

Themes from G. E. Moore:

New Essays in Epistemology and Ethics

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Introduction

I

Nearly fifty years after the death of G. E. Moore, a revisionist consensus has begun to emerge about Moore's place in the history of philosophy and the nature of his contribution to the subject. Although the breadth of Moore's influence, as one of the founders of analytic philosophy, has never been in doubt, an entire generation of philosophers spent their professional lives dissenting from Moore's views, so that, by the middle of the last century, many had come to regard him as only a philosopher whose best arguments had been superseded by those of more insightful successors. But Moore is now being reassessed in light of subsequent developments in both epistemology and ethics that make clear the durability of Moorean ideas in twenty-first-century philosophical disputes. Renewed interest in the normative and evaluative dimensions of epistemology and in the connections between some central issues of epistemology and value theory and metaethics have sparked new interest in Moore's work. This is evident in recent literature on ethical non-naturalism, realism, and intuitionism, and also in debates about skepticism and common sense in epistemology. Some themes developed by Moore in epistemology and ethics are revisited in this volume in the light of contemporary controversies in those areas.

As these new essays make clear, Moore's arguments uncovered significant conundrums whose true import we have only begun to understand. The notorious difficulties encountered by the various attempts at resolving them have only brought us back to a more acute appreciation of just how difficult the problems were to which Moore set his hand. If the early history of twentieth-century philosophy in Britain seems to have been largely a history of philosophers disagreeing with Moore, that is because Moore's

role in that history was that of an innovator who could see old problems in new ways, and because those ways sometimes hit wrong notes that were perceived immediately by his critics. But Moore clearly had an acute sense of where the fault-lines lay in moral philosophy and theory of knowledge, and his meticulous methods of analysis enabled him to point out fundamental issues and say provocative things about them, in a way that led other philosophers to jump into the fray. Where others appeared to make progress on a problem, Moore was happy to acknowledge it; and whenever his own positions proved unsupportable, Moore would revise or abandon them without hesitation.

Moore's interests were wide ranging, but his legacy to philosophy lies chiefly in his contributions to three areas: epistemology, ethics, and philosophical method,—the first two of which are the focus of this volume. In ethics, Moore defended a boldly cognitivist moral realism that incorporated a non-naturalist theory of intrinsic value, and argued that such value was knowable only through intuition. As we shall see presently, all of this was in the service of a normative theory that embraced an ideal utilitarianism. In epistemology, Moore famously broached a number of issues, though his main concerns were with the epistemic status of common-sense beliefs, the problem of knowledge and skepticism, the relation between sense data and physical objects, and what has come to be known as 'Moore's Paradox' (that to say, sincerely and competently, 'I believe that p but p is false,' seems consistent but absurd). Often raising questions of his own about these issues, he struggled to resolve them with arguments and strategies so influential that we may justly consider them *Moorean themes* in epistemology—topics that, in Moore's day, attracted the attention of contemporaries of the caliber of Wittgenstein, Russell, and Ayer. As the essays in this collection make clear, however, they continue to generate philosophical interest in our own time.

II

What, then, were some of the questions in epistemology that puzzled Moore? The historical Moore took a 'common-sense' view of the world to be not only predominantly true but generally known to be true. Questions arise, however, as to whether common sense has such features and, if so, on which grounds. And what, exactly, are the elements that make it up? The *locus classicus* for Moore's own answers is of course his 1925 essay, 'Defence of Common Sense'. Yet, as widely read there, his position often receives little credit. It comes out as championing a Yes answer to the first question, while providing only a viciously circular one to the second, and no view at all that could constitute an adequate answer to the third. On the other hand,

more charitable critics argue that, with supplemental reasons, common sense may be shown to have the properties ascribed to it by Moore.¹

Either way, dissatisfaction appears to be the shared response to at least the letter of Moore's account of common sense. For both skeptical and sympathetic readers have noticed that it ascribes to the relevant beliefs properties they might not have at all, and that it does so without argument. Surely any attempt to back up Moore's account would need to address how the items that make up common sense are individuated. The closest Moore himself came to providing a criterion for membership of the relevant class was perhaps the *Commonplace Book* (1962b: 280), where each item making up common sense is said to consist in 'a thing which every or very nearly every sane adult, who has the use of all his senses (e.g. was not born blind or deaf) believes or knows (where "believes" & "knows" are used dispositionally).' The items at issue, then, appear to be common-sense beliefs, construed as ordinary assumptions shared alike by philosophers and non-philosophers in their everyday lives. Moore is not alone in thinking that a great number of such beliefs have the features of being almost immune to falsity and epistemic failure (see for instance Huemer 2001; Lemos 2004; and Somerville 1986).

Yet the claim is vulnerable to well-known objections. For one thing, there is a long history of outlandish beliefs that were at one time or another shared assumptions of philosophers and non-philosophers in their ordinary lives. Since, as we shall see, Moore intended common sense to have ambitious metaphysical and epistemological cash value, he appears committed to providing a principled way of ruling out unwelcome shared assumptions. After all, a closer look at common sense may very well reveal that the class of actually shared beliefs is either quite small, or of no philosophical interest at all, or both. Moreover, some of Moore's putative common-sense beliefs, such as that *there exists at present a human body which is one's own body* and that *ever since one's own body was born, it has been either in contact with or not far from the surface of the earth* (1925, 33) are quite sophisticated and may therefore fail altogether to qualify for the class. For to understand their contents seems to require a certain cultural, and maybe even philosophical, training that 'nearly every sane adult' may *not* in fact have—a weakness in Moore's account pointed out independently by J. L. Austin (1962) and C. D. Broad (1970), among others.

