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G. E. Moore (1873–1958)

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Reflecting on his long philosophical career, G. E. Moore had this to say:

> I do not think that the world or the sciences would ever have suggested to me any philosophical problems. What has suggested philosophical problems to me is things which other philosophers have said about the world or the sciences.

Yet this philosophers' philosopher was lionized by the Bloomsbury literati, and his first book, *Principia Ethica*, is now included by the Modern Library Board among the one hundred most important nonfiction books of the century.

Born in 1873 to a middle-class family in a London suburb, Moore went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, at 19. After two years studying classics, he switched to philosophy under the influence of his friend Bertrand Russell, but soon after that it was Moore who led Russell from and against idealism. With "The Refutation of Idealism" Moore set the direction that was to take them both to logical and philosophical analysis, and to founding, along with Ludwig Wittgenstein and the logical positivists, the philosophical movement that came to be known as "analytic philosophy."

Moore's focus was not just on the giving of definitions or "analyses," however, though that certainly was central to his work, as it was for Plato. On the contrary, he made it clear that it is also a job for philosophy to give "a general description of the *whole* of this universe, mentioning all the most important kinds of things which we *know* to be in it." He also reflected long and deeply on what knowledge is and on how it might be attained. These reflections had an important impact on Wittgenstein, whose *On Certainty* is a response to Moore in epistemology (see WITTGENSTEIN). And it was ethics that first attracted Moore's intensely concentrated, patient attention, yielding that great first book of his.

In that book, Moore introduces the analysis of concepts and properties into components. Consider, for example, being male and being a sibling, which come together through conjunction to form the complex concept of being a brother. According to Moore, some concepts are not thus analyzable, however, among them that of being yellow and that of being good (i.e. intrinsically good), the latter of which is fundamental to ethics.

This fundamental concept of ethics is said to be not only simple but also nonnatural, and irreducible to any natural property. Thus it is not analyzable in utilitarian style as

a matter of causing or containing states of pleasure or pain. There are ways of being intrinsically good not dreamt of by such hedonism; being good cannot be identified with any one member of the plurality of intrinsic goods. Moreover, concerning any natural property X proposed as identical with the property of being good, there is always some such "open question" as: "Is having X inevitably necessary and sufficient for being good?" Even if we answer such a question in the affirmative, once our answer is disputed, as surely it will be if not absolutely trivial, that will show the property X and the property of being good *not* to be one and the same property. For if these *were* the same, then our question would be tantamount to the question "Is having X inevitably necessary and sufficient for having X?" – than which few questions can be more trivial. Surely this question cannot occasion the sort of controversy that always attends theories of the good.

Moore puts forward some excellent issues here, but his answers are not entirely satisfactory if only because based on too few distinctions (uncharacteristically so). At a minimum, we need the distinction between meaning analysis and philosophical, metaphysical analysis, as well as the distinction between concepts and properties. Perhaps "male sibling" can help provide a meaning analysis of "brother," so that the question "Is a brother a male sibling?" is indeed trivial. By contrast, "is productive of a greater balance of pleasure over pain than any alternative" may not give us a *meaning* analysis of "is the right thing to do." But it is left open that it may give a good philosophical analysis in any case, if one that is *not* obvious, not just a matter of surface meaning. How then are we to think of philosophical analysis compatibly with the fact that, unlike a kind of (surface) meaning analysis, it is far from trivial and requires reflection? This has proved a difficult and troubling problem for analytic philosophy, and has been not so much solved as shelved under the heading of "the paradox of analysis." Those who still care about piecemeal analysis – which still includes many philosophers, though not all who count themselves "analytic" – have good reason to feel nagged by this worry.

Not through such cool analytic work did Moore attract the Bloomsburies. Most likely it was rather through bucking the Victorian penchant for rigid rules. These could not withstand Moore's probing intelligence except as rules of thumb. But Moore also distanced himself from Bentham–Mill utilitarianism. It is certainly not just pleasure that fundamentally deserves our admiration and pursuit. There are things of various sorts that separately have that special status of the *intrinsically* good; prominent among these figure, first, the enjoyment of certain human relations and, second, the appreciation of things of beauty. Here Moore's milieu and upbringing may show. Talk to the starving millions about things of beauty, and you will be less successful than in Bloomsbury. Still, pluralist that he is, Moore could simply accept further intrinsic goods that his list may have overlooked, without any major setback to his overall position.

