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TWO REFUTATIONS OF IDEALISM IN LIGHT OF
THE LINGUISTIC TURN

A Thesis Submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies
Through the Department of Philosophy
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirement for the Degree of
Master of Arts
The University of Windsor

BY
RICHARD ERIC FOURNIE

WINDSOR, ONTARIO
1975
CANADA

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ABSTRACT

In the Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein offers a number of examples to explain one method by which certain philosophical problems might cease to be problems for us. The aim of this essay is to follow that lead by examining a problem which some Idealist figures have insisted ought to be a problem for every thinking person--How can we be certain that there are material things?

In Chapter I, we examine the efforts of Kant, first to refute what he believes to be the typical support for denials of external existence, then to establish his own proof. We find that we are unable to fit Kant's instructions with his conclusions, and thus our reading does not give us complete clarity.

In Chapter II, we examine the efforts of G. E. Moore, first to refute Idealism, then to defend what he feels is the common sense position with respect to the reality of the external. In Moore's refutation his instructions, like Kant's, resist our attempt at understanding them, though his defence of the common sense view makes some valuable points.

In the third chapter, we consider Idealism as a problem. Does it present a coherent thesis? We find inadequacies in a number of Idealist reasonings. In our survey

we find no obvious logical grounds for the thesis that the external is mind-dependent. Upon examining our attitude to material things, we find that our language-practice reflects no rigorous distinction between the external and the internal, whereas the Idealist thesis seems to indicate a strict division. Nor do we in our ordinary reasonings conclude that material things exist, nor make other conclusions that depend upon this knowing. Our normal attitude to material things is best characterized as an absence of doubt, or as a knowing that goes without saying. For the Idealist's demand that we justify our confidence in the external seems to indicate that it is a coherent possibility that there is no external reality. We can find no coherency to this proposition. Thus, I conclude that the absence of any wholesale doubts about the reality of material existence is a reasonable position.

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INTRODUCTION

Idealism is a philosophical thesis that has inspired as much debate in its refutation as in its defence. This in itself is not odd and has been true of many philosophical theses. Each refutation in its own way has offered to solve, once and for all, the Idealist problems. These problems vary in their expression but generally concern the existence of the external world--how to prove it, put it in question, or understand it. Yet, Idealism has remained an issue surrounded by debate. For all participants clarity was the desideratum, and generally this was sought by means of a definitive analysis. A definitive analysis usually involves a proof for the existence or non-existence of external objects or an understanding of the nature of the external. In a similar way mathematical problems become clear when each step in a proof is both logically supported and understood. In the first part of this essay (Chapters I and II) we will explore two traditional refutations of Idealism, those of Immanuel Kant and G. E. Moore.

In the later work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, there is the suggestion that clarity can be achieved in a less conventional way. If a problem were to disappear (or at least cease to be a problem for me), then I would have gained the

same peace that conventional solutions provide. "The real discovery is one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to."¹ It would certainly be a shallow peace that simply ignores a real problem! Accordingly, the discovery Wittgenstein has in mind has to do with the problem itself. Is this my problem? Is this a question for which I need an answer? Is this a problem at all? We all have a number of real problems in our lives. Sometimes what we think of as a problem evaporates after a time as we discover more about it. In his Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein offers a series of examples by which he hopes to explain one method by which this clarity might be achieved. The aim of this essay will be to see if some of the problems associated with Idealism (concerning the status of the external world) are the sort that will yield to Wittgenstein's approach.

Before we attempt to expand this idea, we should sharpen our focus on the problems with which this essay is concerned. The controversy surrounding Idealism is generally considered a modern phenomenon. With Descartes there began a debate that was to give rise to modern Idealism. Although we can find earlier ideas that have a distinct resemblance to Idealism--especially the work of the Skeptics--it is only since Descartes that we can speak of schools of Idealism. Modern philosophy has seen many distinct schools of Idealism

¹Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), I, #133.

which we are concerned with only a small number. The Idealist questions that are examined in the first two chapters are those considered important by Kant and Moore: Kant in The Critique of Pure Reason,² and Moore in two of his published articles. They are both concerned with how we can know that material objects exist independent of our consciousness.

It is not our task to complete a historical treatment of these questions. A brief history does indicate the tenacity of this problem for some thinkers. The existence of the external world first became a problem for the early Skeptics. It is reported that the ancient philosopher Cratylus became convinced that we could have no knowledge of the external world since it was always changing. There was no guarantee that anything true at one moment would be true the next. Communication was also impossible as nothing one said could be counted on to remain fixed. Cratylus, upon realizing this, ceased all communication. If someone spoke to him, he would wiggle his finger to reaffirm his position that all replies are pointless. Skepticism, in one form or another, has been with philosophy ever since.

The consequences of a strict Skeptical philosophy are illustrated by Cratylus. Most Skeptics "distinguished between believing various matters and having sufficient

²Trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), B274 ff.

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reasons for believing them."³ Thus they did not feel they had to suspend any of their everyday actions as they suspended their philosophic beliefs. They saw their philosophical role as an examination of the evidence for beliefs, many of which they continued to exercise in everyday life notwithstanding the philosophical discovery that they were insupportable.

One of the key assumptions for Descartes was that man can directly experience only his own ideas, while all experience of the external is indirect. This idea can be traced to earlier Skeptical works, but only became widespread in the 17th Century, and it played an important role in Idealist thought. The only important Idealist figure we will want to examine is George Berkeley. He saw the existence of external objects as dependent upon their being perceived. We can know nothing about material existence other than what is given in our perception of objects. This central thesis Berkeley called "immaterialism" since he saw it as essentially in opposition to materialism. We only know directly the "sensations" our senses provide. Berkeley thought of objects as collections of these sensations or ideas, yet this did not lead him to Skepticism. If an object is no more than a collection of sensations, then if it ceases to be perceived, it ceases to exist. But all external objects

³Encyclopedia of Philosophy, S.V. "Skepticism," by Richard H. Popkin.

are continually in the perception of God, and steadily being perceived, thus steadily in existence.

In speaking of Idealists we are primarily concerned with philosophers who suspend belief in the external world. Historically we can find many examples of this and several different results. Many of these thinkers simply fail to find conclusive evidence for it. Some, like Descartes, felt they had proofs to offer. Others, like Berkeley, found a way of understanding the external that denies the independent existence of material objects. We will have reason to mention some historical figures, but we are interested in the claim--coming from those who suspend belief in the external--that we must, or that we cannot, prove the existence of the material world. This is the problem that refuses to give us the peace we desire.

In the third chapter we will explore an approach suggested by Wittgenstein by which some philosophers believe the Idealist problem ceases to be a problem. Our first two chapters are designed to help in this project by contributing to our understanding of the problem itself and of how it arises. Many of our everyday problems are brought to us by life situations. If we want to travel Ontario's roads, we need to learn how to use a roadmap--at least for any extensive journey. Our desire to travel brings us face to face with this problem. The questions we have posed above have not bothered many people outside of philosophic circles. Berkeley noticed this and attributed it to a lack of

reflectiveness. He noted that

the illiterate bulk of mankind, that walk the highroad of plain common sense, and are governed by the dictates of nature, [are] for the most part easy and undisturbed. To them nothing that is familiar appears unaccountable or difficult to comprehend.⁴

Berkeley thought the evidence which would lead one away from one's normal acceptance of material things was obvious to anyone who thought carefully about it. Yet it is an important point that few people outside of philosophy have been bothered by these debates, and we will return to this point in our final chapter.

The principal task of this essay is to look closely at the charge that we ought to, or that we cannot, prove the existence of the external. Can this problem cease to be a problem for me? I cannot promise that anyone who reads this essay will find complete peace. I can only hope to provide an example of a Wittgensteinian approach that a reader may find helpful.

⁴George Berkeley, Principles of Human Knowledge, in Berkeley Selections, ed. Mary Calkins (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), p. 103.

CHAPTER I

KANT'S REFUTATION OF IDEALISM

We should preface our discussion of Kant's refutation with a word about some concepts of Idealism that he differentiates. Kant himself was the founder of Transcendental Idealism, which insists on the empirical reality of appearances or things as they appear to us and the absolute reality of things-in-themselves. This must be distinguished from the Idealism he seeks to refute and which he briefly outlines. Kant treats separately two schools of Idealism. He sees Berkeley as the central figure behind Dogmatic Idealism, which affirms that the internal alone is real. The external realm is dependent for its existence on the internal. The second Idealist school Kant addresses--~~the Idealism of~~ Descartes--he calls Problematic Idealism. Problematic Idealism assumes a posture of doubt concerning the physical world until its existence can be deductively established. This later posture Kant considers a sound philosophic beginning, and he has such a deductive proof to offer. For the Dogmatic Idealists, Kant then offers a refutation. For the Problematic Idealists, he offers a proof.

Dogmatic Idealism

Kant's treatment of Dogmatic Idealism centres on one essential claim. It may be argued that Kant has not fully understood Berkeley's position, but for now we will look at Kant's version of it. The claim he takes issue with (that he attributes to Berkeley) is that space and all things that are found in space (things external to us) are "imaginary entities," entities that really belong to the imagination or the internal. The basis of this Idealist conclusion is that space is "something which is in itself impossible" (Kant, B274). The strategy of Kant's refutation is to undermine the premise upon which this claim of Dogmatic Idealism depends. Only if we accept space as a property that "must belong to things in themselves" can we regard space as a "non-entity" and thus external things as "imaginary entities" (Kant, B274). Of course, Idealists did not think of themselves as regarding space as impossible or as a non-entity. Kant is willing to prove that the Idealist claims lead to this because they view space as, belonging simply to things-in-themselves. (We will explain this further in a moment.) But it is not the case that space belongs to things-in-themselves, and Kant is prepared to defend this by showing the true nature of space. In this way he seeks to refute the essential claim of Dogmatic Idealism.

Earlier, in the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant explained the true nature of space. We cannot describe space

as a property of things-in-themselves, because this does not account for its compound character. "We assert, then, the empirical reality of space as regards all possible outer experience; and yet at the same time we assert its transcendental ideality" (Kant, B44). Space belongs in the realm of both the empirical and the transcendently ideal.

Kant offers us some insight into the term "transcendental ideality" by explaining transcendental knowledge. "I entitle transcendental all knowledge which is occupied not with objects but with the mode of our knowledge of objects in general in so far as this mode of our knowledge is to be possible a priori" (Kant, B25). Thus space is internal, because it is an "a priori intuition" (a knowing that comes before any fact or experience). Space is the "form," or the necessary condition, for our perception of external objects. It is the necessary condition for our determining any relations among external objects. Since the intuition of space has its seat in the subject alone, space cannot be considered part of the external list of characteristics of an object; although by being a condition for the possibility of outer appearance, it is associated with the external. We can never imagine the absence of space, whereas we can easily imagine the absence of any or all objects. We cannot look to outer appearances to find any clues about the nature of space.

". . . In order that I may be able to represent outer appearances as outside and alongside one another, . . . the representation of space must be presupposed" (Kant, B38).