It should be noted, however, that although Moore provided no explicit criterion for identifying common-sense beliefs, he did offer at the outset of 'Defence' a list of *truisms*, and these can be put at the service of articulating the following working hypothesis: a belief type qualifies for common sense if and only if its propositional-content type

¹ See, for example, Moore (1925, 44). The list of skeptics about Moore's common sense include Ayer (1984), Broad (1970), Butchvarov (1998), Strawson (1985), Stroud (1984), and Unger (1974). For more sympathetic readers, see, e.g., Klemke (2000), Landesman (2002), Lemos (2004), and Somerville (1986).

belongs to the domains carved out by Moore's list of truisms. Now the question becomes, *what, exactly, are those truisms?* They are propositions Moore took to express meanings that, though resistant to philosophical analysis, are none the less understood and known to be true *mutatis mutandis* by most of us, intellectual and layman alike. But, as we have seen, this claim has problems of its own. In any case, such propositions cannot *express* meanings—for they *are* the meanings of some utterances, as they also are the contents of beliefs and other psychological attitudes.

Let's say that a belief, whether dispositional or occurrent, qualifies as common sense just in case its propositional content is of the kinds illustrated in Moore's list (1925, 33–5). This list divides the included sentences into two 'classes', with many belonging to a metaphysical domain, since they can be used to express propositions about the reality of certain entities and their various relationships. Some involve the existence of one's own body, states of consciousness, recent memories, and/or various relationships with external things. In Moore's own examples, sentences of this sort can be used to express propositions, such as *that one has and has had for a period of time a human body and certain states of consciousness, is and has been near the surface of the earth*, etc. But other sentences in the same metaphysical domain are about others having and having had for a period of time human bodies that have had certain relationships and experiences, and about the existence of biological kinds and non-living things such as celestial bodies and artifacts. Moore's example of a common-sense epistemological belief is expressed by a single sentence asserting that the previously listed truisms are common knowledge: not only does he himself know them, but he knows that *most of us* also know *mutatis mutandis* a great number of them too (1925, 34).

Thus construed, common sense was intended to have ambitious metaphysical and epistemological consequences. For, given Moorean common sense, many of the beliefs instantiating the listed truisms would be true, and therefore entail the truth of some generalizations about the *reality* of the self, other minds, the past, and the external world. But if true, since they would also be justified by whatever reasons can be adduced to include them in that list, such beliefs would amount to *knowledge* in some sense, and therefore entail the truth of some generalizations about knowledge of propositions in those domains. In fact, Moore's argument often appears to aim at substantiating two conclusions at once: one metaphysical, the other epistemological.

Compare Moore's 'Defence' with his 'Proof of an External World'. In both cases it would be too naïve to read the paper as offering only one strand of reasoning—that against metaphysical anti-realist positions such as those held by idealists, solipsists, and the like—while ignoring the fact that it also targets skeptical positions about knowledge, of the kinds illustrated by the listed truisms. In the case of 'Defence', merely by holding that he was justified in believing certain metaphysical propositions because they belong to common sense (since these entail generalizations about the existence of the self, other minds, the past, and the external world), Moore was, in

fact, thereby making a claim with anti-skeptical import. On the other hand, in his 1939 ‘Proof’ if he could come to have a justified belief in the existence of an external world by deducing it from the assertion that *here is a hand* while holding up one of his hands (in good light, clear-minded, with eyes open, etc.), then his argument would *ipso facto* have an anti-skeptical import. And it would, of course, have it independently of whether Moore himself was willing to acknowledge it explicitly (cf. Moore 1942; Baldwin 1990). Let’s now consider these two strands of reasoning separately. First, the metaphysical one, which may be reconstructed as follows:

HAND I

- 1 Here is a hand.
- 2 If here is a hand, then there is an external world.
(For hands are objects in a world external to the mind.)
Therefore,
- 3 There is an external world.

HAND I is valid and may even be sound. Its premise (1) amounts to an empirical belief likely to be true, for example, when ‘I’ refers to Moore. To many, premise (2) is a priori true, given the concepts involved. By simple *modus ponens*, then, the general conclusion (3) follows. Yet, in light of well-known anti-realist arguments and thought experiments, **HAND I** strikes us as unpersuasive. It is difficult to see how any appeal to common sense to support premise (1) could be of any help in avoiding begging the question against anti-realists when it comes to premise (2). Something more is needed to get **HAND I** off the ground—and it may very well be one of the alternative strategies attempted by Moore himself elsewhere.

Let’s now consider whether a Moorean argument against skepticism about the external world (hereafter, simply ‘skepticism’) could do any better. It may be taken to run,

HAND II

- 1 I am justified in believing that *here is a hand*.
- 2 If I am justified in believing that *here is a hand*, then I’m justified in believing that *there is an external world*.
(For a hand is an object in a world external to the mind)
Therefore,
- 3 I am justified in believing that *there is an external world*.

