

REID AND PRIESTLEY ON METHOD AND THE MIND

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Reid said little in his published writings about his contemporary Joseph Priestley, but his unpublished work is largely devoted to the latter. Much of Priestley's philosophical thought – his materialism, his determinism, his Lockean scientific realism – was as antithetical to Reid's as was Hume's philosophy in a very different way. Neither Reid nor Priestley formulated a full response to the other. Priestley's response to Reid came very early in his career, and is marked by haste and immaturity. In his last decade Reid worried much about Priestley's materialism, but that concern never reached publication. I document Reid's unpublished response to Priestley, and also view Reid's response from Priestley's perspective, as deduced from his published works. Both thinkers attempted to base their arguments on Newtonian method. Reid's position is the more puzzling of the two, since he nowhere makes clear how Newtonian method favours mind-body dualism over materialism, which is the central debate between them.

I. INTRODUCTION

Readers of the *Critique of Pure Reason* must often experience some surprise when they find Kant discussing not just Hume and Reid but Joseph Priestley. Reid's philosophical reputation is now fairly secure, at least amongst philosophers with some respect for history; but as a philosopher Priestley's name is still little known. Yet Kant seems to have thought well of him. He portrays him as a Samson pulling down 'two such pillars of all religion as the freedom and immortality of the soul', but adds that he is motivated by 'concern for the interests of reason' and he 'knew how to combine his paradoxical teaching with the interests of religion' (A745–6; B773–4). He ranks Priestley even higher than Reid – but then it seems he knew Reid from Priestley's unflattering account in his 1774 *Examination* of the common sense philosophers, and this was very much a refracted image.

Reid too took Priestley seriously. Reid's main published works mention him, I think, only once, in *Active Powers* in connection with determinism, and even then Reid chooses not to use Priestley's name – he is 'a late zealous

advocate for necessity'. But Reid also published anonymously a review of Priestley's 'Introduction' to his shortened edition of David Hartley's *Observations on Man*.¹ And in his unpublished writings dating from the 1780s or perhaps the early 1790s, now made readily accessible in Paul Wood's edition, Priestley's materialism is the dominant subject.² Why none of these thoughts on Priestley's materialism ever reached publication is far from clear. In his introduction to these papers (p. 52), Wood speaks of Reid's 'obsession with his opponent', and 'wonders if [he] ever succeeded in exorcizing the spectre of Priestley's materialism to his own satisfaction'. It is certainly a question worth pondering.

Reid was a philosopher all his adult life – it was the vocation from which he never strayed, except to carry out his clerical duties. Priestley, twenty-three years his junior, wrote as a philosopher for just a decade, from 1772 to 1782, in a burst of publishing which began with the *Examination*, his critique of the common sense Scots philosophers, and ended with a reply to Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, and which coincided with the scientific work for which he is now best known. After 1782 his friends persuaded him that philosophy was not his *forte*, and he turned to history, politics and the defence of the phlogiston theory. Priestley and Reid were both deeply interested in the same metaphysical questions – the nature and powers of the mind, most importantly – yet the debate that might have taken place between them never happened. Some of the reasons for this are obvious. Priestley's treatment of Reid in his *Examination* had been offensive in both senses of the word, and Reid felt the slight. But there may also be reasons internal to the arguments which each employed. In reconstructing the dialectical situation of the 1780s I shall consider that possibility.

Debate between them would have been a clash of fundamentals. Their views on the nature of mind accord on almost nothing. The clash between them has an archetypal aspect, the confrontation of a sophisticated common sense realism with a robust scientific realism. Can there be debate between these positions? Or do they each simply deny the other's most basic assumptions? The case of Reid and Priestley is interesting just because, in his unpublished writings, Reid sought to meet Priestley on Priestley's chosen ground. That is, there was a common framework which each held as more basic than their respective philosophical creeds. The framework is that supplied by Newton in his 'Rules of Reasoning in Philosophy'. So those rules will be the central theme of this paper.

¹ Review of Priestley's *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind* (1775), *Monthly Review*, 53 (1775), pp. 380–90, and 54 (1776), pp. 41–7.

² *Thomas Reid on the Animate Creation: Papers Relating to the Life Sciences* (hereafter *AC*), ed. Paul Wood (Edinburgh UP, 1995).

