sup>12</sup> Reid reconciled common sense and reason in his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, which were published in 1782, but which again was too late to influence Kant. Thus, we can safely

<sup>9</sup> Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768–1800*, 70–85.

<sup>10</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (Cambridge, 2004), 8.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*. In Sir William Hamilton (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Reid, Vol. I* (Edinburgh, 1872), 209–11.

assume that it is most likely that Kant did not read the English original of Reid's inquiry and that the German translation was published too late to have any impact. Even if Kant read the French translation, it is clear that he did not fully understand Reid, as he vulgarized his philosophy. *Ergo*, Kant and Reid were just two original philosophers who worked independently.

Now let us explore the similarities between Kant and Reid. Probably the first one who noted them was Arthur Schopenhauer. In the second volume of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* he wrote:

Thomas Reid's excellent book, *Inquiry into the Human Mind*, as a corroboration of the Kantian truths in the negative way, affords us a very thorough conviction of the inadequacy of the senses for producing the objective perception of things, and also of the non-empirical origin of the intuition of space and time. Reid refutes Locke's teaching that perception is a product of the senses. This he does by a thorough and acute demonstration that the collective sensations of the senses do not bear the least resemblance to the world known through perception, and in particular by showing that Locke's five primary qualities cannot possibly be supplied to us by any sensation of the senses. Accordingly, he abandons the question of the mode of origination and the source of perception as completely insoluble. Thus, although wholly unacquainted with Kant, he furnishes, so to speak, according to the *regula falsi*, a thorough proof of the intellectual nature of perception (which I was really the first to expound in consequence of the Kantian doctrine), and of the *a priori* source, discovered by Kant, of the constituent elements of perception, namely space, time, and causality.<sup>13</sup>

Schopenhauer noted that in Reid's epistemology space, time and causality have the same *a priori* character as in Kant's critical writings and, in general, the typology of judgements of Kant and Reid have considerable similarities. As we know, Kant distinguishes *a priori* from *a posteriori* judgments. *A posteriori* judgments are always synthetic, while *a priori* can be either analytic or synthetic.<sup>14</sup> Piotr Łaciak suggested that Kant divides synthetic *a priori* judgements even further into pure and not-pure.<sup>15</sup> Not-pure judgments are

<sup>13</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. II, (New York, 1966), 20–1.

<sup>14</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge, 2000), 32–34.

<sup>15</sup> Piotr Łaciak, *Struktura i rodzaje poznania a priori w rozumieniu Kanta i Husserla* (Katowice,

the ones that entail some empirical content. For example, the synthetic *a priori* judgment, 'Every change has its cause', is not-pure because the term 'change' has empirical origins. Although Reid does not specify a concrete typology of judgments, he obviously distinguishes *a priori* and *a posteriori* judgments. Further, he makes a distinction between intuitive and discursive judgments, which might correspond to analytic and synthetic judgments.<sup>16</sup> But what is most interesting, Reid distinguishes even judgments of nature, that are 'immediately inspired by our constitution' from pure judgments that are achieved 'by comparing ideas'.<sup>17</sup> This typology of judgments, although not exactly identical to Kant's, bears enough similarity to justify further investigation into Reid's first principles of common sense. As we know, in the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* Reid divides the principles of common sense into first principles of contingent truths and first principles of necessary truths. It is plausible to say that the first group would be judgments of nature, while the second would be pure judgments. As we know third, fourth and fifth contingent truths on Reid's list presuppose Kantian forms of sensibility, namely Space and Time.<sup>18</sup> These principles are 'That those things did really happen which I distinctly remember', 'Our own personal identity and continued existence, [goes] as far back as we remember anything distinctly', 'That those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be'. Presupposition of space and time is even more clear in conjunction with Reid's chapters on memory and perception. There Reid asserts that 'extension of bodies which we perceive by our senses, leads us necessarily to the conception and belief of a space which remains immoveable when the body is removed' and that 'the duration of events which we remember leads us necessarily to the conception and belief of a duration which would have gone on uniformly though the event had never happened'.<sup>19</sup> Another list of principles, first principles of necessary truths consist of groups of grammatical, logical and mathematical principles, that although were only briefly enumerated by Reid, bear resemblance to Kantian categories.<sup>20</sup> But the most staggering similarity

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2003), 62–82.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, Sir William Hamilton (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Reid, Vol. I* (Edinburgh, 1872), 215–510, at 475.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 416, 489.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 444–6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 452–8. It is hard to point out direct resemblance between Kant's twelve categories and Reidian grammatical, logical and mathematical first principles of



is between the previously mentioned Kantian not-clean synthetic *a priori* judgment 'Every change has its cause', and the Reidian metaphysical first principle of necessary truths, 'That whatever begins to exist, must have cause which produced it'.<sup>21</sup> The only difference is that for Kant this principle was not-clean while putatively for Reid it was a pure judgment. This should be enough to establish that major *a priori* elements of Reid's epistemology are correspondent to and convergent with Kantian forms of sensibility and his twelve categories.