Assuming the plausibility of a closure principle to the effect that, if one is justified in believing that p , and that p entails q , then one is also justified in believing that q , **HAND II** is valid. Yet questions arise as to whether its premise (1) is well supported. In light of well-known skeptical scenarios, it wouldn't do in this case to first invoke common sense to support that premise, and then argue that premise (2) is supported by reflection alone. Such a maneuver would clearly fall short of meeting the skeptical challenge.

Yet perhaps other grounds are available to the historical Moore to support **HAND II**'s premise (1). Is there logical space for him to hold, for example, that such beliefs are justified directly or non-inferentially? It seems not, given his views in theory of perception, which allow only for immediate introspective knowledge of one's own sense data (cf. Pryor 2004). Like other sense-datum theorists, Moore faced the obstacle that no inference from direct awareness of one's own sensedata, be it deductive, abductive, or analogical, could produce the kind of justification needed to counter the skeptic about beliefs such as *that here is a hand*. At the same time, Moore's own rejection of skepticism of the Humean sort (1909, 1910) commits him to avoiding the naturalist contention that such beliefs are justified on the grounds that we humans cannot help but have them (e.g., Strawson 1985). Let's suppose, then, that common-sense beliefs don't qualify for being direct or irresistible. Couldn't they still come to be justified if either epistemic externalism or semantic externalism turns out to be true? The first option is unavailable to the historical Moore, who enlisted himself in the epistemic internalist camp, often claiming not only to *know* many such beliefs but to *know them with certainty* (1941, 236–7), and at the same time conceding to the skeptic that if he did not know *that he was not dreaming*, then he did not know propositions such as *that here is a hand* (1941, 247). On the other hand, semantic externalism might not be an option worth fighting for, since it appears to face a reductio: when held, together with a plausible thesis of privileged self-knowledge, semantic externalism seems to have the consequence that one could deduce *that one has hands* from one's own belief that one has them. As shown by recent literature, the controversial character of any such deduction would speak against Moore's appeal to semantic externalism.

Relevant to the anti-skeptical reasoning of the historical Moore is his own reaction to the Cartesian-dream scenario, which he judged incompatible with knowledge of propositions such as *that this is a pencil* or *here is a hand*. In fact, he would have granted that many other well-known skeptical scenarios are also incompatible with knowledge of that sort. Although we need not rehearse here the details of any such scenario, let's briefly consider a possible Moorean response to the brain-in-a-vat (BIV) case. Imagine the skeptic invites Moore to entertain the possibility of his being a handless brain, electronically stimulated to have sensory experiences indistinguishable from those of a non-BIV. Contra Moore, the skeptic argues

BIV

- 1 Moore is not justified in believing *that he is not a BIV*.
 - 2 If Moore is not justified in believing *that he is not a BIV*, then he is not justified in believing *that here is a hand*.
- Therefore,*
- 3 Moore is not justified in believing *that here is a hand*.

Since to Moore (1941, 247), however, skeptical arguments ‘cut both ways’, he might take **BIV**’s conclusion to be less plausible than the belief *that here is a hand* when he is holding up his hand in the appropriate circumstances. Accordingly, his rejoinder could consist in an equally valid argument such as

HAND III

- 1 I am justified in believing *that here is a hand*.
 - 2 If I am justified in believing *that here is a hand*, then I am justified in believing *that I’m not a BIV*.
- Therefore,*
- 3 I am justified in believing *that I’m not a BIV*.

Could this defeat the skeptic’s argument? Once again, it is difficult to see what resources are available to Moore in order to provide non-question-begging support for premise (1). Only by producing some reasons independent of his own perceptual experience can he prevail in this debate with the skeptic. This is, of course, a common objection to his ‘proof’ of an external world, when construed as an argument against skepticism. Whether or not the charge can be substantiated, it is clear—as noted by some of the papers in this volume—that any successful attempt to vindicate a Moorean anti-skeptical stance must give a compelling account of why it has been so widely thought to fail.²

² As is well known, Moore took his 1939 argument, cast here as **HAND II**, to be a rigorous proof, with a conclusion that differs, but follows validly, from premises known to be true. Although the premise that we have cast as ‘Here is a hand’ is controversial, Moore (1939, 147) believed himself to have ‘evidence’ for it, even if neither he nor anyone else could provide it. He rightly pointed out that it would be unreasonable to demand a proof for each step in a proof. But, since first proposed by Moore, the ‘proof’ has struck philosophers as both provocative and deeply unsatisfactory. It is often charged that, here again, Moore simply begged the question against the skeptic. Some objections to that effect are, for example, in Jackson (1987) and Wright (2002). See also Davies (2004) and Pryor (2004) for neo-Moorean rejoinders.

III

The straightforward realist and anti-skeptical convictions that mark Moore's metaphysics and epistemology appear also in his ethics. As noted above, Moore's normative ethical theory was an ideal utilitarianism. Influenced in some central ways by Sidgwick, Moore's theory held actions to be right only in so far as they produce in their results more overall good than other possible alternative actions (1903, 77). It is therefore not surprising that Moore's position reveals a consequentialist's concern with the objective, intrinsic value of the end in terms of which the rightness of the means is determined. On his view, the goodness that right actions bring about is not merely something subjective (1912, 50–105), but a mind- and language-independent property that good things have.