An act is *right*, Moore advises, if and only if there is no better available alternative, where the value of each alternative is a function not only of its own intrinsic merit but also of the combined value of its consequences unto eternity. These combinations are not just brute additions, however, but may involve special value deriving from the way in which they combine, as when someone is rewarded for doing well or good, or when someone is unrewarded or punished for doing ill or harm.

Especially in his metaphysics and epistemology, Moore joined a tradition of common sense philosophy, one to which he was no doubt inherently and antecedently receptive.

Perhaps he came to know it so deeply during his years in Edinburgh, between the end of his fellowship at Trinity in 1904 and the beginning of his tenure back in Cambridge as a lecturer in 1911. The fuller name of that tradition is, after all, Scottish Common Sense, which is explained mostly by the fact that its greatest early proponent was the Scotsman Thomas Reid. In any case, however he may have been led to this tradition, Moore took to it naturally, and would defend it and develop it in his own inimitable style.

For Moore serious analysis required a kind of patient illumination of detail and nuance which is very difficult to follow attentively, and impossible for nearly anyone but Moore himself to produce. Indeed many of his essays in metaphysics and epistemology are made up almost entirely of such minute analysis, leading up to a few brilliant insights very quickly stated near the end. Take, for example, his famous "Proof of an External World." Except for the concluding few pages, Moore is engaged mostly in figuring out in great detail what "externality" could mean. That he is able to stay with that question through so many twists and turns, and that he does not bother to hide the analytic complexities illuminated by his intelligence, shows his integrity, but also makes him hard to read. If one stays until the end, however, the reward comes in the insights of the concluding pages. This is true not only of "Proof of an External World," but also of "Four Forms of Scepticism," wherein he is again defending his common sense from skeptical attack.

That commonsensical view had already been expounded in his "Defence of Common Sense," wherein he describes various features of the world as he commonsensically believes it to be. At the center of these ontological reflections Moore inquired into the nature of sensory experience and its relation to physical reality in a way characteristically exploratory and attentive to detail. Are sense-data identical with physical surfaces? Are they rather nonphysical denizens of our mental world while representative of physical realities beyond them? Is physical reality itself to be viewed as somehow a construction from or analyzable or reducible to combinations of sense-data? Moore long struggled with such questions, but his work in this area never reached closure.

Nevertheless, he felt certain enough of the core of his common sense, whatever its correct analysis may turn out to be, that he was willing to give it firm expression through a list of some of its central commitments, among them the following two: that he has and has for some time had a human body, which has been in contact with the surface of the earth, and that there have been many other three-dimensional things at various distances from his body. Such propositions form a first group. In a second group are such propositions as that he has had experiences of various sorts, and that he has observed various things in his surroundings at the time, and has had dreams, and other mental states. Finally, in a third group is the proposition that the same is true of many other human beings. In that paper Moore also quite explicitly claims, finally, that he *knows with certainty* propositions in his first two groups, and that the many other human beings of whom similar things are true also have frequently enjoyed such certain knowledge.

These are of course the claims that set up his confrontation with the skeptic, where Moore's legendary patience and powers of analysis are very much in evidence. It is this work, in my judgment, that manifests a depth of insight beyond anything shown in

Moore's other work. Not that we cannot see gaps and problems in hindsight. But his achievement was nonetheless real and impressive, and impressed the singularly unimpressionable Wittgenstein, from whom it elicited his own best work in epistemology. In the next and final part of this discussion, we turn to this work of Moore's.

Is the existence of external things just an article of faith? Certainly not, says Moore, and offers us a proof (which is here simplified), thus aiming to remove Kant's "scandal to philosophy."

> Moore's proof   Here is a hand (a real, flesh and bone hand).
>   Therefore, there is at least one external thing in existence.

According to Moore, his argument meets three conditions for being a proof: first, the premise is different from the conclusion; second, he knows the premise to be the case; and, third, the conclusion follows deductively ("Proof of an External World," in 1962: 144–5). Further conditions may be required, but he evidently thinks his proof would satisfy these as well.

As Moore is well aware, many philosophers will feel he has not given "any satisfactory proof of the point in question" (1962: 147). Some, he believes, will want the premise itself proved. But he has not tried to prove it, and does not believe it can be proved. Proving that here is a hand requires proving one is awake, and this cannot be done.