Our next step is to analyse the role of the *a priori* in the general process of cognition and perception in Reid's epistemology. T. J. Sutton in his paper, meaningfully titled *The Scottish Kant?*, tries to reassess Reid's epistemology as a form of transcendentalism.

To sum up, it is tempting to regard Reid's insistence on the necessity of belief according to common sense as a form of transcendental argument, defending a set of preconditions or foundations not on the ground that without them there could be no meaningful experience, but on the ground that without them there could be no knowledge or rational activity. Although this argument is not the same as Kant's it is similar.<sup>22</sup>

Sutton is completely right. For Reid, the principles of common sense are necessary requirements for any cognition or rational action.<sup>23</sup> According to Reid these principles are 'immediately inspired' by the structure of our cognitive constitution.<sup>24</sup> And this cognitive constitution determines how we perceive

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necessary truths, because he is just briefly enumerating these groups, thinking that they are self-explanatory. For Kant, twelve categories are generalisations of every perceivable and comprehensible quality and the rules of our reasoning and thinking. For Reid, grammatical, logical and mathematical necessary truths are rules governing our speech and reasoning. But from the analytical point of view, both philosophers were in fact referring to the structure of language and its active role in perception and reasoning.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 455. Maybe even more astounding is Reid's moral first principle of necessary truths, 'That we ought not to do to others what we would think unjust or unfair to be done to us in like circumstances', which predates by three years the nearly identical Kantian categorical imperative.

<sup>22</sup> T. J. Sutton, 'The Scottish Kant?' in M. Dalgarno, E. Matthews (eds), *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid* (Dordrecht, 1989), . 151–92 at 180–181.

<sup>23</sup> M. Hempoliński, *U źródeł filozofii zdrowego rozsądku* (Warszawa, 1975), 334.

<sup>24</sup> Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, 110.

the world. Principles of common sense also partially determine our actions. Reid writes of the sceptic who rejects principles of common sense, that 'If he has common understanding, he will find that he cannot converse half an hour without saying things which imply the contrary of what he professes to believe'.<sup>25</sup> He also says that he 'never heard that any sceptic run his head against a post' only because he had doubts in testimony of his senses. The only major difference between Kant and Reid is that Reid, when speaking about role of the principles of common sense and our constitution in cognition and actions generally does not distinguish between theoretic and pragmatic levels. However, this is not enough to prevent us from acknowledging that the *a priori* of Kant and Reid play similar, although not identical, roles in the general process of cognition.

Our last step is to show that in Reid's epistemology our cognitive constitution, and thus also the principles of common sense, play a major role in the 'creation' of perceived objects and in setting the limits of our cognition. According to most commentators, there is something that is a key element in Kant's epistemology, that is lacking in Reid's philosophy.<sup>26</sup> This element is Kantian distinction between noumenon and phenomenon, that results in setting strict limits for our cognitive powers. Now I will argue, that although Reid does not literally introduce the distinction between noumenon and phenomenon, he had in mind its clear intuition. First of all, Reid acknowledges the limits of our cognition when he asserts that 'individual things which really exist, being the creatures of God, (though some of them may receive their outward form from man), he only who made them knows their whole nature; we know them but in part, and therefore our conceptions of them must in all cases be imperfect and inadequate; yet they may be true and just, as far as they reach'.<sup>27</sup> This is even better exemplified by Franz Brentano, who says about Reid, that ...

... space is not for him a thing, neither substance nor accident. The fact that according to Reid the visual sense reveals of spatial things only their extension in two dimensions, and that only the sense of touch leads us to the presentation and knowledge of the third dimension, does not seem to him to be a contradiction, since it points only

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<sup>25</sup> Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, 232.

<sup>26</sup> For example, T. Gościcki, 'Kant a Tomasz Reid', *Kwartalnik Filozoficzny* VII (1930), 275–95, at 283–4.

<sup>27</sup> Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, 364.

to a more incomplete apprehension of space in the visual sense. This however leads him to the idea that even the three-dimensional presentation of space might still be incomplete in the sense that, taken in itself, it could possess even a fourth and, who knows, perhaps further dimensions.<sup>28</sup>

But the most staggering thing is Reid's intuition of *ding an sich*, clearly identifiable when he says of individual things that ...