It is not, however, a natural property. Although the goodness of good things may be said to supervene³ on their ordinary, observable, physical properties (so that it is in virtue of their having the latter that they are good), goodness itself is not reducible to, or analyzable into, any other quality, whether natural or metaphysical. This is because, according to Moore, 'good' denotes a simple, non-natural property. Given its non-naturalness, such a property is not a part of the physical world investigated by the sciences. Given its simplicity, it cannot be analyzed into parts, for it has no parts. In connection with this, it is a central claim of *Principia Ethica* that the term 'good' cannot be defined at all, since the sort of intrinsic value that it denotes is not equivalent to any other property, or to any combination of other properties (1903, 58–69).

In particular, goodness is not equivalent to any natural property, and the attempt to define 'good' in purely descriptive terms allegedly commits a 'naturalistic fallacy' (1903, 62).⁴ Furthermore, to equate goodness with any natural property or properties, such as *what maximizes pleasure* or *what we desire to desire*, only makes the proponent of such an equation vulnerable to the Open Question Argument (OQA). Moore's OQA rests on some intuitions about the cognitive value of propositions relevant to analyses of value predicates into purely descriptive predicates. In light of those intuitions, although it is trivial, and so perhaps even unintelligible, to say 'Granted, *a* is what maximizes pleasure, but is it what maximizes pleasure', or 'Granted, *a* is what we desire to desire, but is it what we desire to desire?', it is informative and clearly intelligible to say 'Granted, *a* is what maximizes pleasure, but is it good?' or 'Granted, *a* is what we desire to desire, but is it good?' If 'good' were *semantically equivalent* to 'what maximizes

³ Moore does not himself use the word 'supervene'.

⁴ Strictly, the 'naturalistic fallacy' is the mistake of trying to define 'good' in terms of *any* other property, or combination of properties at all, whether natural or non-natural. But it is clear that Moore's chief concern in *Principia Ethica* was to deny that 'good' could be defined in terms of either natural or metaphysical properties.

pleasure' or to 'what we desire to desire', Moore reasoned, then questions such as the latter would have exactly the same cognitive value as the former. Yet they don't. He concluded that 'good' is not semantically equivalent to these purely descriptive predicates. And, given that similar arguments could be run for any other attempted naturalistic analysis of 'good', with always the same result, Moore inferred that value predicates such as 'good' are not analyzable at all into purely descriptive predicates.

What this suggests, he thought, is that goodness—or 'intrinsic value', as he often referred to it in *Principia*—is something *sui generis*: what we ordinarily denote by 'good' is never reducible to any natural property or combination of natural properties—or, indeed, to *any other* properties at all. Thus the *OQA*, arguably Moore's most important contribution, fueled Moore's conviction that goodness itself can only be a simple, unanalyzable, non-natural property. But a number of objections were early adduced against the *OQA*, ranging from its begging the question and leading to the so-called paradox of analysis (Frankena 1939) to its being invalid (Putnam 1981; Harman 1977). Ultimately there came to be a consensus that Moore had, in fact, discovered no naturalistic fallacy and that his *OQA* against naturalism in ethics could not be made to work (Darwall, Gibbard, and Railton 1992).

To sum up, Moore's metaethical stance in moral ontology may be said to rest on certain crucial doctrines, to which all other claims are corollaries. One is moral realism, the doctrine that moral properties exist and are mind- and language-independent. Related to this is cognitivism, the doctrine that whether something has an evaluative or normative property is something *objective* so that any judgment to that effect qualifies for a truth value. Another is non-naturalism, the doctrine that moral properties are something over and above natural properties. A corollary of non-naturalism is the so-called *autonomy-of-ethics* thesis, according to which ethics cannot be naturalized, since it is a philosophical discipline with its own subject-matter and methods completely independent of the natural and social sciences.

Another important question raised by Moore's moral ontology concerns its epistemology: how do we know that something has intrinsic value? Moore's answer is that, although the presence of goodness in good things is signaled by the observable, natural properties on which (we would say) it supervenes, goodness itself is knowable only *by intuition*: it is simply apprehended directly in reflecting on the intrinsic nature of the things that have it. Moore thought that the goodness of certain things—in the final chapter of *Principia* he names the states of consciousness associated with friendships and aesthetic enjoyments—was self-evident.

Now clearly, this moral ontology and epistemology amount to a combination of doctrines that could hardly fail to draw fire, and it has done so from the very

outset. Moore's realist non-naturalist account of goodness,⁵ together with his appeal to intuition to account for how goodness could be identified in the things that have it, were so thoroughly alien to the empiricist sensibilities of the younger generation of philosophers in the 1930s and 1940s that some reacted by rejecting cognitivism and moral realism altogether and adopting non-cognitivist theories in various forms. Chief among these were the emotivism of Stevenson (1944) and Ayer (1936), which held that moral judgments were non-descriptive utterances without propositional content that express directly one's attitudes of approval and disapproval; and the prescriptivism of Hare (1952), which held that moral judgments were prescriptive utterances—like imperatives but typically requiring reasons in support—that were ordinarily framed as action-guides and, if assented to sincerely, would be action-guiding.

