

24.400: Proseminar in Philosophy I

Fall 2013

Moore, “The Refutation of Idealism,” “A Defense of Common Sense”, “Proof of an External World”

0. In “A Defence of Common Sense”, Moore claims that “view B” is self-contradictory. Is he right?

Refutation

1. “There is...no question of how we are to ‘get outside the circle of our own ideas and sensations’. Merely to have a sensation is already to be outside that circle”. Explain Moore’s argument for this. Is he right?

2. Contemporary work on the “transparency” of consciousness traces back to “The Refutation of Idealism”. What did Moore mean by saying that the “sensation of blue...seems...to be transparent”? Is consciousness “transparent” in any interesting sense? (You will find it helpful to look at Van Cleve, “Troubles for Radical Transparency”.)

Defence

3. A “Moorean fact” is a proposition whose truth is so obvious that we are justified in flatly rejecting any philosophical argument to the contrary, even if we can’t find the fallacy. Are there any Moorean facts? Does Moore give examples of such? Assuming there are Moorean facts, what is their significance for philosophy?

4. Moore asks, “*What, when I know ‘This is part of the surface of a human hand’, am I knowing about the sense-datum in question?*” Explain the three answers discussed, and evaluate Moore’s objections. How should Moore’s question be answered?

Proof

5. What is the “external world”? Why (according to Moore) does Kant think the expression ‘outside of us’ is ambiguous? (*Critique* A373) What, if anything, is the distinction between (i) something being “presented in space” and (ii) its being “a thing to be met with in space”?

6. What did Moore prove, if anything? What lessons from Moore’s “proof” can we draw about philosophical skepticism? Drawing on “Proof of an External World”, and Moore’s argument in “A Defence of Common Sense”, suggest what lessons (if any) we can draw about the relationship between philosophy and common sense.

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