Does Moore adequately answer the skeptic? Many have denied it for the reason that he fails to rule out a crucial possibility: that our faculties are leading us astray, for example that we are dreaming. Aware of this objection, Moore grants, in "Certainty," that to know he is standing he must know he is awake ("Certainty," in 1962). The point "cuts both ways," however, and he would prefer to conclude that he *does* know he is awake since he *does* know he is standing.

This has persuaded nearly no one. On the contrary, some have thought him committed to an argument, M below, which is like Argument A, preceding it:

Argument A
A1   This map is a good guide to this desert.
A2   According to the map an oasis lies ahead.
A3   Therefore, an oasis lies ahead.

Argument M
M1   My present experience is a veridical guide to reality (and I am not dreaming).
M2   My present experience is as if I have a hand before me.
M3   Therefore, here (before me) is a hand.

When challenged on premise A1, our desert dullard responds: "I must know A1 since the only way I could know A3 is through argument A, and I *do* know A3." Is this a just comparison? Is Moore's response to the skeptic relevantly similar?

If Moore depends on argument M for his knowledge of M3, his response seems like the dullard's. The dullard is wrong to respond as he does. He must say how he knows his premise without presupposing that he already knows the conclusion. And Moore would seem comparably wrong in the analogous response to the skeptic. In explaining how he knows M1, he must not presuppose that he already knows M3.

Does Moore depend on argument M for his knowledge of M3? There is reason to think that he does not, given his emphatic acknowledgment that he cannot *prove* M3. After all, M would seem a proof of M3 just as good as Moore's own "proof of an external world." Moore concedes, in effect, that *if* he does not know that he is not dreaming *then* he does not know of the hand before him. But that is *not* necessarily because he takes himself to know M3 only through M or any other such argument. And, in any case, even if he is relying on some such argument, which would require making that concession, the defender of common sense has other options.

One might, after all, make that concession only because of the following "principle of exclusion":

PE   If one is to know that *h*, then one must exclude (rule out) every possibility that one knows to be incompatible with one's knowing that *h*.

As Moore grants explicitly, the possibility that he is just dreaming is incompatible with his knowing (perceptually) that he has a hand before him. And this, in combination with PE, is quite sufficient to explain his concession above.

Suppose Moore is not depending on argument M for his knowledge of M3. Although he recognizes his need to know he is not dreaming, suppose that is only because he accepts PE, our principle of exclusion. Then the sort of ridicule cast on the dullard is misdirected against Moore. What is more, it is not even clear that Moore must know *how* he knows he is not dreaming if he is to know M3. That is not entailed by the application of the principle of exclusion. All that follows from the application of that principle is that Moore must know *that* he is not dreaming, not that he must know *how* he knows this.

In fact, however, the historical Moore *did* rely on something very much like argument M (more on this below). So is he not after all exposed to the damaging comparison with the desert dullard?

Not at all. There seems no good reason why, in responding to the skeptic, Moore must *show how* he knows he is not dreaming. Of course his response to the skeptic would be *enhanced* if he *could* show that. But it now seems *not* properly subject to ridicule even if he is not then in a position to show how he knows he is not dreaming. The question he is addressing is *whether* he knows that he is not dreaming, and, at most, by extension, what grounds he might have for his answer to *that* question, in answering which he does not, nor need he, *also* answer the question of *how* he knows himself to be awake and not dreaming.

It might be replied that one cannot know that here is a hand if one's belief rests on the unproved assumption that one is awake. According to Moore, however, things which cannot be proved might still be known. Besides, even though he cannot prove that he is awake, he has "conclusive evidence" for it. Unfortunately he cannot state his evidence, and the matter is left in this unsatisfactory state at the end of "Proof of an External World." But Moore has more to say in another paper of the period, "Four Forms of Scepticism" (1962: 193–223). There he takes himself to know for sure about the hand before him, and takes this knowledge to be based on an inductive or analogical argument. We are told that introspective knowledge of one's own sensory experience can be immediate, unlike perceptual knowledge of one's physical surroundings. While agreeing with Russell that one *cannot* know *immediately*

that one sees a hand, Moore thinks, *contra* Russell, that he *can* know it *for certain*. And he disagrees with Russell more specifically in allowing knowledge for certain about his hand through analogical or inductive reasoning from premises known introspectively.