But many philosophers found these forms of non-cognitivism unpersuasive. Some objected that non-cognitivism could not give an adequate account of the distinctive content of moral judgments (Foot 1958) and required us to ignore what is in many cases a plainly propositional form (Geach 1960). Moreover, non-cognitivism, as an anti-realist view, was widely thought to be unable to account for the objectivity of moral judgments. Partly in response to these objections, descriptivist theories have now returned to favor. Developments in metaethics over the past half-century have seen a proliferation of new variations of cognitivism, usually embracing some form of moral realism,⁶ to compete with innovative non-cognitivist positions presented under the banner of what is now called 'expressivism'. Furthermore, some cognitivist theories currently on offer present non-naturalist accounts of moral value.

All of these developments, clearly, are reasons to think that Moorean themes in ethics are well worth revisiting now. Among persistent concerns driving contemporary work in metaethics are two fundamental conceptions about ethical theory and the nature of morality that may justly be seen as among the principal products of the past hundred years' debate over Moore's views. First is the view that moral value is something objective, in the sense of being an agent-neutral consideration somehow built into the fabric of our common human experience, and, hence, that moral obligation comes to each of us *from without*, a view held both by some contemporary moral realists and by many philosophers who endorse what may be called 'practical reasoning' theories. Second is the notion that there is an irreducibly normative function of ethical judgments that any metaethical theory must be able to account for, a view that, though plainly not Moore's, is arguably the distillation of what was

⁵ According to Baldwin (1990), Moore's moral realism is a remnant of the Bradleyan idealism that informed his earliest writing.

⁶ But not always. Some cognitivists are error-theorists, holding that moral judgments are descriptive, but that there's nothing *real* that they describe (Mackie 1977).

most salient in Moore's non-naturalism, the idea that goodness was not reducible to, or definable in terms of, physical or psychological facts. In addition to these, there is also a conviction about the proper methodology of ethics that a growing number of contemporary moral philosophers share with Moore: namely, that appeal to intuition at some level is after all unavoidable in moral reasoning, and is to that extent a legitimate move in ethics.

IV

In this volume, a wide variety of Moorean themes in both ethics and epistemology are explored at length in relation to ongoing disputes in those areas. The opening contributions are devoted to Moore's anti-skeptical arguments. The first selection, by Crispin Wright, takes issue with a liberal conception of epistemic warrant recently articulated by the so-called dogmatists or neo-Mooreans (e.g., Pryor 2004; Davies 2004) and put at the service of vindicating Moore's 'proof'. To dogmatists, some *basic* perceptual beliefs, when entertained in the appropriate circumstances, are warranted by the believer's own sensory and bodily experiences alone, provided she has no reason to doubt them. Thus, if Moore believes *that here is a hand* while holding up his hand in the appropriate circumstances, his belief is warranted. Since, *pace* idealism, the other premise of the 'proof' is warranted by reasoning about the relevant concepts, it follows that, given dogmatism, Moore's 'proof' succeeds in deductively transmitting epistemic warrant from premises to conclusion. Although the proof may fail to persuade anyone in the skeptic's camp, its failure there involves dialectical, and not epistemic, space.

But to Wright, dogmatism faces unresolvable problems, and he ultimately rejects it as unable to be of any help within what he calls 'The Traditional Epistemological Project'. Wright's own sympathies are with a conservative conception of epistemic warrant. Accordingly, in Moore's 'proof', the warrant for 'Here is a hand' depends on some collateral information that includes that contained in the argument's conclusion. If this is correct, then it seems that such a conclusion must already be in place before Moore could reasonably take his bodily experience to warrant the controversial premise. Thus, the 'proof' turns out to be non-cogent, in the sense that having a warrant for its premises and recognizing its validity is not sufficient for having a warrant to accept its conclusion. As a result, the 'proof' fails to meet a challenge that points to a fundamental limitation in our knowledge. But, on Wright's account, the challenge can be met by appealing to non-evidential entitlements or presuppositions of the sort needed for getting our inquiries off the ground, provided there is no reason to doubt them.

Ernest Sosa's contribution also examines Moore's anti-skepticism. He reconstructs the original 'proof' in light of Moore's own understanding of what a proof is and who its primary intended target was—which Sosa identifies as idealism (and not skepticism about perceptual knowledge, as is usually assumed). On Sosa's view, although the reconstructed proof is more interesting and helpful than some *pseudo*-proofs, this result is compatible with its ultimately failing as a response to skepticism. Sosa looks closely at other anti-skeptical arguments offered by Moore in 'Certainty' and 'Four Forms of Scepticism', but finds them insufficient to support the crucial premise of his proof. Although Moore explicitly agreed with Descartes in that knowing that one is not dreaming is needed to refute skepticism, at the same time he held that he knew with certainty many ordinary perceptual propositions, such as *that here is a hand*. In addition, he granted that no such proposition is entailed by what he would consider foundational beliefs, which include only beliefs based on the data of immediate experience and short-term memory. Now, on Sosa's view, since Moore construes a proof as some kind of public demonstration, this may allow for having conclusive reasons for a claim, and even knowing it with *certainty*, without being able to produce a proof for it. In fact, depending on how 'certainty' is construed, a Moorean stance on skepticism may be defensible, provided it avoids some questionable epistemological assumptions made by the historical Moore. If we drop the assumption that knowing that one is awake is required to know *that here is a hand*, then knowledge of a sort Sosa terms 'animal knowledge' is possible. But knowledge of another sort, 'reflective knowledge', does require knowing that one is awake. Yet on Sosa's 'non-linear' conception of reflective knowledge, that condition need not be understood as amounting to *prior* knowledge.