I shall be brief here about Reid and Priestley in the 1770s.³ Priestley's 1774 *Examination* attacks Reid's *Inquiry* for three main reasons: its denial of the reality of 'ideas'; its supposed multitude of instincts and first principles; and its granting of epistemological authority to common sense.⁴ Had the *Examination* been Priestley's only philosophical work, he would indeed be the minor figure in philosophy he is commonly thought to be. I shall move on to his later work, returning to the theory of ideas only at the end of this paper.

II. PRIESTLEY'S MATERIALISM

In 1777 Priestley published *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit* (hereafter *Disquisitions*). It is a substantial defence of materialism, of a kind rare in the history of British philosophy, perhaps the most substantial defence before the 1960s.⁵ Priestley took it as given that as far as is known, all psychological phenomena have one-to-one physiological correlates. At least some dualists – David Hartley for instance, and perhaps Richard Price – conceded as much. He then argued for materialism on three philosophical grounds: from the nature of matter; from the problem of interaction that dualism entails; and from the principles of method articulated by Newton and generally taken as the canonical statement of the nature of modern science.

Priestley's first contention, opposing standard dualist doctrine, is that matter is far from powerless: on the contrary, the most advanced post-Newtonian physical theory shows it to be essentially powerful. Boscovich, he contended, had articulated a coherent and simple theory of matter, based on the idea of powerful point-particles. But if this is so, then one key defence of dualism, the assumption that matter has no powers, fails, and the possibility arises that, for all we can know *a priori*, matter's powers might extend to include the power of thought.

His second claim is that dualism requires interaction between substances with no common properties whatever (excepting temporality), so that

³ James Somerville has explored this debate fully and perceptively in his *That Enigmatic Parting Shot: What was Hume's 'Compleat Answer to Dr Reid and to That Bigotted Silly Fellow Beattie'?* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995), pp. 227–50. See also Alan Tapper, 'The Beginnings of Priestley's Materialism', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 1 (1982), pp. 73–82.

⁴ See *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 on Behalf of Religion* (hereafter *Examination*), in *The Theological and Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Priestley, LL.D. F.R.S. &c.*, 25 vols, ed. J.T. Rutt (London: Smallfield, 1817–31; repr. New York: Kraus Reprint, 1972), Vol. III, pp. 25–67.

⁵ John Yolton, in *Thinking Matter: Materialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), his history of eighteenth-century British materialism, devotes ch. 6 (pp. 107–26) to Priestley's *Disquisitions*, though curiously he focuses mainly on Priestley's theory of matter, which formed the basis for only one of his three main arguments for materialism.

interaction between them is as good as inconceivable. Priestley recognizes that there are two forms of dualism, the Cartesian form in which mind is non-spatial, and a rival form which gives the soul spatial location and dimension. He argues that only the Cartesian position is fully coherent. But Cartesianism makes interaction unintelligible. Thus monism must be preferable to dualism, and materialism on those grounds must be preferable to Cartesianism.

Priestley's most important argument, and the one upon which he placed most weight, is that from Newton's rules. It is in fact his only direct argument in support of materialism. Newton's first rule, as phrased by Priestley, tells us that 'We are to admit no more causes of things than are sufficient to explain appearances'.⁶ But, he asks, what appearances is the soul required to explain? If none, then it is redundant, and, by Newton's first rule, materialism is ontologically obligatory.

These are Priestley's central contentions, and he elaborates on them with various supporting considerations. Curiously, his second and third arguments point towards monism in general rather than materialism in particular, so they could be employed as a defence of immaterialism against dualism; and we know that as a young man Priestley was attracted to Berkeleian immaterialism: 'when I first entered upon metaphysical enquiries, I thought that either the *material* or *immaterial* part of the universal system was superfluous', he tells us (*Disquisitions*, p. 201). He came to reject Berkeley's scheme because it supposes a multitude of divine interpositions which, while not impossible, is not 'consonant to the course of nature in other respects' (*Examination*, p. 23). Thus immaterialism too fails on grounds of simplicity, though not ontological simplicity.