The mistake made by the Dogmatic Idealists was to view space as belonging simply to what they thought of as the external (i.e., to things-in-themselves). Space has a dual nature for Kant. It is external in that it is a condition for the possibility of objects as appearance, and it is internal in that it is an intuition that is inspired by no external experience. Any premise based on an analysis of space that does not acknowledge this dual nature is necessarily false.

Kant claims that the Idealist move is to deny the existence of the external. Included in this denial is the reality of space, inasmuch as space is considered by Idealists to belong to the external. What Kant seeks to show is that this Idealist position leads to a view that space is both real and non-existent. Space is non-existent in consequence of the denial of the external--since space is external. Space is real in consequence of the Idealist affirmation of the reality of the internal--since space is also internal. Thus the Idealist position that space, as part of the external, is non-existent leads to this incoherency. Further, if it can be proven that space is both internal and external, then any denial of the external--while maintaining the reality of the internal--would lead to this incoherency. Thus even an Idealist who maintains that space is simply internal (e.g., as part of our conceptual framework) would be subject to the same difficulty. The important question, then, is this: Has Kant established the dual character of Space?

The bulk of Kant's attempt to establish the dual character of space involves his proof that space as a pure intuition is internal. This is apparently the proposition he views as most controversial. The empirical reality of space is a consequence of its being the foundation of appearances. Even Kant's sympathetic reader Gottfried Martin concedes that ". . . a complete clarification of the nature of the reality of appearances was not achieved by Kant". . . ." ⁵ We cannot accept the empirical reality of space as the foundation of appearances if we do not have a clear explication of the reality of appearances. If the Idealist Kant pictures regards appearances as external, then he seeks to deny their reality with all things external. If he regards appearances as internal, then space, as a foundation of appearances, is also internal. Thus we do need from Kant an explicit account of the reality of appearances.

We can avoid the metaphysical difficulties involved in establishing either the empirical reality of space or its transcendental ideality by turning our attention directly to the dual nature of space. As this is the key premise in Kant's argument, if we cannot find coherency here, we need go no further. Is Kant's claim that space is both empirically real and transcendently ideal a consistent proposition or

⁵ Gottfried Martin, Kant's Metaphysics and Theory of Science, trans. P. G. Lucas (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1955), p. 158.

simply two statements that resist all efforts to consider them as a description of ~~one~~ concept.

Kant asserts the strong position that if we remove ourselves as subjects, ". . . space and time themselves, would vanish; they cannot exist in themselves but only in us" (Kant, B59). With admittedly less fullness, Kant asserts the "empirical reality" of space. Generally, when we say of something that it has empirical reality, we assert that it has an existence independent of ourselves; it would certainly not vanish if we were to leave the scene. But this is in direct contradiction with the ideal nature of space. What then could Kant have meant by space's empirical reality? Martin, in recognizing this as a trouble spot for Kant, interprets Kant as saying that "space and time have empirical reality but do not have absolute or transcendental reality" (Martin, p. 156). Absolute reality pertains to things which are external (things-in-themselves) and has the characteristic of being independent of our consciousness. What is absolutely real cannot also be transcendently ideal. This is consistent with our notion of the external, but we find that space is not to be found in the realm of the absolutely real. "Space does not represent things in themselves, nor does it represent them in their relation to one another" (Kant, B42). Objects that have empirical reality are representations. "But this space and this time, and with them all appearances, are not in themselves things; they are nothing but representations, and cannot exist outside our mind"

(Kant, B520). It is clear that space cannot be confused with the absolutely real and thus with objects that exist independent of our minds.

What are we to make, then, of Kant's assertion that space is dependent on our mind, while at the same time he insists on its empirical reality? "For, since space is a form of that intuition which we entitle outer, and since without objects in space there would be no empirical representation whatsoever, we can and must regard beings in it as real . . ." (Kant, B520). We have learned that the objects in space are appearances. Kant seems to suggest that because objects appear to us as what we call "outer" we must regard them as real. But this is a reality which has no existence independent of our minds. An Idealist might well ask why we continue to call these appearances outer when in Kant's account their existence is dependent on our minds. Even if empirical representations are dependent on objects in space, still, if these objects are only appearances--dependent on our consciousness--we have not yet shown independent existence in any strong sense.

This seems to indicate a fundamental incoherency in Kant's way of conceptualizing space. If there is to be any sense to the concepts "empirical reality" and "external" that differentiates them from "ideal," they must include a notion of independence from our consciousness. The very fact of dependency on our consciousness gives an "object" an impermanency that I cannot reconcile with my notion of

external. But the transcendental ideality of space demands its dependence on our conscious state. Thus I find myself unable to come to terms with Kant's dual concept of space.

In sum, Kant has explained the concept of space in terms of two parallel attributes. Yet I cannot fit these two together in terms of anything like the conventional notions of internal and external. Without this dual character of space, Kant's attack upon Dogmatic Idealism falters. As nearly as I can make out, Kant's refutation has failed to make a solid case against this kind of Idealism, and I find myself without the clarity I desire.

Problematic Idealism

Kant understands Problematic Idealism to be a sound starting point for philosophy. Until one can establish a proof, the existence of external things must remain in doubt. The reality of the internal is a given, but the physical realm stands removed from us and in need of support. Kant is thus prepared to offer a proof. Simply to show that the Idealist thesis is based on a false premise is not enough--even if he had done this successfully. What is needed is a counter-thesis. Thus, Kant offers the following proof.

If we display Kant's proof (B275-276) in a more structured form, the major premises are easily identified.

- P1: I am conscious of my own existence as determined in time.
- P2: The determination of my existence in time is possible only through the existence of actual things I perceive outside of me.

P2a: All determination of time presupposes something permanent in perception.

P2b: Perception of this permanent is possible only through a thing outside me (not a mere representation).

P2bI: The permanent cannot be in me.

P2bIi: Only through this permanent can my existence in time be determined.

C: Consciousness of my existence, as determined in time, is just as much an immediate consciousness of the existence of other things outside me.

Descartes' suggestion that we have thoughts implies that we have at least the imagination of external things. What Kant is seeking to prove is that we also experience external things--thus having direct knowledge of the external. What makes this true for Kant is that even inner intuition of ourselves (which is indubitable) is possible only on the assumption that we can have outer experience--the experience of time, for example, which is both internal and external.

As Kant saw it, the Idealist certainty "I am," immediately includes the existence of a subject, but not knowledge of that subject--not experience of that subject. With the same certainty we can say more than the simple "I am." To have experience of something, "we require, in addition to the thought of something existing, also intuition, and in this case inner intuition, in respect of which, that is, of time, the subject must be determined" (Kant, B277). Thus, the intuition "I am existing right now" is just as

indubitable as the simple "I am." This intuition includes more than the existence of ourselves; it also includes the inner intuition of time. Time is a concept--like space in the previous section--which is both internal and external. The inner intuition of time is necessarily the intuition of something external.

Inner experience--such as the experience of one's existence--has this necessary tie (time) to the outer, thus it is possible only in relation to the outer. Everything internal that we can know has at least a determination in time and is thus dependent, as knowledge or as experience, on the external. It may be that an object can exist outside of time, but we cannot know such an object. We can never know anything without this framework of time.

Kant sees support for his thesis in our ordinary experience of time. Determinations of time are dependent on the motion of some object relative to another (e.g., the movement of the sun relative to the earth). Motion is understood in relation to the static. We can speak independently about motion and stability, but whenever we have some experience of motion, it is understood in relation to something static. We judge the speed of a car with respect to the earth, which, in this case, is considered to be static. Without this static point of reference, we could have no judgment of motion. Kant sees a similarity between this and our experience of things. Our experiences are related to time in a manner analogous to the relation of motion to the static. Without

reference to time, we could have no experience in the sense of sequences of sensations that hang together intelligibly.

This does not lead Kant to assert that simple perception of an external thing is the sole and sufficient guarantor of the existence of that thing. It is still possible that the object perceived is an imaginary object (e.g., an hallucination). Imaginings, dreams, and delusions are the reproduction of previous outer perceptions which in turn are possible only through the reality of outer things. What Kant has tried to prove, then, is that inner experience is possible only through outer experience--though the outer experience may be second-hand. Kant has not tried to establish a rule for the determination of the existence of any particular object by which we could decide if a given perception was an illusion or real. His proof seeks to show that no inner experience is possible without reference to the external--even if it is only the simple external reference to a time. Thus, our ability to imagine a unicorn is not a counter-example to Kant's thesis. That we can imagine a unicorn is possible only through our real experience with four-legged creatures and horns. Even if we could imagine something that had no resemblance to anything external, we would still have to imagine it at some time.

Before we take a critical look at this proof, an important distinction should be made--the difference between appearance and thing-in-itself. It is the thing-in-itself which is the foundation of the real. Although this realm

affects us through the senses (the thing-in-itself is the cause of the appearance), we can never know anything-in-itself. This realm is entirely independent of our thought and in no way needs to be thought in order to exist. If the action of appearing is to be complete--that is, have a cause--then the thing-in-itself must exist. "For otherwise the absurd proposition would follow, that there would be an appearance without anything that appeared" (Kant, Bxxvi). But this is all we can know about the realm of things-in-themselves. They are the cause of appearances and thus necessarily real. The world we encounter when we brush our teeth or chop our firewood is the world of appearances.

The opening premise of this argument contains the phrase that is the key to Kant's position: "I am conscious of my own existence as determined in time." Given this, Kant moves easily to the proof we outlined above. This is not the sort of sentence for which we can easily imagine a context outside of philosophy. We can thus be forgiven if the meaning is not immediately clear. Do we have common knowings that could be said to assert this Kantian knowing? I certainly know my birthdate and I know my present address. I know how long I have been around and could even figure it out in minutes. I have a rough idea of where I have been, the places I have lived, and the periods of time I have lived in each. One might say that these examples describe a consciousness of my existence in time, and we have no trouble recognizing any

of these mundane knowings. So if these knowings are what Kant meant, we can assent to the first premise with little hesitation.

These common knowings find voice in common expressions for which we can easily imagine contexts (e.g., job applications). Meaning cannot be simply divorced from context.

Unless Kant's first premise is understood as we have outlined it, the meaning is at best vague. I can think of no moment when I am naturally "conscious of my own existence as determined in time" unless the above examples qualify. Kantians might argue that this is a philosophic enterprise, and the consciousness associated with filling in job applications is not of high enough standards; we are to notice our consciousness of our existence and then notice whether or not it is a consciousness of our existence in time. However, the only occasion that I might call noticing my consciousness of existence is when I am doing such things as filling out job applications. In what sort of moment am I aware of a pure consciousness of my existence in time? When I am told to think about my existence, my mind as often as not goes blank, or else knowings like those listed above occur to me. It is only these and similar knowings that are connected with my experiences.