Ram Neta's essay in this volume argues that although Moore's 'proof' cannot succeed in transmitting the epistemic warrant of its premises to its conclusion, it is none the less capable of rationally overcoming doubts about it. In this way, Neta attempts to accommodate the sense of inadequacy widely felt about the 'proof', while avoiding some dilemmas facing two current interpretations of that argument: Crispin Wright's (2002), and that of neo-Moorean rivals such as Martin Davies (2004) and James Prior (2004). Neta argues that, by denying that warrant transmits from premises to conclusion in Moore's argument, Wright's interpretation is at odds with common intuitions about how we acquire knowledge through deductive reasoning. And by holding that warrant does transmit in that argument, the neo-Mooreans run into the problem of easy knowledge (Cohen 2005). If Neta is right, then the neo-Mooreans have it exactly backwards. Moreover, both parties face equally troublesome dilemmas. Neta regards his own position as offering an alternative construal of the 'proof', one that is more congenial with the historical Moore and avoids both objections. According to this construal, the argument can rationally overcome skeptical doubts about its conclusion. Evidence from Moore's writings suggests that he took the 'proof' to *display*

the knowledge we already have of its conclusion (cf. Sosa, this volume), rather than to transmit it from premises to conclusion.

William Lycan's essay also looks closely at Moore's strategies against skepticism, which he tracks from Moore's early writings on Hume to his classic essays on the topic. After reconstructing the arguments and considering possible objections, Lycan contends that it was not until 'Four Forms of Scepticism', where Moore proposed what we may call 'method of comparative certainties', that he managed to articulate an effective response to the skeptic. In fact, as recast by Lycan, what Moore is really up to in his response to skepticism is a plausibility comparison between the conclusion of the skeptical argument and any Moorean propositions based on sound experience, such as *that here is a hand* or *that one is standing up*. Since the skeptic's conclusion comes out as being less plausible than Moorean propositions, at least one of the skeptical argument's premises should be rejected. While skeptical claims are always seen to rest on some highly controversial philosophical assumptions, Moorean ones aren't. In light of this, Moore's anti-skeptical argument may be reconstructed in a way that resists the objections that it is question-begging against the idealist and that it dogmatically privileges propositions of a certain kind. It may be thought that Moore has provided a superfluous argument, or that he is committed to ignoring the requirement that the premises of the anti-skeptical argument be known. The latter would, of course, be consistent with epistemic externalism. But, on Lycan's view, given the plausibility-comparison strategy and epistemic externalism, no epistemological theory is needed to back up the choice of a Moorean proposition over its skeptical rival.

C. A. J. Coady's paper assesses the significance of Moore's defense of common sense. Coady argues that, as in the case of Reid, Moore's conception of common sense presupposes that the philosopher's role is not that of a radical always ready to reveal truths incompatible with what ordinary people believe to be true. At the same time, according to Coady, Moore is committed to neither the acceptance of all such beliefs nor to a conservative attitude about the philosopher's role (of the sort Wittgenstein seems to have adopted). On the other hand, far from being either the product of dogmatism or a non-serious response to skepticism, Moore's appeal to common sense has what Coady sees as a 'strategic' significance. For one thing, it suggests that there is a puzzle facing the absurdity of skeptical claims about ordinary beliefs. To some, however, any objection to skepticism along these lines can be met by a Humean maneuver invoking a distinction between what can be justified ordinarily and what can be justified 'in the study'.

But Coady holds that such a maneuver cannot succeed, since it presupposes a divide between the outcomes in the study and in reality, which has unwelcome implications for skepticism. Furthermore, he sees no good reason for thinking that Moore's strategy is vulnerable to the charges of dogmatism and question-begging. In arguing for this, Coady offers a charitable reconstruction of Moore's 'greater certainty

argument', according to which it really rests on a comparative judgment of what is more *rational* to believe when one is faced with the choice of believing either that one is more certain about skeptical claims or that one is more certain about some common-sense propositions. After pointing out some widespread misunderstandings of Moore's appeal to common sense (including that underwriting Wittgenstein's dissatisfaction with Moore's list of the common-sense propositions allegedly known to be true), Coady concludes by suggesting a way to accommodate error in popular belief within a Moorean common-sensist framework.

For the historical Moore, there is a need to make his stance on skepticism about ordinary beliefs consistent with his views in theory of perception. As a sense-datum theorist, Moore granted that one can have direct knowledge of *only* the data of one's own current conscious sense experience. But, given this commitment, problems then arise for his claim to know *that he has a hand* while holding up his hand in the appropriate circumstances. Given his sense-datum theory, he seems committed to saying that the object of immediate awareness could not be the hand itself or its properties, but some mental entity directly given in perception which is related (in a way to be determined) to a physical object external to the perceiver's mind. To support the controversial premise of his anti-skepticism, it seems, Moore needs a suitable account of the epistemic relation between sense data and physical objects. A suitable account of that relation was a problem on which he struggled throughout his philosophical career.