Priestley had been led from scientific realism to materialism. His scientific outlook wanted an account of the mind, one which preserves our knowledge of external realities, while acknowledging that this knowledge is mediated to us physiologically by 'ideas' or 'impressions'. His close acquaintance with the development of post-Newtonian matter theory had convinced him that the dualist assumption of matter's powerlessness is untenable. On methodological grounds, grounds he sees as Newtonian, he seeks a minimalist ontology. All this taken together drives him to materialism, which other arguments persuade him is at least consistent with Christianity, and possibly more suitable to the tenor of early Christianity than the Platonized metaphysical Christianity Priestley deplored. We should add that in 1774 Priestley had been in Paris with Lord Shelburne, where he had met D'Holbach and others, who were coming to take materialism for granted, and who simply

⁶ *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit*, in *Works*, Vol. III, p. 221.

assumed that materialism excluded theism.⁷ Part of his ambition was to turn the tide of the Enlightenment in the direction of a modernized minimized Christianity. In all this Priestley's character shows through: intellectual boldness or audacity is his normal mode, with nothing held back, trusting that open debate will decide the outcome in the best interests of truth. Priestley's strange enterprise both deserved and needed criticism, and he was lucky to have on hand both a friendly critic, Richard Price, and an unfriendly one, Thomas Reid. Priestley's debate with Price is a lucid exchange of ideas on physics and the philosophy of mind, but Price nowhere touches on Priestley's use of Newton's rules.⁸ Reid's deep commitment to those rules endows his response to Priestley's *Disquisitions* with a special interest, all the more so since the relevant papers have been for so long inaccessible.

III. NEWTON'S RULES AND THE NATURE OF MIND

Reid's response, in seven manuscripts, takes up no fewer than 77 pages (165–241) of Wood's edition. Four of these are simply notes; but documents IX, X and XI, as Wood classifies them, are carefully considered and polished statements of Reid's position. I shall start from the earliest and longest of these, IX, entitled 'Some Observations on the Modern System of Materialism', in which he sets out a close rebuttal of Priestley's argument.

Reid's 'Observations' has six sections or 'chapters'. The first sets Priestley in the context of modern, post-Cartesian philosophy. The second section tackles Priestley's interpretation of Newton's rules. Sections three, four and five are devoted entirely to contesting the theory of matter set forth by Priestley. The sixth wraps up Reid's case against his adversary. These proportions by themselves tell us much about Reid's position. Reid replies to Priestley on two and only two of the grounds staked out by Priestley. He tackles his methodological argument and his theory of matter. He says nothing about his argument from the problem of interaction and nothing about his empirical assumption that there is a universal correspondence

⁷ D'Holbach's *Système de la nature* had been published in 1770. Priestley described it as 'the most plausible and seducing of any thing I have met with in support of atheism', *Works*, Vol. iv, p. 389.

⁸ See *A Free Discussion of the Doctrines of Materialism and Philosophical Necessity, in a Correspondence between Dr Price and Dr Priestley*, of 1778. Price's main objection to materialism is that 'It is inconceivable to me how any person can think that many substances united can be one substance, or that all the parts of a system can perceive, and yet no single part be a percipient being'. Priestley's reply (*Works*, Vol. iv, p. 42) is that 'A system, though consisting of many beings or things, is nevertheless but one system. A brain, though consisting of many parts, is but one brain; and where can be the difficulty in conceiving that no single part of a brain should be a whole brain, or have the properties of a whole brain?'

between psychological and physiological facts. More than half of 'Observations' is devoted to refuting Priestley's account of matter. This is even more true of the other two long manuscripts, X and XI. Priestley's 'Modern System of Materialism' fails, in Reid's assessment, because it misconstrues Newton's rules, but even more because it misconceives the nature of matter.

First, then, Newton's rules, about the authority of which they are in complete agreement. Priestley had professed 'an uniform and rigorous adherence' to these rules, and had asked that his own reasoning 'be tried by this and no other test' (*Disquisitions*, p. 221). For Reid, the first rule 'is the true and proper test, by which what is sound and solid in philosophy may be distinguished from what is hollow and vain'.⁹ 'So long as we follow these maxims, we may be confident that we walk on sure ground; but the moment we depart from them, we wander in regions of mere *fancy*, and are only entertaining ourselves and others with our own crude imaginations and conceits' (*Disquisitions*, p. 222). That is Priestley, but it might be Reid *verbatim*.