Given our understanding of the first premise, we can move on to the second. Knowing my birthday and my present address is "possible only through the existence of actual things I perceive outside of me." Here again we have an

abstract statement that we can fill out with our common knowings. If it were not for calendars, clocks, and our practice of keeping records, I would not know my birthdate. If it were not for post offices and government records and the practice of numbering buildings, I would not have a street address. Calendars, clocks, and records are things outside me, and they do make possible my knowing such things as my birthdate and address.

There may be some tribes of primitives that have no clocks, calendars or records. For this society the regular cycles of the seasons, the sun, and the moon would be the main determinants of passing time. Expressions that refer to clocks and calendars would not likely be heard--except from missionaries. There may be expressions in their language which are comparable to the few we listed above in English. "I have lived in this shelter for two moons now." "My son was born two winters ago." Time may not be measured in as precise units as we know, but then they seldom have to worry about job applications or marriage certificates. We might want to conclude in a more general way that we are the sort that can notice the passing of time in reference to various things, such as the seasons, the months, or microseconds. Again, this is not news.

When we consider the simple premises, "I know when I was born," and "I can only know this if there was a record kept of my birth," then we can conclude that there was a record kept of my birth; and we do think of birth records as

outside of us--they are kept at county registration offices. In Kant's syllogism we find a supporting premise that there is something permanent outside of us which makes possible the determination of our existence in time. He insists that the permanent be "a thing outside me and not. . . a mere representation of a thing. . ." (Kant, B275). In Kant's ontology, however, only things-in-themselves can be called things in the unqualified sense of having an existence independent of our thoughts. In our syllogism we used the example of the record of my birth which is not like a thing-in-itself. We can know this birth record. We can find it at the county registration office, pull it from the file and do many such tasks that Kant tells us we cannot perform with things-in-themselves. Thus far, we have arrived at an understanding of Kant's premise that our existence in time is determined by something outside of us. Kant calls ~~this~~ something outside us a "permanent" and identifies it with things-in-themselves; but we have found only such things as clocks, calendars, and birth records which are clearly not things-in-themselves.

Though Kant's proof, as we read it, involves a reference to things-in-themselves, it is the reality of everyday objects that he wishes ultimately to establish. Our interpretation of his conclusion leaves us with little more than an assertion that we are the sort of beings that use calendars and clocks and keep records. This is far from startling news. The "things outside me" that normally go with consciousness of my existence are quite ordinary things. The knowledge that

I have been camping for a full month is not dependent on having watched the moon-in-itself. I simply watch the moon or a calendar. I am perfectly content to depend on either. It is merely a fact of our natural history that we depend on such things as the moon and calendars. Such a fact is not what we would normally call a conclusion--we do not infer it. The mere parading of facts like this does not amount to a proof of external reality, for the common objects they refer us to are precisely the ones Idealism puts in question.

We have found, then, two difficulties with understanding Kant's proof. Our explanation of Kant's premises brings in nothing that we would call a thing-in-itself--clocks and calendars are readily apparent. Nor do the facts we have offered as an interpretation of Kant's premises yield us a proof of external things. Much of our confusion can be traced to Kant's explanation of the empirical reality of appearances. Appearances, like space, are empirically real. Thus they share the dual status that we found so confusing in the previous section. They are external, yet they have no existence independent of our minds. The only entities that are clearly external are things-in-themselves, and our understanding of Kant's proof involves nothing that fits their description. Thus, when Kant offers a proof of the empirical reality of things outside me, it is a proof of a state of affairs about which I am still confused. It is a proof of an external realm that is, at the same time, dependent upon my consciousness. We are left, then, with this ambiguity. If

the premises of his argument are understood as we have suggested, we have no proof of the existence of external things, only a statement about our natural behaviour. If they are not to be understood this way, they remain incoherent.

Kant's point that the division between the external and internal realm is not as distinct as the Idealists suppose is one we will want to examine at greater length. His examples of time and space did not prove helpful, but the point is not yet lost. Another suggestion we will want to re-examine is Kant's point that we cannot consider existence apart from our experience of existence. When we consider our experiences of existence (e.g., filling out job applications), we can find specimens of knowings that no one has any trouble with. We have mentioned a few in this section: We are the sort that depend on calendars, we have birth records, we know our age, et cetera. Our project is still to find some clarity with respect to the Idealist problem: Can we prove the existence of external things?

Kant's attempt to solve the problem of Idealism has not brought the lucidity we desire. There are many aspects of his proof that do not seem to fit with his instructions. When I do look to my experiences of existing (I have only the everyday sort), I notice many durable entities^a, but I do not find the "permanent" that Kant's conclusion seems to call for. Kant's counter-thesis against Problematic Idealism was not designed to make the problem disappear, but to offer a solution to the problem. Good points have been made and, in

some ways, I feel less troubled by the Idealist problem. But the weakness of Kant's proof leaves us short of a definitive analysis.

CHAPTER II

G. E. MOORE'S REFUTATION OF IDEALISM

Moore's Thesis

G. E. Moore is often associated with the term, "common-sense philosopher." It was his contention that Idealism breached some of these common sense knowings, and so he offered his refutation of Idealism. The two articles that most clearly exhibit his attack on Idealism are: "The Refutation of Idealism" (1903),⁶ and "A Defence of Common Sense" (1925).⁷ The arguments of these two essays, although directed toward the same end, are radically different. We will look at each in turn.

Moore sees his principal task in this discussion as the examination of the arguments of Idealism. Following this overall plan, he tries to cover all the bases in attacking Idealist arguments. Moore is fully aware that to undercut an argument is not to refute the conclusion, but he feels that if there is no good reason to believe the Idealists' premises,

⁶G. E. Moore, Philosophical Studies (Paterson, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1959), pp. 1-30.

⁷G. E. Moore, Philosophical Papers (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1959), pp. 32-59.

his readers will follow their good common sense and see things as he does ("Defence of Common Sense," p. 35).

The claim of Idealism Moore finds most difficult to juxtapose with his common sense is that the universe, or the external, is spiritual. To his mind this amounts to a denial of the physical/mental distinction. The mechanics of this denial vary with different Idealists. Sceptics view physical objects as illusions, while for some Idealists the existence of the external is dependent on a perceiving mind. Each of these concepts amounts to a belief that goes against Moore's common sense notion that the external is an independently existing realm. The central tenet offered in support of the claim that the universe is spiritual is "esse is percipi." Since Moore sees this proposition as ambiguous, he has to consider all possible interpretations and show that each is false, in order to complete his discussion of Idealist arguments ("Refutation of Idealism," p. 6).

The interpretation that Moore turns his attention to first is the Idealist claim that something can be real only if it is part of a sentient experience. "I shall undertake to show that what makes a thing real cannot possibly be its presence as an inseparable aspect of a sentient experience" ("Refutation," p. 8). For Idealists of this camp the internal/external dualism is done away with. Whatever is real is internal. It is not that the external is dependent on the internal; there simply is no external.

Moore does not stop yet to turn his analytical powers to this interpretation; he first sets out another Idealist possibility, namely that ". . . what is meant by esse, though not absolutely identical with what is meant by percipi, . . . includes the latter as a part of its meaning" ("Refutation," p. 9). For something to be real it must be experienced and something else besides. Here the external is analytically dependent on the internal. We cannot give anything the stamp of "reality" unless it is experienced. This still leaves open the possibility that something can be experienced yet not be real, a possibility the first interpretation excludes.

If an Idealist were to stop at this point and assert the above interpretations as self-evident, Moore would have nothing further to say. Moore has set himself the task of dealing with Idealist arguments, and if an Idealist simply asserts his claims as true, with no argument, Moore is content to counter with his own claims. His satisfaction with such a response is rooted in his belief that, left to our common sense, we will side with him. But, as Moore sees it, all Idealists have offered statements in defence of their view that are demonstrably false. At this point we have the two statements of Idealism that Moore extracts from the "ambiguous" Idealist literature: first, the external is no more than an aspect of the internal; second, the external cannot "occur" without percipi or the internal. The fact that our common sense contradicts both of these is a strong indictment in itself, but as all Idealists hold to a further proposition,

in defence of one or the other of these two possible interpretations, Moore turns his attention to that.

"Idealists, we have seen, must assert that whatever is experienced is necessarily [experienced]. And this doctrine they commonly express by saying "the object of experience is inconceivable apart from the subject" ("Refutation," p. 12). Moore now approaches this as having a meaning which is demonstrably false. Since this meaning is the one he supposes all Idealists to hold, he sees himself as attacking all of them.

What is wrong with this Idealist position is that it fails to notice that object and subject are necessarily distinct ("Refutation," p. 13). To illustrate this failure, Moore introduces two terms, "yellow," and "the sensation of yellow," which he feels are distinguishable. There is something in the latter which is not in the former. The Idealist, as Moore sees it, denies this distinction. Moore claims that everyone agrees that (1) "experience is something unique and different from anything else," while Idealists also hold that (2) "experience of green is entirely indistinguishable from green" ("Refutation," p. 14). This he declares a contradiction.

Moore's strategy is not to directly refute the claim that "being" and "being experienced," or "yellow" and the "sensation of yellow" are necessarily connected (indistinguishable); rather he feels that an analysis of the concept "sensation" or of "idea" will show people the obvious falsity of this position. It is also Moore's opinion that all who

hold that "whatever is experienced also must be experienced," ("Refutation," p. 16) do so on the basis of proposition (2), while at the same time holding (1), thus contradicting themselves. In this way Moore seeks to lead the reader away from the lure of the Idealist's temptations.

To determine what a sensation is, Moore seeks what is common in both the sensation of blue and the sensation of green. The feature he finds that all sensations share is "consciousness." The element by virtue of which sensations differ is the "object" of the sensation. To say that "blue exists" is to refer to the object of consciousness, not to consciousness alone, as Idealists claim. Moore admits that to talk of the "sensation of blue" is to recognize that consciousness (which is part of the sensation) exists. This leaves one with only two alternatives: (i) both blue and consciousness exist, or (ii) only consciousness exists. Faced with this alternative Moore asserts, "We can and must conceive that blue might exist and yet the sensation of blue not exist" ("Refutation," p. 19).

The first step for Moore in showing the plausibility of his own belief is to offer an explanation for the Idealist's variance with common sense. There are two facts that help explain the Idealist mistake:

The first is that language offers us no means of referring to such objects as "blue" and "green" and "sweet" except by calling them sensations: it is an obvious violation of language to call them "things" or "objects" or "terms." And similarly we have no natural means of referring to such objects as "causality" or "likeness" or "identity" except by calling them "ideas" or "notions" or "conceptions" ("Refutation," p. 19).

Language-practice gives the same name to two different things; both the "experience of green" and "green" are called sensations, and this may have led people to see them as identical. The second fact Moore suggests is that introspection is a difficult process, and it is only by means of introspection that we discover the nature of the "sensation of blue."

"Consciousness" is an especially difficult element to examine in the introspective process. Thus, when many thinkers examine their own "sensation of blue," the consciousness element eludes them and they see only the object blue. Thus they conclude that "blue" and the "sensation of blue" are identical.