In his contribution to this volume, Paul Snowdon examines Moore's writings on theory of perception, showing that the question of whether sense data are identical to external objects is the one on which Moore labored exclusively, thereby neglecting other issues raised by the phenomenon of perception. Moreover, Snowdon finds Moore's treatment of that question to presuppose further assumptions that are themselves in need of support. He argues that the views of the historical Moore cannot, in the end, really contribute to current discussions of perception, since some of the parties to those discussions reject the act-object analysis of experience to which Moore was committed, while others would require an act-object analysis of perceptual experience of a sort that Moore failed to provide.

Another focus of some contributions to this volume is the so-called Moore's Paradox, a problem originating in Moore's intuitions about what appear to be odd, yet logically consistent, statements of the form '*P* but I don't believe that *P*' and '*P* but I believe that not-*P*'. Michael Huemer proposes a number of such paradoxical sentences and contends that the exercise of trying to resolve the puzzle raised by them can itself bring needed illumination to a vexing epistemological problem: viz., the analysis of knowledge. For the attempt to resolve what's puzzling about them leads to a plausible norm bearing on the nature of belief and knowledge. Huemer disagrees with both Moore and Wittgenstein, who took the puzzle to be a purely linguistic

phenomenon requiring a linguistic solution. To Huemer, any attempt to resolve it in that way would be ‘incomplete’, since one could generate a number of similarly puzzling phenomena for belief and other psychological attitudes. On his account, Moore-paradoxical sentences and attitudes are *akin* to contradictions. He is especially interested in epistemic versions of the paradox that arise with sincere utterances of sentences such as ‘It is raining, but I do not *know* that it is’. Huemer contends that the puzzle thus generated supports the general conclusion that fully believing that *P* commits one to the view that one knows that *P*. He takes this to be a rule that governs and constrains rational belief.

On the other hand, Roy Sorensen argues that Moore detected a real anomaly of assertion: that paradoxical sentences, such as ‘It is raining but I do not believe it’ are unassertible (despite being consistent). Thus, Sorensen takes Moore’s puzzling sentences to be illuminating for theories of assertion. He is especially interested in exploring what he sees as *the Moorean absurdity* of post-mortem statements, such as ‘I am dead’. In connection with these, Sorensen rejects Alan Sidelle’s contention that such statements are deferred utterances, which presupposes the existence of conditional assertions. To Sorensen, both deferred utterances and conditional assertions are Moorean absurdities. Given this view, it follows that the dead cannot make assertions. In arguing for the view, Sorensen appeals to David Kaplan’s theory of indexicals, holding that a sentence intended to be read after death is similar to the answering-machine greeting ‘I am not here now’, in that both amount only to *displays*. This enables Sorensen to accommodate John Searle’s Chinese-room argument against attributing mental states to computers: rather than asserting a sentence, what a computer offers is merely a display of it.

Contributions to this collection focusing on Moorean themes in ethics likewise reflect a variety of different issues bearing on contemporary disputes in philosophy. Stephen Darwall’s essay argues that it was Sidgwick rather than Moore who better understood the essential normativity of ethics. For, although both agreed that there was a fundamental concept underlying all ethical judgments that made them irreducible to any claims of the natural or social sciences, they did not agree on what that concept was. Moore held that it was the idea of goodness or intrinsic value that was basic to ethics, so that all of ethics was based on goodness at the *conceptual* level. But Sidgwick rightly saw that a genuine ethical judgment is necessarily one that asserts of some attitude or action that it is supported by normative reasons, so that it’s an attitude or action some person ought to have or take. Thus, on Sidgwick’s view, judgments about intrinsic goodness are judgments about the normative reasons, or justification, for some attitude. But Moore could not accommodate this view, since he held that goodness was ‘unanalyzable’ and so could not be cashed out in other terms, such as what we have reasons to esteem, desire, or do; thus it was not, for him, a normative notion in this way. For this reason, Sidgwick’s account is to be preferred to

Moore's, Darwall thinks, though both ultimately fail to appreciate a crucial dimension of ethical reasoning, for they miss what is most distinctive about normative judgments regarding the attitudes in which we hold one another responsible and direct moral demands to each other.

In the essay by Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons, they attempt to show how certain aspects of Moore's ethics that lend themselves to moral-phenomenological analysis can be adapted in a more general phenomenological account of the experience of moral obligation, and then discuss the ways in which facts about moral phenomenology bear on the metaethical problem of moral realism. In particular, they ask if it is a fundamental part of the phenomenology of direct, judgment-involving moral experiences that there be a sense of some action's appropriateness or inappropriateness in the circumstances. And if the related felt demand is experienced as coming to the agent *from without*, then isn't the intentional content of such experiences just a sense of their objective appropriateness or inappropriateness as an *in-the-world relational property*? And don't such experiences in this way purport to represent *objective moral facts*? Their answer is that a moral phenomenology of this sort would *not* carry descriptive purport—and, thus, neither does the Moorean moral phenomenology they present. The facts that moral phenomenology can provide, they conclude, do not support realist over irrealist views in ethics. Such an exercise does not, by itself, have the power to justify metaphysical judgments about what sorts of properties there are in the world.