...our conception of them is always inadequate and lame. They are the creatures of God, and there are many things belonging to them which we know not, and which cannot be deduced by reasoning from what we know. They have a real essence, or constitution of nature, from which all their qualities flow; but this essence our faculties do not comprehend. They are therefore incapable of definition; for a definition ought to comprehend the whole nature or essence of the thing defined.<sup>29</sup>

This point is so important that it is worth making one further quotation from *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*:

We know the essence of a triangle, and from that essence can deduce its properties. It is an universal, and might have been conceived by the human mind though no individual triangle had ever existed. It has only what Mr Locke calls a nominal essence, which is expressed in its definition. But everything that exists has a real essence, which is above our comprehension; and, therefore, we cannot deduce its properties or attributes from its nature, as we do in the triangle. We must take a contrary road in the knowledge of God's works, and satisfy ourselves with their attributes as facts, and with the general conviction that there is a subject to which those attributes belong.<sup>30</sup>

As we have just seen, not only has Reid acknowledged unknowability of thing in itself, but he also recognized that we have no other proof of its existence

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<sup>28</sup> F. Brentano, *Philosophical Investigations on Space, Time and the Continuum* (New York, 2010), 114.

<sup>29</sup> Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, 364.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 392.

than 'general conviction'. This alone should be enough to refute accusations of Reid's being a dogmatic naive realist.

In the beginning we have defined criticism as a philosophy that questions cognitive powers of man and analyses conditions, prerequisites, and limitations of cognition in general, and acknowledges their role in the process of creation of the object of cognition. I believe that I have shown that Reid's epistemology in all of these elements is similar to Kant's. Reid acknowledges similar limits of our cognition and lists similar *a priori* principles governing our perceptions and actions as does Kant. Thus, his epistemology fulfils the criteria of our definition. I also believe that this justifies, or at least makes plausible, the thesis that Reid was pre-Kantian criticist. To take the argument further, however, I need to address two objections often raised against any comparison between Kant's and Reid's epistemologies. The first one concerns the fact that Reid stood on the position of natural realism, while Kant called his philosophy a transcendental idealism. As a reply to this objection I must stress that Kant published two editions of his *Critique of Pure Reason* that could be counted as two different books. The first edition from 1781 has stronger idealistic implications, while the second from 1788 is more realistic. Since *The Critique of Pure Reason* is usually published as a conjunction of these two editions, this fact often escapes our attention. It also doesn't help that Johann Gottlieb Fichte in his interpretation—or to be more precise, in his variation on Kantian criticism—was ultra-idealistic, which resulted in a half century of German Idealism. But we can't forget that idealistic and realistic interpretations of Kant's philosophy are equally plausible. By contrast, German philosopher Erich Adickes in his book *Kant und das Ding an sich* provided an ultra-realistic interpretation of Kantian criticism, acknowledging that we know noumenon through phenomenon. The second objection concerns the tremendous difference between the methods employed by both philosophers. While Kant utilises 'transcendental logic', Reid conducts his research into the human mind through reflection. Different methods result in such different terminology 'that for many people it is impossible to see the similarity of these two thinkers'.<sup>31</sup> However, if we distinguish the context of discovery from the context of justification, we will see, that a method of discovery is irrelevant for the validity of a result. And because both Kant and Reid did not do enough to justify their epistemologies, Brentano and others have coined the term 'philosophy of

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<sup>31</sup> Brentano, *Philosophical Investigations on Space, Time and the Continuum*, 3–4.

superstitions' to refer to them. But we must remember, that, according to Reid, first principles are not first principles because they are common, but they are common because they are first principles, included in our constitution and reachable through reflection. No matter how different Kant's and Reid's methods were, their results are convergent enough to justify the plausibility of our thesis.

Despite Reid's influence on classical American pragmatism and even on British analytic philosophy, his influence in Europe was minor at best. Tadeusz Gościński, Polish historian of philosophy of the interwar period, while speaking very kindly of Reid, hinted at this important fact.

Comparison of Kant and Reid raises the question whether history was fair in its assessment of these two thinkers, and whether it rightly lifted the first one so high, while removing the second into the shadows. In my opinion, there is no doubt, that it was a great injustice. Reid, because of his position in the history of epistemology, should be recognized as a profound and original philosopher of the same class as Kant. Modern philosophy, oriented towards realism, despite the fact that it rarely mentions the name of our Scottish philosopher, is very often repeating his views.<sup>32</sup>

However, whether the history was fair or not is not a primary concern for a historian of philosophy. In the course of past two millennia we have seen many such situations, when a work was not fully understood by contemporaries, while similar work by someone else erected a new paradigm in better times. Even if our thesis, that Reid's epistemology of common sense is a form of pre-Kantian criticism, is true—or, to make it less extreme, is at least a plausible interpretation—in the end it doesn't matter. Reid lost his battle for continental Europe to Kant. Vulgarized and misunderstood by many of his contemporaries, Reid failed to contribute to the European epistemological debate of the nineteenth century and reinforced a long list of underestimated philosophers. But we should not be too harsh in condemning nineteenth century philosophers for not recognizing the value of Reid's epistemology, that it unravels *a priori* principles of reason, perception, understanding and action. It is considerably easier to 'reverse-engineer' a critical conceptual scheme onto Reid's epistemology now. But it

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<sup>32</sup> Gościński, 'Kant a Tomasz Reid', 295.

had proved incomparably more difficult to read this conceptual scheme from Reid's works themselves.<sup>33</sup>

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