These facts suggest a way of understanding how some people have gone wrong in thinking about the relationship of things outside us and things inside, but this is not Moore's central concern. It is the relationship of "blue" to "the consciousness of blue" which Moore wishes to explain. But this relationship is just what we mean when we speak of knowledge that something is blue. We often speak of being aware of, knowing of, or imagining. These are ordinary states and the relationship in each case is just as ordinary, Moore claims. Philosophers have gone wrong on this point because they have never been clear about "consciousness." They have never been able to hold "consciousness" and "blue" before their minds for a comparison. The process of introspection needed here is one that requires a long and careful look. With such a careful look, we see that our awareness is of blue and that there is a distinct and unique relation of

blue to the awareness of blue--blue is the "object of the awareness."

Given this analysis, to have a sensation (at least a sensation of a colour) is to move out from the circle of the inner to the external. It amounts, for Moore, to knowing something which cannot be reduced to experience. If one deduces "a reason for doubting the existence of matter, that it is an inseparable aspect of our experience, the same reasoning will prove conclusively that our experience does not exist either, since that must also be an inseparable aspect of our experience of it" ("Refutation," p. 30). Thus Moore's argument in the "Refutation of Idealism" is closely allied with his analysis of sensation. This analysis is at least rooted in the process of introspection. For Moore, introspection seems to mean a careful examination of our experience which will reveal the true nature of sensations.

This is Moore's most famous attack on Idealism, but it is not his only one. In "A Defence of Common Sense" Moore employs a quite simple argument which is both typical of his style and important. This article begins with a list of truisms each of which, Moore asserts, "I know, with certainty to be true" ("Defence," p. 32). This list consists of such propositions as: "The earth had existed also for many years before my body was born," and "That mantelpiece is at present nearer to my body than that bookcase" ("Defence," p. 33). His propositions share one theme in that they are typical instances of "common knowledge" of the external world.

Moore distinguishes two types of philosophic stance-- in opposition to his own--which he will address. Philosopher A holds that at least some of the propositions Moore listed are simply not true. Philosopher B holds that for at least some of these propositions no one can ever know them. Moore again has Idealism in mind here when he points out that many of his propositions imply the "reality of material things" ("Defence," p. 38).

With respect to philosopher A, Moore points out that to deny, for instance, that there are other human bodies that have lived on the earth is inconsistent with the act of denial ("Defence," p. 41). To whom is one denying this? The act of denial includes in it a listener. It is inconsistent to engage a listener in order to deny his existence. It is not clear whether Moore thinks that such an inconsistency can be found for each of his propositions, but he is willing to assert: "I have, I think, no better argument than simply this--namely, that all the propositions in (1) [his list] are, in fact, true" ("Defence," p. 42).

Moore's reply to philosopher B points out that B holds a position which is "self-contradictory, i.e., entails both of two mutually incompatible propositions" ("Defence," p. 42). A philosopher of this camp denies that we ever know for certain the propositions in Moore's list.

Now the remarkable thing which those who take this view have not, I think, in general duly appreciated, is that, in each case, the philosopher who takes it is

making an assertion about 'us'--that is to say, not merely about himself, but about many other human beings as well ("Defence," p. 42).

Such a philosopher is making a statement about "human knowledge in general" ("Defence," p. 43). When a philosopher asserts that "we cannot know the existence of other human beings," he is saying there are other human beings and none of them can know the existence of any others. Thus two incompatible propositions arise from the assertion that we cannot know the existence of others--there are others, and no one can know there are others.

Moore's position is that of defending common sense. He has encountered charges against his position, that other humans exist, from other humans. "Since, if I know that they have held such views, I am, ipso facto, knowing that they were mistaken . . ." ("Defence," p. 40). If a philosopher were to think that some other people hold the mistaken view that we can know the existence of other people, and thus sought to ~~set~~ them straight, then the very fact that he believes there are other people in need of his instructions proves Moore's charge of inconsistency. Similarly, as soon as we know that this philosopher is making this charge, we know there are other humans (at least this one). The point Moore wants to emphasize is that there is no reason for a philosopher to write at all when there is no audience for his work.

Moore recognizes that this does not prove his knowledge of these propositions.

If, for instance, I do know that the earth had existed for many years before I was born, I certainly only know this because I have known other things in the past which were evidence for it. And I certainly do not know exactly what the evidence was ("Defence," p. 44).

Moore distinguishes his adherence to the "Common Sense view of the world" from that of simple faith (since there is some evidence), yet he agrees that his knowledge is predicated more on the inconsistency of any doubt or denial than on a slate of evidence.

Moore's defence of common sense view against Philosophers of type A and B is quite different from his earlier refutation of Idealism. It still constitutes an attack on Idealism and is in many ways the more profound work. In the next section we can take a critical look at the damage suffered by Idealism from Moore's arguments.

A Look at Moore's Thesis

In Moore's earlier "Refutation of Idealism," he outlines where Idealists have gone wrong in their thinking. Moore claims that by performing the exercises he suggests, we can put the problem of Idealism into its proper perspective. In this section I wish to look closely at the key exercise in Moore's program--examination of the "sensation of yellow" by introspection. In the later "Defence of Common Sense," Moore suggests that a logical inconsistency is the outcome of the Idealist denial of common sense knowings. The question to be put to this later claim is whether inconsistency is an unavoidable consequence of denying one of Moore's propositions.

First, we will consider the charge that the failure to distinguish between "yellow" and the "sensation of yellow" is the central weakness of the Idealist arguments. This is a distinction that everyone makes in some connections, he claims, but Idealists generally deny it in their philosophy. The blame for this mistake is leveled in part against ordinary language. To recall briefly Moore's argument, yellow as it is encountered in the external world is called a "sensation." Thus both the experience and the colour are referred to as sensations. But has Moore paid close enough attention to ordinary language? It seems correct to observe that people do not refer to yellow as a "thing" or a "term" or an "object" ("Refutation," p. 19), but when do they refer to it as a sensation? Does a sentence like "I am having a sensation of yellow" bring to mind any familiar contexts--outside of philosophy? If someone were to say this while pointing at a yellow balloon, we would not mind so long as the balloon was yellow, but we might wonder about his peculiar speech. "The sensation of yellow" is not a phrase we normally use. If we refer categorically to yellow, we generally do so as a "colour." When we are pointing out the colour of a yellow object, it suffices to call it yellow.

We must then be on our guard when Moore asks us to distinguish between "yellow" and the "sensation of yellow." We have known for many years which colours are called yellow and which are not. There are a few border-line cases that give us trouble, but these do not seem to be what Moore

is talking about. As a rule we can pick out yellow things: nor are we confused about which of Moore's two expressions to use, for we only use the one.

Fortunately Moore suggests a program by means of which we can examine "the sensation of yellow" and see that it is clearly different from "yellow." This program is "introspection" and it promises us a way of solving our difficulty. What is introspection? Webster's tells us that introspection is "self-examination." This term is broad and needs to be narrowed down. C. S. Peirce suggests that introspection is limited to "knowledge of the internal world not derived from external observation."⁸ If we allow inference from the external then introspection is indistinguishable from our normal activity of seeking knowledge--for scientist or school-child. If Moore means something distinct from normal observation, Peirce has suggested an appropriate restriction. The "sensation of yellow," Moore tells us, is distinct from "yellow" inasmuch as yellow is external. The sensation of yellow is internal. Thus it seems fair to suppose that what Moore had in mind when he spoke of introspection was a self-examination which is limited to the internal realm. No evidence from external observation is allowed. Introspection is then a special kind of looking which I have yet to see if I can perform.

⁸"Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed For Man," Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, Vol. 5 (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 144.

Moore assists us again when he tells us what the final result will be. When we look long and closely enough, we will see that the sensation of yellow is consciousness which has as its object "yellow." It is not immediately clear what sort of consciousness has yellow as its object. Since speaking of yellow as an object of consciousness does not remind me of a familiar context in everyday language-practice, we must be careful in considering its meaning. If I were to look at a yellow object, one might say I was conscious of yellow. This could be offered as a substitution for the normal description of the colour of the object. In this case we might say that "I am conscious of yellow" means "X (the object) is yellow." Given this use, our proposition can hardly be considered without considering the external object X. When are we ever conscious of yellow when we are not conscious of a yellow object?⁹ I can see no way in which either phrase--"the sensation of yellow" or "consciousness of yellow"--can be used except in reference to being aware of a yellow object. Thus, the experience we must subject to

⁹Modern day science provides one possible exception to this--brain stimulation. By means of electronic wizardry we can be stimulated to see yellow without a yellow object. This brings up the ambiguity of the word "see." As it is used in English, it not only relates to the act of visual perception, but also to the "grasping" of concepts--understanding. Though it seems proper to speak of brain stimulation as an example of "seeing," it is not clear which sense of the word is best. As Moore had nothing in mind as technical as brain stimulation, we can avoid this exception by saying that in our everyday lives we are never conscious of yellow without being conscious of a yellow object.

the rigors of introspection is the awareness of a yellow object. If this is true, we have arrived at something I can do. I need only find a yellow object and look at it.

Luckily, I have a yellow pen close at hand.

As I gaze at this yellow pen, I reach for the second step. How can I concentrate on myself looking at this yellow pen? A snapshot will not do, since I would clearly be working with something external. When our goal is to examine consciousness, external objects can only mislead us. I have to look at my own internal condition in order to find this sensation. As soon as I even begin to think about how I am going to look inside, I forget about the pen. This will not do! Yet I cannot do both. I cannot concentrate on the pen and concentrate anywhere else at the same time.

Can I take a long look at my yellow pen and then, while that is still fresh in my memory, look at my memory and discover this sensation? Here my attention is not called upon to do any simultaneous split, so I can move one step closer. But when I look at my memory of looking at the yellow pen, what I recall is what the pen looked like. If someone asks, "Did you have a sensation of yellow?" I might reply, "The pen was yellow." Again I can understand "sensation of yellow" as a phrase one could substitute for a normal description. I was aware that the pen was yellow, but my memory was of the pen, not of me. It is the simultaneous split that still plagues me--even looking at my memory of a situation. The only way I can understand the term "sensation

of yellow" is as an awareness of a yellow object. As long as my attention is on a yellow object, I notice nothing I would call "consciousness." If experiencing the "sensation of yellow" involves something other than looking at a yellow object, this experience eludes me.

My first inclination when confronted with a new term is to examine its use in language-practice. "Sensation of yellow" is not ordinarily used in language-practice. If someone wished to use this phrase as a substitute for a normal description of a yellow object, this would be acceptable--though odd. But then, what is the distinction between "yellow" and the "sensation of yellow"? Evidently Moore does not understand the "sensation of yellow" in this way. His suggestion is that "introspection" will offer us insight into this experience, but the only experience that I can relate to a "sensation of yellow" is an awareness of a yellow object. Moore did warn us this would be difficult, and it may well be that he is one step ahead of me. I do not wish to suggest that this is an infallible criticism of Moore. What remains unclear is what I am to examine when I turn my powers of introspection to the "sensation of yellow."