In Richard Fumerton's contribution to this volume, he argues that although the philosophical legacy of the Open Question Argument (*OQA*) has persisted, it has done so in unexpected ways. Although no version of the argument is successful, he thinks, it raises fundamental metaphilosophical issues that have to do with the nature of analysis, and these recur in contemporary discussions of naturalistic analyses of ethical judgments and of naturalistic analyses of reasons for acting, chiefly in the denial that such analyses can take account of normativity. The real value of Moore's fundamental insight in the *OQA*, Fumerton believes, is mostly in the influence it has had on anti-naturalist arguments familiar in present-day moral theory, with their insistence on the irreducible normativity of ethical terms. These arguments are really little more than contemporary variations of the *OQA*, Fumerton thinks, and may in the end be vulnerable to the same criticisms.

Charles Pigden's paper contends that Moore has *two* arguments to the effect that 'good' denotes a non-natural property: the Barren Tautology Argument (*BTA*); and the open question argument (*OQA*). The *OQA*, he suggests, was probably proposed to deal with naturalistic theories, such as Russell's desire-to-desire theory, which are immune to the *BTA*. The *OQA* is valid and would, if sound, have disposed of the desire-to-desire theory. But, according to Pigden, two key premises were successively questioned: one because philosophers came to believe in synthetic identities between

properties; and the other because it led to the so-called paradox of analysis. By 1989 David Lewis could put forward precisely the kind of theory that Moore professed to have refuted. But all is not lost for the *OQA*, says Pigden. He first presses an objection to the desire-to-desire theory derived from what he considers Kripke's epistemic argument, which he sees as a variant of the *OQA*. But Moore's argument does not lead to the Paradox of Analysis, Pigden believes, and this suggests three conclusions: (1) that the desire-to-desire theory is false; (2) that the *OQA* can be revived, albeit in a modified form; and (3) that the revived *OQA* poses a serious threat to *semantic naturalism*.

In the next contribution, Susana Nuccetelli and Gary Seay offer a qualified defense of the open question argument that recasts *OQA* in two different versions, depending on the variety of reductive naturalism each attempts to undermine. One is a non-question-begging extended argument that can transmit by entailment the apriority of its premises to the conclusion that no thesis of semantic reductive naturalism is true. According to Nuccetelli and Seay, this argument rests on the contention that Moorean questions have the privileges of cogito-like thoughts. The other, a non-deductive argument against metaphysical reductive naturalism, takes the failure of semantic naturalism as suggesting that some good reason is needed for the reductive naturalists' view that value predicates and purely descriptive predicates are co-extensional. Nuccetelli and Seay conclude that, in the absence of such a reason, the burden of proof is on the metaphysical reductive naturalists.

Recent interest in ethical naturalism, and in the viability of non-naturalist responses to it, is also evident in Robert Shaver's essay, 'Non-naturalism'. Shaver looks closely at two main objections facing non-naturalism: that it is epistemically and metaphysically extravagant and that it solves no problems. He defends non-naturalism from both objections. The non-naturalism of Moore, Ross, Broad, and Ewing, he argues, was primarily a rejection of 'analytic' naturalism and, later, non-cognitivism.

Joshua Gert, in his essay included here, contends that most of the central doctrines of Moore's ethics, when subjected to more careful analysis using distinctions drawn with today's methods, actually undermine utilitarianism rather than support it. A number of core doctrines in Moore's theory can, in fact, be defended, he thinks, if reconstrued in updated terms; thus, for instance, the contextual invariance of goodness and the narrow dependence of goodness on the intrinsic nature of that which has it can be given revised interpretations that make them highly plausible. Likewise, the notion of 'intrinsic value' can be reconceived as 'what it is rational to choose for its own sake'—so that the primary normative notion is not 'good' or 'right' but 'rational.' Gert also defends a version of Moore's isolation test for intrinsic value that appeals to the notion of rationality instead of duty, and makes use of this test to defend both the universality and the supervenient nature of non-moral goods and harms. In the end, however, this same move from duty to rationality provides a diagnosis of Moore's attraction to a maximizing utilitarian view,

and provides a way of avoiding it while retaining much of what is distinctive in his position.

Recent scholarship on Moore's metaethical theory has also included attention to the much-neglected Chapter 6 of *Principia Ethica*, in which Moore considers, among other things, the notion of 'organic unities', complex states of affairs wherein the value of the whole may not be equivalent to the sum of the values of its parts. In this volume's final essay, Jonathan Dancy considers two ways of thinking about organic unities: Moore's way, sometimes called the 'intrinsicist' way; and the 'variabilist' way preferred by Dancy himself. The difference between these lies in the fact that Moore claims that value-bearers cannot change their non-instrumental value as they move from whole to whole, even though the value they contribute to a whole may depend on the nature of the other parts of that whole. Dancy claims, by contrast, that a feature cannot contribute value that it has not got, and so that intrinsicism is incoherent. A test case for this debate is that of what Moore calls 'vindictive punishment'. Although some have raised doubts that this case can be treated in a variabilist way, Dancy contends that it can. He considers Moore's intrinsicist treatment of punishment in the final chapter of *Principia Ethica* and tries to show that the variabilist can, in fact, describe the situation equally well. In the end, Dancy concludes that there is no counter-example to variabilism there.

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