Priestley, Reid argues, has misstated the rules, and misstated them in just such a way as to make them favour the very thing that Newton sought to avoid, namely vain hypothesizing (*AC*, pp. 182–93). Reid translates the first rule thus: 'Of natural things no more causes ought to be admitted, than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their phaenomena'. Priestley's version of this rule, Reid correctly points out, omits the condition in Newton's original text requiring truth. The rule applies two tests, truth and sufficiency. By converting the rule into a one-test instrument, he represents it 'as if it gave a sanction to hypotheses, which have no evidence but that of explaining appearances', which is 'to contradict its main design'. The hypothesizing philosopher, seeking to explain some phenomenon, and applying his capacity for 'invention', 'hits upon an ingenious conjecture', one which is sufficient to provide an explanation, and he then concludes that 'by his sagacity he has discovered the Secret of Nature'. Hypotheses of this sort can be corrected by taking note of contradictory evidence, evidence that compels us to discard inadequate hypotheses and to form new and better ones. But even so, this method of argument is basically flawed, since all such hypotheses are 'grounded upon the same false notion, that human wit and invention is sufficient to discover the art of Nature' (*AC*, p. 187). Reid's heroes, Bacon, and following him, Newton, showed that explanations are valid only if both the truth condition and the sufficiency condition are met. The sufficiency condition standing on its own makes explanation a matter of ingenious invention. The truth condition crucially grounds explanation in the testimony of our senses.

⁹ Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (hereafter *IP*), ed. W. Hamilton (Edinburgh: McLachlan & Stewart, 1846), I iv, p. 236a.

Reid similarly thinks Priestley has misconstrued Newton's second rule. Priestley's version is 'That to the same effects we must, as far as possible, assign the same causes'. Reid thinks that the phrase 'as far as possible' is 'purely an addition of the translator'. Wood has pointed out Reid's mistake here (*AC*, p. 72, fn. 153). In the third edition of Newton's *Principia* the rule is as Priestley has it. The earlier editions are as Reid contends: 'Of natural effects of the same kind, the causes are the same'. So both philosophers can find authority for their readings of the second rule. The philosophical point Reid wants to make is that Priestley's version leaves too much scope for those who are prone to see similitude of effects, 'when more accurate attention would discover [the effects] to be of a different kind'. 'The proper caution therefore with regard to this rule is, not That we assign Effects to the same Cause *as far as is possible*, but that we be sure the effects be of the same kind before we assign them to the same cause' (*AC*, p. 189).

Reid goes on to reproach Priestley for his failure to mention Newton's third rule. Since Reid uses this rule to debate the theory of matter and not the nature of mind, I shall pass over that point just now. Oddly, neither Priestley nor Reid makes mention of Newton's fourth rule.

Reid's interpretation of Newton's first rule is clear enough. What is quite unclear is how he thinks the rule applies to the theory of mind, and especially how it rebuts Priestley's claim that the rule warrants materialism. Neither in his 'Observations' nor in the other documents is there a single sentence on this point, which, however, seems to be the key point in this debate. At most he has shown that Priestley has misunderstood the first rule, and thus cannot claim Newton's authority for his position. To admit this is in no way to see how Reid thought he had refuted Priestley's materialism. But there is also a logical difficulty for Reid here, which, though never expressed, seems crucial to the dialectical situation. Priestley has open to him a reply that accepts all that Reid has so far claimed. He can accept the truth condition and turn it against the dualist. The materialist can claim his own 'true cause', the brain, an entity whose 'real existence' is not in doubt. What is the status of the soul? Is its existence not hypothetical? Since Reid's manuscripts were never published, Priestley never replied to them. But it is impossible to believe that, had they been published, Priestley would not have driven home this point with some force. His actual writings are never as explicit as Reid is about the distinction between truth and sufficiency in the first rule, but he clearly accepts that hypotheses are to be tried according to the truth test. Quite possibly, he trimmed the rule just because he thought the sufficiency issue, and not the truth criterion, is what the materialist must most explicitly satisfy, the truth condition being one which counts obviously in his own favour.

Reid's views on the application of the sufficiency criterion are also unclear. He might have tried to show the 'insufficiency' of the brain to account for mental phenomena. This could be done by nominating some mental state that lacks a physical correlate. He does not adopt this type of argument, and, for all we can tell, he may have thought that there is a complete correlation between the mental and the physical.