Moore's accusation that Idealists regard the "sensation of yellow" and "yellow" as terms for the same experience is thus not clear. If Idealists use the term "sensation of yellow," we can look to them for an explanation.

But Moore's charge that their error lies in failing to distinguish these two terms is of little help in light of my inability to understand "the sensation of yellow."

As we recall, Moore aims his refutation at the arguments of Idealism. As he sees it, the failure on the part of Idealists to make the appropriate distinction between "yellow" and the "sensation of yellow" is a mistake made in the course of supporting their arguments. In his "Defence of Common Sense," Moore changes his tactics somewhat. He begins this essay by asserting several propositions which he says he knows to be true. Some of these propositions are in direct opposition to the tenets of Idealism--at least as Moore characterizes it. If Moore's tactic were to do no more than affirm his list of propositions as true and to deny any Idealist counter moves, his essay would be of little interest. However, Moore's aim is to show that anyone who denies these propositions is inconsistent. Not only does Moore believe that anyone with common sense would recognize his list of propositions as true, but that everyone does, in some sense, hold them to be true. Moore certainly recognizes that some philosophers deny some of his propositions. However, he believes that in their actions, and even in their philosophical reasoning, they act upon them as if they were true. In this way a philosopher who insists that some of the propositions of Moore's list are false, by this very act, establishes his own inconsistency.

Moore's argument centres on this inconsistency.

Suppose someone were to announce a large philosophical convention, to which all are invited, with himself as the keynote speaker. When the people have assembled, this thinker walks to the podium and proclaims his new discovery. His research has led him to the inevitable conclusion that he alone exists; there is no existence outside of his internal state. This would constitute the inconsistency Moore describes. The act of calling other philosophers together to hear of this discovery is inconsistent with his conclusion.

Moore suggests that in our everyday activities and everyday reasonings, we act in a manner consistent with the propositions of his list. To completely retire from all the activities that involve the common knowings that Moore defends would be nothing short of psychosis. Moore speaks, then, of the philosopher who denies one of the propositions of his list and also participates in an activity--a perfectly natural activity, such as speaking to someone--which is inconsistent with his denial. For Moore's charge of inconsistency to be effective, he must establish a necessary connection between the denial of a "common sense proposition" and the subsequent performance of an act that contradicts this denial. Yet it is conceivable that someone might decide that he is the only human in existence and cease all conversations and all interactions with other people. This may sound like a difficult thing to imagine, but is it any more difficult than to imagine someone who denies the existence of other humans?

Moore has failed to show the necessary connection between denying a "common sense proposition" and acting inconsistently. Yet his point is not completely lost. If someone were to deny one of Moore's propositions outright, we might easily find a contradiction in his lifestyle. This is not a logical trap that one springs on someone who denies a common sense knowing, but rather one realistic way in which to discover what is involved in denying a proposition on Moore's list. What normal activities would we have to suppress if we denied the existence of things outside of us and wished to act consistently with our thoughts? What alternative lifestyle would be the consequence of an outright denial of other humans? I am not sure how these questions are to be answered, but they would be good questions to ask an outright sceptic. Unfortunately, such outright scepticism is hardly to be found in modern philosophy, so it is not clear why Moore saw a need for this rebuttal.

In his case against Philosopher B, Moore again charges inconsistency and again suggests we look at the lifestyle of such a thinker. For Philosopher B the propositions on Moore's list may be highly probable, but we can never be certain of them. If the philosopher we described above announced in his keynote address that his research had failed to produce a definitive proof for the existence of other humans, Moore would again find this inconsistent with his action of speaking to his fellow philosophers. Since Moore admits that the evidence for many of his common sense

knowings is not entirely clear, he could hardly object if someone did begin the task of proving the existence of things outside of us.

But is ~~Philosopher~~ B inconsistent in addressing his convention? The conclusion of his speech might read like this: "Fellow human beings, that is, if it is the case that there are people out there and they can recognize me, I have discovered that it is impossible for humans like myself, if there are any other than myself, to ever be certain that you, if you are out there at all, really exist." He might even develop a short form for this cautionary phrase and learn to speak with his former articulateness and speed. Thus Moore's charge of inconsistency could be circumvented by Philosopher B, simply by the addition of a qualifying phrase whenever he made a reference to something outside of himself.

Yet a point can still be made concerning the lifestyle of Philosopher B. What effect does his philosophic conviction have on his normal activities? In the course of our everyday lives, we are often in contact with other people. Our language-practice makes constant unqualified reference to other people. Are we wrong in using language as we do? Is a reform of language needed? To hold that our language-practice is in error is to suggest that people are caught in an all-encompassing illusion--the illusion that they know other people exist. Philosopher B is likely to argue not that we are to cut off all relations with things outside of us, but rather that we need to be careful in our

speech. The benefits of including a qualifying phrase with every reference to the external may be difficult to imagine, but Philosopher B might insist that accuracy is the heart of this issue.

Whether or not it is accurate to say that people think they know that objects exist outside of them is something I wish to pursue in detail in Chapter III. More than a straightforward examination of the evidence is required for this discussion. It is clear, though, that people are not uncertain about the existence of external things. The normal attitude to things outside us is characterized by an absence of doubt. (In Chapter III we look more closely at the attitude people generally have towards the external.)

The problem here is this: should we feel uncertain about the existence of material things. Are we missing something important? It may be helpful to consider a common example of uncertainty. It is reasonable to be uncertain as to whether a given train will arrive on time. We may have experienced late arrivals and have surely heard complaints of such from other travelers. Most stations provide a schedule and usually have a clock. We can easily determine whether the train is late or on time, and both these situations occur. We have, then, a coherent idea of what it means for a train to be late as well as on time. When a train arrives, we compare its arrival time (by looking at the station clock) with the proposed time of arrival (by looking at the schedule) and this tells us whether the train is on time.

Philosopher B suggests we should be uncertain about the existence of things outside of us. Which is the existent object by which we are to compare other objects? What is the schedule that we can examine to see which objects are existent? Philosopher B will not be stopped long with these questions. "The schedule is unknown, and this is precisely why we must be uncertain. There is no object which is obviously in existence so that we can compare. The only certain existence is my own internal state, but that is completely separate from external things and cannot be used as a means of direct comparison. What can be compared is the certainty with which I know my internal state is real and the uncertainty I feel for the reality of the external."

I cannot deny the testimony of Philosopher B's feelings of uncertainty. But these uncertainties are not widely shared. The question here is how did Philosopher B become uncertain? If it were the case that trains always arrived on time, would we go to the station with any doubt about the arrival time? In this hypothetical situation, it may still be logically possible for a train to be late, but this has never happened. What, other than this logical possibility, would suggest a doubt concerning the promptness of the train? Philosopher B then has a difficult task in hand if he wants us to share his uncertainty about the existence of the external world. What is missing is an explanation of how the non-existence of the external world is logically possible. In Chapter III we will consider some of the

explanations of Berkeley and Descartes. The point here is that something more is needed before we can become uncertain about the existence of the external realm. We are left, then, without a good reason to suppose that our unqualified references to the external realm are inaccurate. To show that these references are inaccurate may amount to proving that our normal use of language is wrong.

Moore has not found an unavoidable inconsistency in the actions of Philosopher B, but some of his questions point to peculiar actions on the part of someone who claims not to know the propositions on Moore's list. If, for instance, someone insisted on speaking as we have suggested our keynote speaker might, and made no further demands, this would be simply peculiar. The skeptic Sextus Empiricus (second or third century B.C.) was careful to avoid stating that his work was anything other than a "chronicle of his personal feelings at given moments" (Popkin, p. 459). It is when a skeptic demands that we should follow his example that Moore's reply is most telling. A skeptic cannot both admonish us--and thus acknowledge our existence--and deny that we can ever know other humans exist.

This charge of inconsistency concerns the variance between the actions of Philosopher B and his philosophy. Moore also suggests another side to this inconsistency. If I recognize that Philosopher B is telling me that I cannot know the existence of other humans, how can I reconcile this with my recognition of Philosopher B? Moore did

not dream up B's skeptical view. He found it in books and lectures. Thus if he recognizes correctly that someone holds this view, he has already refuted it. If no one holds this view, where did he find it? If it came to him in a dream one night, could he not simply dismiss it as a bad dream?

If Philosopher B is deeply troubled by the existence of the external, Moore's analyses may well leave him unsatisfied. Moore might alert him to avoid inconsistencies between his Idealist claims and certain commonsensical ways, e.g., addressing an audience. Moore has not shown, however, that Philosopher B must fall into those inconsistencies or else give up his Idealist claims. Thus B may feel it is still far from proven that material things exist.

Moore's earlier "Refutation of Idealism" seeks a definitive analysis of the Idealist error in a conventional way. By pointing to a weak Idealist premise, Moore hopes to effect a refutation. This refutation--like Kant's--offers me instructions that I cannot relate to his conclusions. I am to attain the clarity he feels with respect to Idealism by performing a task of introspection. This task is itself surrounded in a cloud of obscurity. Thus, at the end of this refutation, I found myself no closer to my goal of clarity.

In Moore's second essay, several points are made that are quite helpful in my project of settling the Idealist problem. Moore brings to our attention several questions we would certainly want to ask a real-life Idealist concerning his lifestyle. As for the outright skeptic, as soon as we

correctly recognize his existence, we have refuted his position. But Moore's attempts at establishing a necessary connection between Idealism and inconsistent actions has not been completely successful. In a sense, Moore lays the groundwork for Wittgenstein. In the second article, he moves beyond a consideration of Idealism that is restricted to an examination of the premises or the offering of a new proof. He begins to question what is involved in knowing that the external realm has an independent existence, as well as what is involved in denying the external world. It is questions along these lines that we wish to pursue in our attempt to see if the problem can be made to disappear.

CHAPTER III

SOME COMMENTS BASED ON THE LINGUISTIC TURN

. . . the harmony between thought and reality is to be found in the grammar of the language.

Zettel #55

In the first two chapters we found that both philosophers use the term "refutation of Idealism," and that they held a similar notion of what was needed for a refutation. Certain Idealist propositions were seen by these thinkers as in error. One can claim to have refuted a proof in two basic ways. In the course of a proof, certain rules of logical procedure may have been violated. To point these out together with the proper logical procedure is, in effect, to undermine the proof. Kant and Moore chose the other route: to point out a false premise. In both cases the premise in question was seen as based on an inaccurate observation. For Kant, Idealism failed to observe the true nature of space. For Moore, Idealism failed to observe the true nature of the sensation of yellow. The result of each faulty observation was a weak premise.

Proofs generally operate in a context of a set of rules and accepted notions. In mathematics these rules are strict and well formulated. The proofs of Idealism are

generally referred to as being in the field of metaphysics or epistemology. In these fields we do not have fixed rules and notions that all participants agree upon. Unlike mathematics, there is no textbook that is considered authoritative. When we are confronted with two conflicting notions, it is not clear how we are to decide between them. Kant, upon the conclusion of his refutation, offered his proof of the empirical reality of things outside of us. He confronts the reader with a new set of basic notions in contrast to those of Idealism. There is no fixed, general procedure for dealing with his proof. We could only examine it carefully for coherency.