However, it is doubtful that any allowable form of inference – whether deductive, inductive, or analogical – will take us from the character of our experience to the sort of knowledge of our surroundings that we ordinarily claim.

Familiar skeptical scenarios – dreaming, evil demon, brain in a vat, etc. – show that our experience prompts but does not logically entail its corresponding perceptual beliefs. Experience as if there is a fire before us does not entail that there is a fire there, experience as if here is a hand does not entail that here is a hand, etc. Perhaps what is required for one's beliefs and experiences to have certain contents entails that these could not possibly be *entirely* false or misleading. Indeed, some such conclusion follows from certain externalist and epistemic requirements on one's justified attribution of familiar contents to one's own experiences or beliefs. But even if that much is right – which is still controversial – one's experience or belief that here is a hand, or yonder a fire, might still be wildly off the mark. We cannot deduce much of our supposed knowledge of the external from unaided premises about our experience.

As for inductive or analogical reasoning, only abductive reasoning – inference to the best explanation – offers much promise, but it seems questionable as a solution to our problem.[1] Suppose (1) that we restrict ourselves to data just about the qualitative character of our own sensory experience, and (2) that we view belief in a commonsensical external world as a theory postulated to explain the course of our experience. What exactly is the proposal? Is it proposed that when ordinarily we accept the presence of a hand before us, we *do* know, and know on the basis of an abductive inference; or is it proposed rather that in such circumstances we have resources that *would* enable us to know if only we used those resources to make effective abductive arguments? The second, more modest, proposal is *too* modest, since it leaves our ordinary perceptual beliefs in a position like that of a theorem accepted through a guess or a blunder, one that we do have the resources to prove after much hard thought, but one that we have not come close to proving at the time when we are just guessing or blundering.

Even the modest proposal, moreover, seems unlikely to succeed. *Could* we form a rich enough set of beliefs purely about the qualitative character of our sensory experience, one rich enough to permit abductive inferences yielding our commonsense view of external reality? This seems doubtful when we consider (1) that such pure data beliefs could not already presuppose the external reality to be inferred, and (2) that the postulated commonsense "theory" of external reality must presumably meet constraints on abductive inference: for example that the postulated theory be empirically testable and also simpler and less *ad hoc* than alternatives (e.g. Berkeley's). These requirements plausibly imply that our data must go beyond detached observations, and include some acceptable correlations. Yet these correlations are unavailable if we restrict ourselves to beliefs about the character of our experience.[2] Most especially are they unavailable, and most especially is the postulated inference implausible, when our database is restricted, as it is by Moore, to introspectively known facts of one's own *then present* subjective experience, and to *directly recalled* facts of one's own earlier experience. (If

deprived of the epistemic resources of testimony and of retentive memory – except insofar as such resources can be validated by reason-cum-introspection, which is not very far if at all – then there is precious little we can any longer see ourselves as knowing, thus deprived.)

Accordingly, the skeptic has a powerful case against Moore's claim that our knowledge of the external is based on an inductive or analogical inference from such information about our experience. It is not realistic to suppose that we consciously make such inferences in everyday life. It is more plausible to conceive of such inferences as implicit or dispositional, but even this strains belief. Besides, even granted that we make such inferences if only implicitly, do they yield simpler and less *ad hoc* hypotheses than alternatives? That is far from clear; nor do such hypotheses seem empirically testable and credible simply as explanations of the purely qualitative character of our then present or directly recalled experience.

Having reached a dead end, let us have some second thoughts on Moore's view of perceptual beliefs as inferential. Here he joined a venerable tradition along with Russell himself. If perceptual knowledge is thus mediate and inferential, what knowledge can qualify as immediate and foundational? Modern philosophy begins with Descartes's canonical answer to this question.[3]

Descartes had two circles, not only the big famous one involving God as guarantor of our faculties, but also a smaller one found in the second paragraph of his Meditation III, where he reasons like this:

> I am certain that I am a thinking being. Do I not therefore also know what is required for my being certain about anything? In this first item of knowledge there is simply a clear and distinct perception of what I am asserting; this would not be enough to make me certain of the truth of the matter if it could ever turn out that something which I perceived with such clarity and distinctness was false. So I now seem to be able to lay it down as a general rule that whatever I perceive very clearly and distinctly is true.[4]

About the *cogito,* I wish to highlight the inference drawn by Descartes: *So I now seem to be able to lay it down as a general rule that whatever I perceive very clearly and distinctly is true*. Just what is Descartes's argument in support of this general rule? Would his reasoning take the following form?