There are two interpretations that might make some sense of Reid's general strategy in his 'Observations'.

(1) Perhaps Reid is not arguing for dualism but simply against materialism, and his own position is one of ontological agnosticism about the nature of mind, an agnosticism backed by Newton's methodological principles. On this view both materialists *and* dualists are guilty of 'vain hypothesizing', and we must rest content in ignorance of mind's real nature. To take this interpretation seriously, we would have to imagine Reid as capable of attacking dualism with the same hostility as he evidently felt for Priestley's position, and there is nothing in Reid to suggest this possibility.

There is a suggestion in his discussion that the rules have their place in discovering the laws of nature, but not the essences of natural things. Pursuing this line of thought, we could think of science as discovering what laws govern the mind, but not telling us anything about its composition. Thus Newton's rules could be construed as ontologically agnostic. This reading requires that 'true causes' are simply antecedent events in a law-like statement. Reid, however, talks of 'true causes' as referring to 'real existences', and this phrase blocks the ontologically neutralist interpretation.

(2) A second interpretation is that he is not applying the rule to the nature of mind, but only to the nature of matter. Priestley had applied the rule to both; he held that it authorizes both materialism about the mind *and* Boscovichian matter-theory. Reid, it could be, is saying nothing about materialism itself, but he is trying to eliminate the support for it that Priestley derived from the theory that matter possesses real powers. The evidence in Reid's unpublished papers for this view is good. The main body and the concluding section of 'Observations' are about matter theory and not at all about materialism, showing that this was Reid's main concern. And Reid's later manuscript, XI in Wood's edition, is conclusive on this point: 'It was not the Intention of those Observations [on the Modern System of Materialism], to discuss the Question at large Whether the Soul be a material substance or not *but only* to consider the Aid which that Author [Priestley] had endeavoured to give to Materialism, by giving a new Conception of the Nature of Body or Matter' (*AC*, p. 233).

This settles the matter of Reid's intentions, but of course it leaves open the question about Reid's own position on how the rules relate to the

nature of mind, a question raised by the first interpretation, and the central issue between Priestley and Reid. Priestley's ontological challenge to the dualist is to defend dualism in some way that does not violate Newton's criteria.

Whether Reid thought this could be done remains puzzling. It is also unclear why he devotes so much space to the theory of matter, which was germane to only one of Priestley's three arguments for materialism. The best sense we can make of his thinking seems to be this. Priestley is to be answered by rebutting his theory of matter, with the help of Newton's 'rules of reasoning'. Rebutting the thesis that matter possesses powers will drive us to reject materialism, since if matter has no physical powers it can have no capacity to serve as the substrate of mind. That is, Reid will reinforce dualism's underpinnings in Newtonian physics. I turn now to that issue.

IV. THE THEORY OF MATTER

The very broad question of the nature of matter in the late eighteenth century is one about which there is already much scholarly literature. My focus here is on how Reid and Priestley employed Newton's 'rules of reasoning' in this controversy. Priestley's view is that the first rule requires us to ascribe powers to matter itself, for to ascribe them to something other than matter is to postulate a realm whose existence is hypothetical. That is, his argument rests mainly on the truth condition of the rule, the very condition Reid accused him of neglecting. To make out this case he adopts a hypothesis, Boscovich's theory of point-particles that exert their powers of attraction and repulsion at a distance. This theory, he contends, is sufficient to account for all the appearances of nature, and thus satisfies Newton's second desideratum. He has of course no direct proof of the real existence of point-particles.

In replying to this position, Reid might again have chosen ontological agnosticism, and attacked Priestley for going beyond the direct evidence of the senses. That is not his reply. Rather, Reid defends as strenuously as he can the theory of matter's powerlessness, which he equates with the Newtonian notion of inertia. Granted that matter itself has no power, and that nature exhibits power, it follows that nature contains non-material powers. Reid's insistence on matter's lack of power is designed to demonstrate the existence of immaterial but non-mental natural agents, which (like Newton) he refers to as *immaterial principles*. Thus Reid is committed to a dualistic natural science quite as much as he is committed to a dualism of mind and matter.