Moore's refutation was also found to be less than coherent. The basis of his refutation was a careful observation of what he considered a perfectly natural experience--of a colour. But in Moore's later work a new note was struck; Idealism was considered on a different level. What must an Idealist do in this world, Moore asked, to remain consistent with his philosophical beliefs? Here, even if talk of proofs and refutations is not relevant, Moore nevertheless raises some extremely important questions about Idealism.

The later work of Wittgenstein also suggests a way of examining Idealism that is not completely removed from Moore's treatment. With some cues from Wittgenstein, I want to look at Idealism as a problem and at the context in which it acquires a grip on certain thinkers. How should one approach the propositions of Idealism? Are they, for example,

strange assertions in need of a refutation? Do they embody mistakes made in understanding how language works? How does a thinker come to feel that the existence of a physical world stands in need of proof? And should this be my feeling as well? We turn now to questions like these.

Some Idealist Reasons for Doubting External Reality

In this section we will examine some of the arguments of Descartes and Berkeley that were designed to bring their readers to doubt material existence. These arguments give historical testimony of how the problem of external existence arose for these thinkers, and thus we may gain some insight into what sort of problem this is. We cannot deal with all Idealist reasonings, but a look at some of the central proofs--and their weaknesses--can help us with the central question of this section: Can the traditional Idealist arguments generate a doubt of external reality?

Any consideration of Idealism as a problem cannot ignore the fact that it is not a problem for many people. This was a debate that began in philosophy and never gained a larger audience. As a philosophic issue, it has not been centre stage for a number of years. One of the most important reasons that it is a problem only in philosophy can be seen in Kant's explanation of how the problem began.

"Idealism assumed that the only immediate experience is inner experience, and that from it we can only infer outer things" (Kant, B276). As Kant saw it, Idealism found inner

experience undeniable because of its immediacy, whereas outer experience does not share this immediacy. Thus, some sort of inference is necessary to establish its reality. Idealism could find no trustworthy inference. Kant felt he had found a certain immediacy in our experience of outer things, thus they also were undubitable.

When the problem was posed in this manner, the assumption and the inference had to be justified. In our ordinary life we have no need to make any such inference or any such assumption. We do not infer the reality of things outside of us because the problem never naturally arises in the form Kant saw it above, nor does the failure to make this inference interfere with our ordinary actions. That most people do not engage with the philosophical difficulties Kant describes is not much in dispute. But should we involve ourselves with this problem? Is there an ethical commitment to understand the mode of reality of outer things with which we interact every day? We cannot ask anyone to concern himself with a problem that never arises, but Idealism is a problem in philosophy. Thus, as we look at some examples of Idealist reasonings, we should keep in mind our question about how this problem arose for them, in hopes of gaining some insight into whether and why it should arise for us.

With Descartes there began a succession of modern thinkers who found the reality of things external to themselves in need of justification. Internal states were known by Descartes with perfect clarity, but there was reason to

doubt material things. The classic piece of reasoning that led him to this doubt began with the consideration of certain natural phenomena: dreams, optical illusions, after-images, hallucinations, et cetera. These are all examples of natural experiences in which we are misled by our senses. When involved in a dream or hallucination, we think of dreamt objects or hallucinated objects as being real. We discover only at a later moment that these objects were not real. As all knowledge of the external comes to us via one or more of our senses, how can we be certain we are not misled all the time? Until we can establish a proof for the general reliability of our senses or a procedure for distinguishing between illusions and experiences of actual objects, the testimony of our senses remains in doubt.

Many thinkers have followed Descartes' reasoning up to this point, then continued with either a rejection of Descartes' subsequent proof and a proof of their own, or a rejection of the possibility of a proof. Descartes' proof relied heavily on the existence of God and is not of immediate interest to this project. What is of interest is the doubt Descartes describes. Is this the kind of doubt one normally experiences? Another of the important ideas we receive from Descartes is the picture of two distinct realms, the only connecting link being the channels of the senses. When Descartes saw the world as two distinct realms, it became possible to doubt the existence of one realm. The

external seemed not to have the clarity or immediacy of the internal, and to leave room, therefore, for a doubt.

This picture of two distinct realms was followed up by George Berkeley, but he spoke for Idealism with more conviction than a mere logical possibility could inspire. Berkeley judged none of the proofs of the existence of the external, prior to his own writing, as successful and further claimed that we could never produce a proof such as Descartes attempted. As Berkeley is one of the most important figures in the tradition of Idealism we are studying, it may be helpful to turn to A Treatise Concerning Human Understanding. We will not consider every point Berkeley made, but we will examine the opening sections of this book where the problem is introduced. Our intent again is to gain an understanding of the typical style of these arguments.

In just the third section of his Treatise, Berkeley turns his attention to the definition of the term "exists." For an object to exist, there must be a certain collection of sense data that we call by one name. Sensations from objects usually come in consistent patterns. We learn that an object having a given collection of sense data is called a "tractor." Our decision that there is a tractor in the nearby field is determined by the sensations we receive. (It is important to note here that Berkeley has familiar objects in mind--his example is a table.) As these sensations are internal, existence has no external reference. If someone were to speak of the "absolute existence" of an object (existence

without reference to the object's being perceived, that is, existence independent of the internal), Berkeley would find this individual "unintelligible" (Berkeley, #3). In Berkeley's definition, the word "exists" can only be used in reference to these internal "sensations," not to an independent object.

"Sensation" or "sense datum" talk has played an important part on both sides of the Idealism/Realism debate; yet, as we saw in our discussion of Moore, a coherent conception of this notion is difficult to come by. We will have to watch closely to see if Berkeley has not restricted the term "existence" right out of existence.

This definition of "existence" will be acknowledged by anyone who looks closely enough, claims Berkeley, but this is not the complete reasoning behind Idealism. All our knowledge of the outside world comes to us by way of the senses, and an object can be considered entirely in terms of these sense reports. Why then take another step and claim the object is outside us at all (Berkeley, #4)? It is impossible to conceive of an object apart from our sensations of the object (Berkeley, #5); thus, to say that the object exists apart from the sensations amounts to a further assumption. Not only is there no need to assume that there is an external world existing independent of human perception of it, but this assumption is without foundation.

Berkeley supports his contention that this assumption is uncertain in several ways. He looks first at the attempts of philosophers before him to establish primary qualities,

matter, or originals, and notices the failure of these attempts. Berkeley asks: Can we ever perceive these alleged external things? If we can perceive them, then they are ideas and an idea cannot be an external thing. If they are not perceivable, then this is to say that a physical object is like something intangible (Berkeley, #8). Being invisible and intangible goes completely against our notion of material objects; thus to claim external things are unperceivable sounds strange to the ear. Few of us wish to deny that physical objects are perceivable, thus Berkeley's twin-edged attack relies most heavily on the first alternative. We will return to this, but Berkeley has more seeds of doubt to sow.

He next tries to show that all sensible qualities are relative to the perceiver (Berkeley, #14). What is cool to one is warm to another. The sweetness of something at one time is sour to the same person at another time (when with a fever). This Berkeley sees as further evidence that an "object" is a collection of sense data. How can there be an enduring material object where there are no sense qualities that reflect these stable characteristics? The assumption that there is something physical behind these variable sense data does not fit with our notion of physical beings--enduring and unchangeable.

Though it is not controversial to point out that heat and sweetness are the sort of sensations that vary

(to a certain degree) from individual to individual, Berkeley's contention that all the qualities of alleged "physical objects" are likewise variable is not so obvious. That this ink is black inspires few debates among those who know how to use the word "black." Further, it is at least as doubtful that the disagreement of individuals about the level of heat or degree of sweetness of an object proves that these qualities exist in the mind alone. The logic here will certainly need further examination.

Berkeley summarizes the issue by looking at the question: "How could we know that material things exist outside of us?" He sees only two general possibilities by which we could come to this knowledge--by our senses or by reason (Berkeley, #18). If we consider the knowledge we receive from the senses, we notice it is entirely internal. The senses can only provide us with sensations and thus cannot bring us any direct knowledge of external objects. The senses then provide us, claims Berkeley, with no facts to solve his question. Where now can reason lead us? In considering this possibility, Berkeley suggests an hypothesis. It is possible that we could have all the ideas we have now, even if there were no bodies outside us (we need only the same sensations). No object need have an external existence for us to have the idea of this object. This is illustrated by dreams and illusions. In these cases we have the sensations without any reference to the external. Berkeley's hypothesis

then asserts the possibility that a complete concept of the external world is possible without any independently existing physical objects. In other words, what is demonstrated in dreams and illusions--sensations without external cause--is possible in every case of our receiving sensations.

In Berkeley's view the above hypothesis requires no special knowledge--it can be proposed from what is known by everyone. But to move from the fact that we receive sensations to the supposition that material things exist is more than reason can do. We cannot prove the existence of material things, and Berkeley sees the consistency of his above hypothesis as a clear indication that we have no need for such a proof. Berkeley concludes earlier that it is "impossible that any . . . sensible quality whatsoever, should exist in an unthinking subject without the mind, or in truth that there should be any such thing as an outward object" (Berkeley, #15). His conclusion here is somewhat less dogmatic: If there are external bodies, it is impossible for us (human beings) ever to know this to be the case (Berkeley, #20). Berkeley's logic depends upon divorcing any talk of sensations from an external cause. Talk of existence can only be meaningful in terms of sensations. Objects are then defined in terms of these orphaned sensations and Berkeley's world becomes entirely internal.

With this, Berkeley considers his case established. We can see how his central strategy is similar to that of Descartes. One of the key points for both thinkers is the

deduction of the logical possibility that our senses mislead us in every case. Just as in our dreams we are convinced an object is real, but on awakening find it to be only a dream, so in our everyday life it is logically possible that we may one day--following the analogy--awaken and discover the grand illusion of material things. But is this a coherent possibility?

To examine this possibility, we need to look more closely at the phenomena which give rise to the argument. The natural occurrences of optical illusions, dreams, and hallucinations are only momentary. Invariably, at the end of a finite duration, usually quite short, we find ourselves back in the "real world." Idealists do not deny that we know how to distinguish a dream from our awakened state; we would have no use for the term "dream" if we could not do this. The Idealist claim is that we can never be sure that what we call our awakened state is not just another level of illusion. In the same way that we can look back on a hallucination and notice our "illusion," we may some day look back on our everyday interaction with the external world and notice our grand illusion.

What makes it possible for us to judge that a hallucination was in fact an illusion? We might see a chair, make an attempt to sit on it, and go crashing to the floor. On looking again, we might find no chair--not even splinters or broken pieces. Our normal experience of sitting in chairs is quite different and provides a convenient comparison. If

we are immediately doubtful, we can run through a check-list of comparisons. Can we touch the chair in question? We can normally handle chairs. Can we sit on it? Can other people describe it as we see it? This check-list might be useful in an extreme case, but normally we know almost immediately that this vision does not compare to a real object. With dreams, we have an automatic release. Almost as soon as we awaken, the dream reveals itself to be clearly a dream.