1 Datum: I know with a high degree of certainty that I think.
2 I clearly and distinctly perceive that I think, and that is the only, or anyhow the best account of the source of my knowledge that I think.
3 So my clear and distinct perception that I think is what explains why or how it is that I know I think.
4 But my clear and distinct perception could not serve as a source of that knowledge if it were not an infallibly reliable faculty.
5 So, finally, my clear and distinct perception must be an infallibly reliable faculty.

The move from (1) and (2) to (3) is an inference to an explanatory account that one might accept for the coherence it gives to one's view of things in the domain involved. Descartes does elsewhere appeal to coherence at important junctures.[5] So he may

be doing so here as well, although questions do arise about how Descartes views coherence. Does he accept the power of coherence to add justified certainty, and, in particular, would he claim infallibility for (sufficiently comprehensive and binding) coherence as he does for clear and distinct intuition?[6] In any case, the comprehensive coherence of his world-view would be enhanced by an explanation of how clear and distinct perception comes to be so highly reliable, even infallible. And this is just what Descartes attempts, through his theological and other reasoning. Descartes can see that reason might take him to a position that is sufficiently comprehensive and interlocking – and thereby defensible against any foreseeable attack, no holds barred, against any specific doubt actually pressed or in the offing, no matter how slight. Unaided reason might take him to that position. Need he go any further? What is more: might one reach a similar position while dispensing with the trappings of Cartesian theology and even of Cartesian rationalism?

Compare now how Moore might have proceeded:

1   Datum: I know with a high degree of certainty that here is a hand.
2   I can see and feel that here is a hand, and that is the only, or anyhow the best account of the source of my knowledge that here is a hand.
3   So my perception that here is a hand is what explains why or how it is that I know (with certainty) that here is a hand.
4   But my perception could not serve as a source of that degree of justified certainty if it were not a reliable faculty.[7]
5   So, finally, my perception must be a reliable faculty.

Moore could of course go on to say more about the nature of the perception that assures him about the hand. He might still say that such perception involves an implicit inference from what is known immediately and introspectively, perhaps an inductive or analogical inference of some sort. And that might make his view more comprehensively coherent, but we have already seen reasons why postulating such an inference is questionable. So we focus rather on a second alternative: Moore might well take perceiving to involve no inference at all, not even implicit inference, but only transfer of light, nerve impulses, etc., in such a way that the character of one's surroundings has a distinctive impact on oneself and occasions corresponding and reliable beliefs. This might also amount eventually to a comprehensively coherent view of one's knowledge of the external world. *And its epistemologically significant features would not distinguish it in any fundamental respect from the procedure followed by Descartes.*

There are other ways of opposing Moore besides that of the traditional skeptic. These are all based in some way or other on a key requirement of "sensitivity" for knowledge, one imposed on any belief candidate for knowledge, as follows: one's belief that *p* amounts to knowledge that *p* only if one would *not* believe that *p* if it were not the case that *p*.

It is initially very tempting to accept the sensitivity idea common to the various forms of sensitivity-based opposition to Moore: namely, the skeptical, tracking, relevant-alternative, and contextualist approaches that share some form of commitment to that requirement. And, given this idea, one can then argue powerfully for the first premise of the skeptic's "argument from ignorance," AI, formulable by means of the following abbreviations:

   H   I am a handless brain in a vat being fed experiences as if I were normally embodied and situated (see PUTNAM).

   G   I now have hands.

Here now is AI:

   (i)   I do not know that not-H.
   (ii) If (i), then C (below).
   C   I do not know that G.

That lays out the skeptic's stance. Moore for his part grants the skeptic premise (ii), but rejects C and therefore (i). Robert Nozick's stance is different.[8] Like Moore, he rejects C. Like the skeptic, he affirms (i). So he must reject (ii), which he does aided by his independently supported account of knowledge as tracking. It is not only Nozick who rejects closure under known entailment; so does the relevantist, for whom in order to know some fact X you need not know (and often cannot know) the negation of an alternative known to be incompatible with X, so long as it is not a "relevant" alternative.

Having granted to the skeptic his premise A(i), contextualism is able to defend ordinary claims to know only by distinguishing the ordinary contexts in which such claims are made from the context where the skeptic asserts his distinctive premise in the course of giving argument AI. With this difference in context comes a difference in standards; and, because of this difference, it is incorrect to say in the skeptic's context that one knows G, correct though it may be to say it in an ordinary context.