How exactly does Reid employ Newton's rules in defence of this position? How in particular does he show that his immaterial principles are not hypothetical entities? Part of the answer is that he turns to Newton's third rule, which, he observes, Priestley has ignored, but which Reid thinks governs exactly the point at issue in the theory of matter, namely, 'upon what evidence we are to hold a quality of bodies to be universal, or to belong to all Matter' (*AC*, p. 191).

The third rule permits us to treat as essential to matter only those qualities which 'admit neither of increase nor of diminution, and which are to be found to belong to all bodies on which we can make experiments' (Reid's translation: *AC*, p. 189). Reid thinks that inertia meets these requirements but Priestley's 'inherent powers of attraction and repulsion' do not, so that Priestley is unable to justify his account of matter by Newton's standards. Reid's physics requires both inertia and powers of attraction and repulsion, but he denies that both can be essential to matter (*AC*, pp. 203, 207). The onus is on Priestley to show how a mechanics without inertia might be at all plausible. On Reid's view, inertia is essential to mechanics, because without it 'the whole matter of the universe will require as little expense of force to move it, as an atom; and therefore the same impressed force may produce either a small or a great change of motion, which contradicts the second law of motion' (*AC*, p. 206).

Priestley's thesis is that a theory of powers of attraction and repulsion can replace talk of solidity, impenetrability and inertia, and that the first rule warrants this replacement. What we see in nature is the action of natural powers, and these powers are to be ascribed to matter, because to ascribe them to something else is to postulate something whose existence is not known to be true, and so is to breach the first rule. Reid's first reply is in terms of the third rule. But does he reply to Priestley's use of the first? He does: the first rule is the crux of his argument against Priestley. Priestley's assertion that powers such as gravitation are inherent in matter is mere conjecture, as Reid sees it. There are three equally eligible hypotheses available to us. Instead of *A* attracting *B* by an inherent power of attraction, *A* might move itself to *B* by an inherent power of self-motion; or some invisible matter between *A* and *B* may attract them to each other; or some invisible matter may propel *A* and *B* together (*AC*, p. 209). Priestley has not shown his hypothesis to be the true cause, nor has he shown it to explicate any phenomena, so he is violating the very rule he asked to be judged by. Reid's Newtonianism is thus the Newtonianism of *Hypotheses non fingo* and of Newton's Letter to Bentley.

Reid wonders, astrangely, how Priestley can imagine that 'Sir Isaac Newton and the whole tribe of experimental philosophers for more than a

century' could have reasoned fallaciously from the same evidence and by the same rules as Priestley accepts (*AC*, pp. 215–16). Is Priestley's position unintelligible, then? Not entirely. Two of the rival hypotheses Reid thinks he has not eliminated involve 'invisible matter'. Reid assumes we know true causes only when hypotheses of this sort are ruled out. Priestley, by contrast, takes the first rule as ruling out 'random hypotheses', and it seems likely that he would count talk of invisible matter as random. Reid's other hypothesis involves a power of motion inherent in matter, which makes it similar to Priestley's power of attraction in matter. Priestley cannot rule out that hypothesis on methodological grounds alone. But he can claim to defend 'true causes' if true causes are known real existents, since both parties to this debate think matter is a known real existent, and if, by the first rule, natural powers must be ascribed to known real existents and not to 'random hypotheses'. The clash between Reid and Priestley may be explicable, given these conflicting accounts of true causes and of the role of the first rule.

So far, so clear. But Reid does not leave it at that. His later documents are far from agnostic about natural powers. There is a startling statement in document X: 'the Philosophy of Matter naturally leads to the Philosophy of immaterial Being' (*AC*, p. 230). In that document he takes it as an assumption 'that Matter is that inert and passive substance which all natural philosophy teaches it to be' (p. 217). This assumption made, he then freely ascribes all natural powers to non-material agents. That is, he adopts a hypothesis – just the procedure for which he had earlier chastised Priestley. How might Newton's rules authorize Reid's move if they will not authorize Priestley's? Reid must show that his immaterial principles are true causes and sufficient to explain the phenomena. But plainly there can be no direct observation of these principles. Reid never attempts to square his account of natural powers with Newton's rules nor with his critique of Priestley, so documents X and XI look like lapses from his own methodological standards. Nor are they minor lapses. Many passages in Reid present an *immaterialist* natural science. Immaterial principles do all the work in nature, and the role of matter is merely to be that upon which those principles act. All this fits with Reid's account of causation and agency. But it does not fit with Newton's rules. As an interpreter of Reid I would like to remove this striking inconsistency, but I can see no way of doing so.