When we judge an occurrence to be an illusion, we are making a comparison with reality. If we consider the possibility that every occurrence is an illusion, what is to be the basis of this comparison? Do we not need some "reality" to compare with our illusion? Here an Idealist might suggest that this logical possibility implies that one day a new "reality" might come along and show us that our material world is definitely ideal. But this is no better. The material world is what we call the real world. The material world is what we turn to when a comparison is needed. If a new sphere of existence were to enter magically into our everyday lives, wouldn't we also compare this with our notion of the real? On what grounds could we judge it to be more real than what we now know as reality?

This argument for the possibility of an all-encompassing illusion remains incoherent so long as no basis of comparison can be found. If everything is an illusion, there can be no reality, and "illusion" would lose its meaning. This argument can prosper only if one fails to look at what

we mean by an "illusion." Berkeley's definition of the term "exists" also fails to notice the way we use the word. In our everyday language-practice, such words as "real" and "exists" are seldom used in connection with the objects we are familiar with. The reality of physical objects normally goes without saying; it is not in question. Where talk of existence does enter into our conversations is in the cases of witches, ghosts, Santa Claus, and certain space bodies (e.g., comets, asteroids, planets, moons). The existence of another moon of some distant planet may be in question, but the existence of our kitchen table is not. The only case I can readily imagine where one might say that a person is real is when it is being explained to a child that Santa Claus is not real in the way one's parents or friends are real.

The fact that the reality of familiar objects generally goes without saying is an important consideration in examining Berkeley's definition of the term "exists." Berkeley uses the example of the table he writes on. We can say it exists when we receive a set of sense data that we normally call a desk. We might do this by memorizing a list of sense data or a formula that we can compare with the sense data we are receiving. But this is becoming exceedingly complex and further removed from typical behaviour. When do we have the need to say a desk exists? We do know how to recognize a desk and thus how to use the word "desk." This is part of our normal language-practice. I am not prepared,

nor do I see the need, to explore the psychological complexities behind the operation of recognizing a desk.

As we mentioned above, the usual context for the term "exists" is where the existence of something is in question. An astronomer might argue that the results of a special test indicate that another moon exists behind some distant planet. In this case we talk of a collection of data that compares with results from moons of undisputed existence. (The main dispute here may be the reliability of the testing procedure, not the procedure of comparing data from a known moon.) We can talk of collecting data here--to call it "sense data" does not seem to add anything. But when do we ever even claim that a desk exists, let alone collect data in support of this judgment? Thus the most peculiar aspect of Berkeley's definition of "exists" is the example he gives. His definition does have some affinity with the scientific use of "exists" that we discussed above. But again a discussion of the existence of Santa Claus seldom has any reference to collections of data or evidence. Thus, his definition does not take into account the various uses of the term "exists."

I do find myself in sympathy with Berkeley's bewilderment about "absolute existence." This is a term I also find less than transparent, though for no reason that resembles those listed by Berkeley. In what context would one find this term employed? Can something have a greater degree of existence than plain existence? I cannot readily imagine

a context in which it would fit. Berkeley's misgivings over talking about the existence of an object (presumably such familiar objects as desks) without reference to its being perceived poses no problem for someone who does not talk about the existence of familiar objects.

One of our tasks in examining the arguments of Berkeley is to see how the problem of Idealism arises. We have not seen thus far how a mere logical possibility could occasion a doubt. Berkeley has also suggested that we make a false inference about the reality of external things; and upon seeing that this inference is unnecessary and invalid, we will understand his doubt. This inference--that material things exist--could only be made by sense or by reason, and neither is sufficient for the task. In the case of the previously undiscovered moon, we can speak of inferences; but again Berkeley's example is a desk. We simply do not infer the existence of such a familiar object as a desk. We cannot be accused of making a weak inference where no inference is made at all. It may be the case that some philosophers make this inference, and thus Berkeley may be directing his criticism to this group. However, if he is criticizing everyone, then it appears he has not paid enough attention to our language-practice.

Yet we have not resolved the issue of whether we need to make this inference. We have been suggesting that the reality of the desk goes without saying. In this sense it might be called a "knowing," and we will later want to

point out some characteristics that make it different from common knowings. But if it is a knowing, should we not have evidence or a proof for it? Are we not responsible for the justification of our knowings? I want to reserve these questions for a later section where we will discuss in what sense this is a knowing.

Another cause for doubt in Berkeley's mind is the logical trap he composed in Section Eight. An object is either perceivable or not perceivable. In the first disjunct it is dependent on our perceptions, and the second disjunct makes no clear sense to Berkeley. The latter case is also unfamiliar to most of us who speak readily of perceiving things. Our concern, then, is with Berkeley's logic in the first case. He claims that any perception of an object is an idea. If it is an idea, it is internal. However, it is a peculiar way of speaking to identify a perceived object with an idea. Ideas are generally internal. We sometimes speak of understanding an idea where "understanding" is not appropriate for an object, perceived or not. When can we say an idea was rained upon, other than speaking figuratively? To speak of a perceived object as an idea goes completely against distinctions manifest in normal language-practice, and Berkeley has given us no explanation for this variance.

The final argument of Berkeley that we explained above contains some curious points. He claims that all characteristics of matter are subject to the same variance of description as we experience with temperature and taste. From

this premise he concludes that variable sensible qualities can only represent something just as variable. Material objects that share these variable qualities are thus clearly mind dependent. If they were not, then their qualities would be stable. Upon reading this argument, we can imagine the tremendous difficulty it would create in the world of commerce. For any length of cloth a merchant desires to sell, people must agree on how long it is in order to pay a fair price. If no one can agree, the lines will soon back out into the streets as customer after customer argues that the piece of cloth is too long or too short. Although such disagreements do arise, they are few; and we have methods of settling them. The situations that actually surround descriptions of length, colour, or shape are not characterized by general disagreement. Berkeley may be concerned with some absolute determination of length which is remote from the level of everyday commerce, but this is not our problem. Our conduct in the market place does not reveal the uncertainty Berkeley describes.

Each of the arguments we have considered has failed to point us to a compelling doubt. But our initial questions have gained some depth. We have learned something about the way this problem arises for philosophers. Although most of the Idealist reasonings that we considered are weak, there are some points that remain in question. In a certain sense people "know" that material things exist, although it is a knowing that generally goes without saying. Are we then

responsible for a defense of this knowing? Is a defense possible? This problem will be explored later. Our examples of Idealist reasonings also give us insight into what sort of problem Idealism has been for philosophy, and why it has failed to engage the popular spirit.

We have been concerned with how this problem arose for Berkeley. Our principal considerations have been with the reasonings he provides, but a general concern about this question cannot ignore the influence of Locke. Obviously, other philosophers have helped sustain the Idealist debate. Locke's picture of the internal/external connection involves "imperceptible bodies" which travel to us from external objects and give rise to ideas. Thus the external is removed from us, and we have only the reports of these bodies. When Locke turns his attention to the existence of external objects, he can come up with no better name for them than an "unknown something."¹⁰

The question of who influenced a particular Idealist is of little help in our effort to discover if the Idealist reasonings can generate a doubt for me. That Locke had an influence on Berkeley can only suggest that we examine Locke for reasons that put in question material reality. Our survey of some of the major reasons for doubting the external has failed to lead us to a compelling doubt. The lack of

¹⁰ John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, abridged by Richard Taylor, The Empiricists (Garden City, New York: Dolphin Books, 1961), pp. 52-62.


soundness in the logic of Berkeley and Descartes is the prime reason for this failure.

Another cue to help us understand the failure of these Idealist reasonings to generate a doubt can be found in a brief look at their style. Idealist arguments have some similarity to scientific reasoning. As we noticed in our discussion of Berkeley's definition of "exists," it appears that only in a scientific context would the word be used as he describes it. Such concepts as "logical possibilities" and "sense data" also remind one of scientific reasoning. Logical possibilities play an important role in any axiomatic study where one unaccounted possibility can be a monkey-wrench in a grand theory. "Sense data" may not have a direct use in scientific language-practice, but it does seem appropriate in discussions of sound waves, scents, and light quanta. Further, such questions as, "Does an eleventh planet exist in our solar system?" share a grammatical similarity with questions like "Does this desk exist?" Whether or not the growth of Idealism was given any impetus by scientific developments is not my prime concern. Berkeley's use of "existence" can only be compared to our scientific use. When a child asks about the existence of Santa Claus, proofs and counter-proofs are not called for; but when an Idealist puts in question the existence of his desk, his reasoning bears at least some resemblance to the style we call scientific.

The most striking difference between these two disciplines is that science virtually never questions the

existence of objects which are familiar to everyone and about which no one outside of philosophy has any doubts. Few scientists have ever shared Idealist sympathies. But even if a scientist were also a philosopher who doubted the existence of his telescope, the procedures by which he studies a distant moon would not be valid for the study of the existence of familiar objects. The principles of astronomy cannot help us with the Idealist problem. This raises another question: What procedures are valid? Idealism cannot even compare cases as there is no basis for comparison. Science compares data from moons of known existence to data from moons which are in dispute. If all external objects are in dispute, there can be no comparison. What methods can we use to prove or disprove material existence? This is another question to which Idealism owes us an answer.

Idealism--posed in a context bearing some resemblance to science--demands of those who claim a knowledge of the existence of material things a logical deduction in support of that knowledge. Our look at some Idealist reasoning has failed to turn up the "obvious" doubt to which Berkeley suggested reflectiveness would lead us. This generates certain suspicions about the demand that we must justify our belief in the external reality. In what sense can we be said to "know" physical reality? Is this the sort of knowing for which we need a justification? What we need at this point is a closer look at our attitude toward material things.



Our Attitude to Material Things

Though we have not considered all Idealist arguments, we can say, in defense of those Berkeley calls the "illiterate bulk of mankind," that we have seen no reasoning that tends to cast the shadow of a doubt on the physical world. We have agreed all along with Berkeley that we are generally unperturbed about the existence of familiar things, but more can be said about our attitude toward them. One thing we can do is look at our language-practice. We have noted that the reality of familiar objects generally goes without saying. It enters explicitly into common language-practice only when we are confronted by Idealist questions. What does enter into common language-practice that reflects our attitude to material things? Can we find support in our language-practice for the picture of two distinct realms that we have seen in Idealist arguments? Or, as Kant has suggested, is this a weakness in the Idealist argument? How is this internal/external distinction pictured in our language-practice?

When we think of the internal or the mental, two things come immediately to mind--ideas and emotions. More specifically, many things come to mind that we consider emotions--guilt, happiness, disappointment, fear, scorn, loneliness. What would it be like for these emotions to be strictly internal? One Idealist assumption is that we have immediate access to our internal states and thus they are never in doubt. If emotions are strictly internal, does

this mean that an individual is the only one with indisputable access to his internal feelings? To consider something as strictly internal, we need some such feature which makes the distinction strict. As everyone has equal access to the external, indisputable access would provide this distinction.