That response to the skeptic faces a problem. Moore's opponents argue that sensitivity is necessary for correct attributions of knowledge.[9] Despite its plausibility, however, serious objections have been published against any such requirement of sensitivity. But the problems for sensitivity do not affect a similar requirement of "safety." A belief is sensitive iff had it been false, S would not have held it (i.e. it would have been false only without S holding it), whereas a belief is *safe* iff S would have held it only with it being true. For short: S's belief B(p) is sensitive iff $\sim p \rightarrow \sim B(p)$, whereas S's belief is safe iff $B(p) \rightarrow p$. These are not necessarily equivalent, since subjunctive conditionals do not contrapose.[10]

And now we see the problem faced by the contextualist response to the skeptic: namely, that an alternative explanation is equally adequate for undisputed cases (undisputed, for example, between those who opt for a Moorean stance opposing the skeptic's distinctive premise (i) and those who opt for a contextualist stance which accepts it). According to this alternative explanation, it is safety that (correct attribution of) "knowledge" requires, a requirement violated in the ordinary cases cited, wherein the subject fails to know. One fails to know in those cases, it is now said, because one's belief is not safe. Suppose this generalizes to all uncontentious cases adduced by the contextualist to favor his sensitivity requirement. Suppose in all such cases the condition required could just as well be safety as sensitivity. And suppose, moreover, that the problems for sensitivity briefly noted above do not affect safety, as I have claimed. If so, then one cannot differentially support sensitivity as the right requirement, so as to invoke it in support of the skeptic's main premise.

Here is the striking result: if we opt for safety as the right requirement then a Moorean stance is defensible, and we avoid skepticism.[11] That is to say, one does satisfy

the requirement that one's belief of not-H be safe: after all, one *would* believe that not-H (that one was not so radically deceived) only if it was true (which is not to say that one *could* believe that not-H only if it was true). In the actual world, and for quite a distance away from the actual world, up to quite remote possible worlds, our belief that we are not radically deceived matches the fact whether or not we are radically deceived.[12]

Consider, moreover, the need to explain how the skeptic's premise – that one does not know oneself not to be radically misled, etc. – is as plausible as it is. That requirement must be balanced by an equally relevant and stringent requirement: namely, that one explain how that premise is as *implausible* as it is.[13] To many of us it just does not seem so uniformly plausible that one cannot ever be said correctly to know that one is not then being fed experiences while envatted. So the explanatory requirement is in fact rather more complex than might seem at first. And, given the distribution of intuitions here, the contextualist and the Nozickian still owe us an explanation.

Interestingly, our distinction between sensitivity and safety may help us meet the more complex explanatory demand, compatibly with the Moorean stance, which I adopt as my own. My preferred explanation may be sketched as follows.

Those who find the skeptic's distinctive premise plausible *on the basis of the sorts of sensitivity considerations favored by opponents of Moorean common sense* may perhaps be confusing sensitivity with safety, and may on that basis assess as correct affirmations of that premise. After all, the requirement of safety is well supported by the sorts of considerations adduced by Moore's opponents. Sensitivity being so similar to safety, so easy to confuse, it is no surprise that one would find sensitivity so plausible, enough to mislead one into assessing as correct affirmations of that premise.

The plausibility of the skeptic's premise is thus explained compatibly with its falsity, which fits the stance of the Moorean. Of course all we really need in order to explain the plausibility of the skeptic's premise is that it clearly enough follows from something plausible enough. And the sensitivity requirement may perhaps play that role well enough independently of whether it is confused with a safety requirement. But that would still leave the question of why sensitivity is so plausible if it is just false. And here there might still be a role for safety to play: if this requirement of safety is plausible because it is true and defensible through reflection, then it may be deeply plausible to us simply through our ability to discern the true from the false in such a priori matters. Compatibly with that, some of us may be misled into accepting the requirement of sensitivity because it is so easy to confuse with the correct requirement, that of safety.[14]