V. INTERACTIONISM

The theory of matter and issues of method inform attitudes to the problem of interaction. It is one of Priestley's three main arguments for materialism

that dualism leaves mind–body interaction unintelligible. As I remarked above, in his youth he ‘thought that either the *material* or *immaterial* part of the universal system was superfluous’ (*Disquisitions*, p. 201). For him it is more certain that there are causal relations between matter and mind than that the mind is or is not material (p. 154). He rejected Berkeley’s immaterialism because it supposes a multitude of divine interpositions that is not ‘consonant to the course of nature in other respects’ (*Examination*, p. 23) – that is, he rejected it on the ground of simplicity. In his *Examination* he argued that Reid’s position approaches occasionalism, since Reid held that mind and body are so different that ‘we can find no handle by which one may lay hold of the other’ (p. 48). He quotes Reid from the *Inquiry*: ‘I take it for granted, upon the testimony of common sense, that my mind is a substance ... and my reason convinces me that it is an unextended and indivisible substance; and hence I infer that there cannot be in it anything that resembles extension’.¹⁰ By implication, no extended thing can act on an unextended one. Priestley’s general objection to this position is to ask ‘how can any thing act upon another but by means of some common property?’ (p. 47).

In his unpublished papers Reid says little about this argument. If matter is passive, as these papers argue, then by definition it cannot act on mind. Given his theory of matter as passive, Reid might have replied that mind–body interaction must be interaction between two immaterial agencies. He does not say this, but it is his position.

VI. DUALISM AND THE COMMON SENSE PHILOSOPHY

I return now to the central topic, Reid’s response to Priestley’s materialism, as distinct from his theory of matter. Reid’s unpublished papers show him attacking materialism by defending the doctrine of the passivity of matter, the doctrine that Priestley thought had been refuted by Boscovich and was contrary to Newton’s rules. As already remarked, Reid nowhere debates Priestley’s main argument, that Newton’s rules authorize us to ascribe the powers of the mind to the brain. Why Reid passes over this is unclear. If he had an easy refutation he would have wanted to use it. Nor does he put forward any positive arguments for the mind’s immateriality. In general, we can be sure that Reid was a dualist, and not an agnostic, about the mind. We therefore expect him to display something of his own positive position when he is replying to Priestley. In fact we get almost nothing. Why so little?

¹⁰ *Examination*, p. 47. The source is Reid’s *An Inquiry into the Human Mind*, ed. Hamilton, VII, p. 210b.

Reid is not agnostic about the nature of mind. It is true that he generally eschews speculation about the nature of mind. But one who ascribes immateriality to natural powers is hardly likely to be in doubt about the immateriality of the mind. As he puts the point in document X, 'if the meannest Animals and even Vegetables be endowed with an immaterial Principle there can remain no doubt of the existence of such a Principle in Man' (*AC*, p. 230). But animals and vegetables are endowed with an immaterial principle only in the sense in which non-living agents are, in Reid's opinion, so endowed. These agents are not themselves immaterial, but are animated by such a principle acting within them. (This line of argument may seem exactly opposite to that which we are accustomed to from Reid, who objected strenuously to all positive comparisons between material and immaterial entities. However, the comparison is really between various sorts of immaterial powers, and not between the mental and the physical.) The argument can work only against one who accepts such immaterial principles in nature; it can do nothing against a scientific realist like Priestley.

Is Reid perhaps an axiomatic dualist? Some interpreters have gone close to suggesting that he is. Selwyn Grave contends that for Reid 'common sense is implicitly dualist, root and branch. Bodies and minds are altogether different kinds of things, not things that might merge into identity below their manifested properties, though common sense has to wait on philosophy (on Descartes especially, Reid thinks) to know how to put the difference properly.'¹¹ Perhaps, as this suggests, Reid thought that both justification of dualism and refutation of materialism are equally impossible, since they would be argument framed in incommensurable terms. Against this, we can note that the refutation of immaterialism is also at issue here, and we have seen Reid using Newton's rules against that position.