I have wanted to convey the power and depth of Moore's thought not only by describing it at a lofty distance but also by engaging with it at close quarters. Despite the reservations I have recorded on this or that point, I hope to have made it clear how persuasively right are his views on some of the most difficult and disputed issues in the history of our subject. But being right does not alone confer greatness in philosophy. From his earliest days as a thinker, Moore was not only right but also able to think for himself in ways opposed to the regnant orthodoxies, and to prevail as a master dialectician. One main source of his influence is now impossible to capture fully, however, since it resided in his *viva voce* contributions to the intellectual life of that golden age of

Cambridge philosophy. This Socratic side is well conveyed by his younger Cambridge colleague, C. D. Broad, in an obituary for Moore:

> It was by his lectures, his discussion-classes, his constant and illuminating contributions to discussion at the Cambridge Moral Science Club and the Aristotelian Society, and his private conversation with his colleagues and pupils that he mainly produced his effects on the thought of his time.

Notes

1   For Russell the "common sense hypothesis" of independent physical objects is "simpler" than the supposition that life is but a dream (as he explains in chapter II of *The Problems of Philosophy*). For Quine the "hypothesis of ordinary physical objects" is "posited" or "projected" from the data provided by sensory stimulations. "Subtracting his cues from his world view, we get man's net contribution as the difference" (*Word and Object* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), p. 5). That Quine's position is deeply problematic is shown by Stroud (*The Significance of Philosophical Skepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), ch. VI).

2   This is argued by Wilfrid Sellars in "Phenomenalism," in his *Science, Perception, and Reality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963) (see SELLARS).

3   The shift to discussion of Descartes may seem abrupt; however, what we find about the nature of immediate knowledge in that discussion has important implications for a position that Moore failed to explore. Skeptics who are willing to grant Descartes his immediate knowledge through introspection or rational intuition would need to explain exactly why perception could never yield such knowledge. (And what of memory?) The discussion of Descartes to follow is meant to highlight this issue.

4   *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, ed. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), vol. II, p. 24.

5   In his *Principles of Philosophy* (Part IV, art. 205) for example, he notes that if we can interpret a long stretch of otherwise undecipherable writing by supposing that it is written in "one-off natural language," where the alphabet has all been switched forward by one letter, etc., then this is good reason for that interpretation. There he also argues for his scientific account of reality in terms of certain principles by claiming that "it would hardly have been possible for so many items to fall into a coherent pattern if the original principles had been false" (Cottingham et al., *Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, p. 290). Of course, if we join Descartes in adopting this sort of inference to an account that aids comprehensive coherence we will need to be able to distinguish it relevantly from the rejected abductive inference to an external world from introspective data about one's own experience and direct memories about one's past experiences. But there are important differences: for one thing, the present Cartesian inference is not an inference to a causal account, one with discernible rivals that we are unable to rule out without vicious circularity. But it remains to be seen whether the *additional* theological project that Descartes next launches is or is not open to similar problems as those that beset the abductive inference to the external world, or even worse problems. We do not consider these issues which are matters of detail by comparison with the more abstract epistemological structure of Descartes's reasoning that we consider.

6   My attribution to Descartes is tentative because of the enormous bibliography on the "Cartesian circle." In deference to that important tradition of scholarship, I do no more than *suggest* that there is logical space for an interpretation of Descartes that is perhaps more

complex than many already tried, but that seems coherent and interesting. (I am myself convinced that this *is* Descartes's actual position, and defend this more fully elsewhere.)

7   Here one would reduce Descartes's requirement of *infallible* certainty.

8   Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

9   Keith DeRose, "Solving the Skeptical Problem," *Philosophical Review* 104 (1995), pp. 1–52.

10   If water now flowed from your kitchen faucet, it would *not* then be the case that water so flowed while your main valve was closed. But the contrapositive of this true conditional is clearly false.

11   I mean that *we* in our reflection and in our discussions in journal and seminar, avoid skepticism; we can say right here and now that we do know various things, and not just that we say "I know" correctly in various contexts not now our own.

12   This sort of externalist move has been widely regarded as unacceptably circular, mistakenly, as I argue in detail elsewhere.

13   When I have asked my classes to vote on that premise, generally I have found that those who find it false outnumber those who find it true, and quite a few prefer to suspend judgment. At every stage people spread out in some such pattern of three-way agreement-failure.

14   For a fuller defense of a Moorean stance in epistemology by comparison with alternative ideas on the epistemology marketplace, see my "How to Defeat Opposition to Moore," *Philosophical Perspectives 13; Epistemology* 13 (1999), Supplement to *Noûs*, pp. 141–55.

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