More basically, this interpretation needs to account for the fact that Reid does not include the mind's immateriality amongst his twelve 'first principles', the principles definitive of common sense. Those principles include the claims that 'the thoughts of which I am conscious, are the thoughts of a being which I call MYSELF, my MIND, my PERSON'; that 'we have some degree of power over our actions, and the determinations of our will'; and that 'there is life and intelligence in our fellow-men with whom we converse' (*IP VI v*, pp. 443b–8b). They do not include anything about the substance of the mind or the substance of matter; nor do they include anything about the passivity of matter, though they do insist on the free activity of mind – the crucial terms informing his response to Priestley.

¹¹ S.A. Grave, *The Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 200. Grave observes (p. 199) that Reid's successor, Dugald Stewart, 'is less consistently sure than Reid that the difference between matter and mind goes beyond their phenomenal difference'.

Grave's interpretations can be defended if we emphasize 'implicitly' in the claim that 'common sense is *implicitly* dualist'. On this view, Reid's twelve 'first principles' are the *explicit* commitments of common sense, but there are other, implicit, commitments.

Reid does not regard his twelve principles as settled for all time ('I shall rejoice to see an enumeration more perfect', he says at *IP VI v*, p. 441b). They are a first attempt at discovering, inductively, the domain of common sense; with further thought, other principles may be added. But the idea of 'implicit common sense' runs into other difficulties. For Reid, first principles appear early in childhood, are indispensable in practical life, are felt to be undeniable, and are almost universally accepted as true (*IP VI iv*, pp. 438a–41b). Nowhere does he argue that either dualism or the passivity of matter meets these criteria.¹² And given these criteria, which seem to require that common sense must be explicit, it is far from clear what implicit common sense could be.

If the axiomatic interpretation is blocked, we seem forced back to the methodological approach to Reid's dualism. When Reid is not arguing from first principles, he commonly lets Newton's rules guide his thinking. Curiously, in these papers he is quite explicit that there is nothing in principle inappropriate in applying Newton's rules to the mind, as Priestley did, even though Newton may not have intended them for that purpose. '... the reason of them', Reid says, 'extends to these [natural phenomena of the mind], as well as to the phaenomena of the material system; and therefore they may be applied to both with equal propriety, and ought to be adhered to with equal strictness'. They should not be applied, however, to 'the voluntary actions of men', which are not natural phenomena.¹³ Taking these two points together, it seems that Newton's rules extend only to the *phenomena* and not to the *substance* of the mind.

Elsewhere Reid does seem to use Newtonian method to reach ontological conclusions. In his *Inquiry* (V viii, p. 132a), Reid applied Newton's rules when objecting to Berkeley's immaterialism:

... this acute writer argues from a hypothesis against fact.... That we can have no conception of anything, unless there is some impression, sensation, or idea, in our

¹² Beattie, not surprisingly, does so argue. As Grave (p. 201) summarizes from Beattie's *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth* (1772), 'it is the universal conviction of mankind, that we have souls which are completely different things from our bodies. No arguments are needed in support of this conviction; no arguments can shift it. It has intuitive evidence, "the evidence of internal sense".' Reid's writings are notable for the absence of any such claims.

¹³ *AC*, p. 185. Reid's willingness to apply Newtonian method to the mind is present right at the beginning of *Intellectual Powers*: '[Newton's] *regulae philosophandi* are maxims of common sense ... and he who philosophizes by other rules, either concerning the material system or concerning the mind, mistakes his aim' (*IP I i*, p. 97b). There is no substance/phenomena distinction at this stage in Reid's thought.

minds which resembles it, is indeed an opinion which hath been very generally received among philosophers; but it is neither self-evident, nor hath it been clearly proved; and therefore it hath been more reasonable to call in question this doctrine of philosophers, than to discard the material world.

Here Berkeley's immaterialist 'hypothesis' – discarding the material world – is contrasted with Reid's dualistic direct realism, with the latter being preferred because it is not 'hypothetical'. In general too, Reid rejected the theory of ideas, because it supposed the existence of merely hypothetical entities, ideas.

Following this line of argument, he seems required to explain the methodological standing – its status as a 'true and sufficient cause' – of the immaterial mind. The place to find such an explanation, we might suppose, would be in his unpublished reply to Priestley's materialism, since for Priestley the brain is a 'true cause', but the soul cannot be. Reid's explanation is not there.

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