Our everyday experience with emotions does not support a radical split between the internal and the external. If a soldier were to flee in the face of a battle, he could steadfastly claim that his privileged contact with his internal state proves he was courageous, yet his actions speak clearly of his fear. If someone with a scowl on his face kicked his dog and told us how happy he felt, we would not be convinced. We can run through a great list of emotions and find that in our normal experiences, external conditions and behaviour are closely associated with our feelings. There are cases where we make mistakes in our interpretations of someone's feelings. If we were to walk into a room and see a woman crying, we might not guess that it was relief at news that her husband had just been released from a foreign prison. There are also cases where someone makes an effort to conceal his internal feelings by altering his actions. But our everyday experience of emotions does not support the conclusion that the individual has sole and indisputable access to his own internal state. We are most often correct in denying someone's testimony of happiness in the face of contrary external manifestations.

Literature also provides examples of how our internal state is often revealed in our actions. Playwrights give instructions to actors concerning the internal feelings that they are to display. G. B. Shaw introduces Alfred the dustman in Pygmalion with this short description:

He has well-marked and rather interesting features and seems equally free from fear and conscience. He has a remarkably expressive voice, the result of a habit of giving vent to his feelings without reserve. His present pose is that of wounded honor and stern resolution.

An actor is not likely to complain that stern resolution is a mental attitude and belongs entirely to the internal. He is trained to set his face and bearing with a look that gives the message of his stern resolution. When Theodore Roethke writes in his poem "Open House"

My heart keeps open house,
My doors are widely swung.
An epic of the eyes
My love, with no disguise.

we are not struck by any peculiarity in saying that what one thinks and feels shows through.

Emotions are something we call "internal" as opposed to "external"; they are "intangible" as opposed to "tangible"; they are "mental" as opposed to "physical." We are not denying that these two realms exist, rather we are trying to understand the kind of separation they display in our normal experiences. Our emotions are intimately connected with the external by means of facial features and actions. Not only are emotions interpreted on an external level, we also speak of their inspiration in external terms. We are happy with

the weather, angry with our friends, or saddened with our fortune. Seldom do we speak of an emotion apart from its source. It is difficult to envision a strict border between the internal and the external when one thinks of the emotions. There are many external aspects that are an integral part of our feelings.

Emotions are only part of what we consider the internal. We could also list a number of ideas. Scientists have brilliant ideas, mothers have useful ideas, teachers have imaginative ideas, and, on some occasions, each of us has all these kinds and more. One feature of ideas that indicates external connections is that ideas can be shared. Books, speech, and sometimes gestures convey ideas. We speak of widespread or pervasive ideas. More than one person can have the same idea. Yet few of us are in danger of confusing ideas and cement blocks. Ideas are recognized as internal. We speak of someone as having a secret. We cannot overhear someone thinking to himself. Ideas are, in many ways, more private than emotions, but not exclusively private.

We can think of countless examples of expressions that advert to what goes on inside someone--his brain or nervous system. We have countless expressions for what goes on with someone's body and its interaction with things around it. These expressions often go in tandem--referring to the internal and external conditions in one sentence. "He smiled with confidence as he began his serve." Other expressions show a manipulation of the external to conceal the

internal: "His smile fooled everyone but himself.", or the reverse, "No one else believed his smile," where we censor the real situation. We have all these types of expressions and no one type is preferable. We can think of countless cases where we use each type of expression.

We do recognize two realms, the internal and the external, but our language-practice does not suggest distinct boundaries. It is no more correct for us to suggest in one case that one's internal condition is hidden from us than it is to suggest in another case that it is an "open house." It is difficult to conceive how our emotions and ideas are strictly internal. We cannot say they are hidden from those around us, nor can we say that our language-practice reveals a preference for those expressions that reflect two distinct realms. Nor can we say they are completely independent. Emotions without their external manifestations are lifeless and not wholly believable. Emotions without external causes are also rare. In what other sense can they be strictly internal?

When the Idealists claim that the internal is more obviously real, while the external is in need of justification, he implies a boundary between these two that is much sharper than that reflected in our language-practice--we do not normally speak of two distinct realms. To call the internal immediate, and the external removed, is to forget that often they are intimately connected. Looking at our language-practice would not inspire the radical division

between the internal and external that we have seen in Idealist concepts. The only way our language-practice could suggest this radical division is if we looked at only one type of linguistic expression--those that emphasize the split. Imaginably, a concern that we are unable to demonstrate or prove the external world as existent, could lead one to see the world in terms that are amenable to this way of speaking. As we mentioned in the previous section, when we give the issue a scientific character, it is natural to look for such things as "evidence" and "absolute certainties." We are more apt to think in terms of "sense data" than "language-practice." As we have pointed out, Idealism is not an empirical thesis and does not offer empirical grounds for doubting the existence of physical things. We are still left with our question of why someone would begin to think in terms of a radical dualism and thus go against the commonest language-practice. The exhortation that we must question the reality of external things is losing its sting.

We can speak of our ability to use language as a knowing. In this sense we could make a long list of things we know, for example, vocabulary. In considering our attitude toward material things, we have been considering some of these knowings. When an Idealist examines his store of knowings to determine which are certain and which in doubt, the fact that he has command of his mother-tongue is far from doubtful. When Descartes found that the only thing he knew for certain was that he had thoughts, he neglected to mention

that he was able to think in both French and Latin. When I examine the counsel of many philosophers, including Idealists, to believe nothing for which I do not have clear evidence, my command of English is never in doubt. One thing that comes with my knowledge of English is how to use a great many names of "physical objects."

There is another fact of grammar I wish to mention here: the words "is" and "are" often mean the same as "is called" and "are called" in our language. If someone asks, "What is that called?" we may well reply, "That is a smoke-stack." Children learn that this colour is blue and is called "blue." There is not complete synonymy between these two sets of terms. There are contexts in which we want to know what something is called (meaning titled--for example, a statue) not what it is. At times we ask what something is when we want more information about how to classify it than can be discerned from the name. In the case of mermaids, we may understand someone who claims there are mermaids; but no one can point to something and say this is called a mermaid. With these reservations we can still list two grammatical facts: We know how to use a great many words that are the names for physical objects, and the words "is" and "are" are often interchangeable with "is called" and "are called." These are not startling facts, nor do they seem immediately relevant to the Idealist demand that we prove the existence of external objects.

Consider then an Idealist who points to an object and demands that I prove its existence independent of its being perceived. Looking at the object, I see immediately that it is what is commonly known as a desk. I answer his demand by saying: "This is a desk." This expresses my linguistic knowing. What else do I need to know about the desk? No need arises in our everyday language-practice to assert anything about the existence of the desk. I can say with complete confidence that it is a desk--confidence inspired by knowing how to speak English. His insistence that I must prove the existence of the desk is now less compelling. To embrace this problem (that is, to feel I am in need of a proof) there must be some uncertainty. Yet my language-practice inspires confidence--I know how to refer correctly to external objects. The burden is now with the Idealist to explain why I should embrace a problem that does not arise for me, and how I am to see it as a problem in the contexts of my ordinary experiences. In this case the most important of these ordinary experiences are those of doubting and knowing. Can Idealism, as a problem, fit in naturally with our ordinary doubts? Along the same line, does our "knowledge" of the existence of material things fit in naturally with our ordinary knowings? These are the questions we want to examine in the next section.

Is This Problem Mine?

The Idealist admonition that we should justify what normally goes without saying about the existence of the physical world--or that this problem is ours--brings with it several assumptions. One is that we can treat it as a problem, that is, examine our "knowings." In our look at the historical grounds of this problem, we found it generally began when the existence of the external came into doubt. For me to understand Idealism as a problem, I must understand this doubt. As it stands for me, the existence of familiar objects goes without saying. Unless this comes into question, I have no problem. Doubting is an experience that I am well acquainted with, but this doubt seems to require a special effort.

In our attempt to understand what doubting the external world involves, we may best begin by reminding ourselves of a few common doubts. The story of the fisherman who returns more often with large stories than large fish is not an uncommon one. The spread of his hands may be the true length of the lost fish, but his past record of fish stories gives us reason to suspect his integrity. On the other hand there are a great many fisherman who seldom bring home stories without the fish to match; and when they do so, their stories are generally accepted. Unless a controversial claim is made (no fish has ever been caught in this lake that matches his description) or the teller has a record of exaggeration, then we generally trust his story. One of our habits is to

treat everyday reports as true. Only when something sounds odd do we entertain doubts.

Doubting a report is a doubt of the simplest kind. There are examples of doubts that are quite common and at least as grand as doubting the existence of physical things. For instance, the existence of God is a controversial issue. Some people find the thought of a universe without a God incomprehensible. The presence of God is as clearly felt as the presence of a livingroom chair--there is no room for doubt. On the other extreme, some people regard the existence of God as a myth. For this person, God might be considered a symbol that people have invented and use to comfort themselves in time of trouble. There are many arguments for either side. Another group of people profess doubt about the existence of God. It is just as reasonable that God exists as that he does not. Often they can find no argument on either side that is convincing. They can doubt the existence of God because they see it as a reasonable alternative that he does not exist.

It seems to be a general feature of doubts that they involve a coherent alternative. This also explains why doubts are involuntary. When we are confronted with the facts of a tragic event--such as the smoldering ruins of our house--we cannot doubt those facts as no alternative is apparent. No amount of desire (short of delusion) can bring us doubt. As creatures we seem better equipped for avoiding doubts when the alternatives are unpleasant than we are at

raising doubts on demand. In order for us to experience doubt, we must be aware of a reasonable alternative, and we cannot manufacture such alternatives at will.

The fact that our ordinary doubts involve a clear possibility of things being otherwise is an important consideration in explaining the phenomenon that people do not generally doubt the existence of familiar objects. An Idealist who suggests that our conventional attitude toward physical things should be subject to doubt must explain to us a coherent alternative. What would it be like if physical things did not exist independent of our perception of them? Only when we are faced with such an alternative possibility can we regard his doubt seriously as a doubt. (We will consider the possibility that his "doubt" is not an ordinary doubt, but rather a philosophic exercise.)

We can describe our attitude toward material things as an absence of doubt. Our project, then, is to imagine what it would be like if material things did not have an independent existence. This task of imagining will involve various aspects. How would our language-practice be affected? How would physical things appear to us? These are the type of questions we want to explore.

If accepting Idealism demanded a visual act of a new dimension, then I would certainly fail. The world looks quite solid to me. It seems fair to assume that no such act is required. It is unlikely that Berkeley saw his table any less clearly than the average person today. Idealists speak of

the actual existence of an object. It is an object's existence apart from its appearance that they wish to question.

To imagine how our language-practice would be affected, we might start by considering two parents--one a strict Idealist, the other a Realist--teaching their children. In either family, the fact that they have such strong convictions makes them atypical. The parents are likely philosophy professors. The children might learn to say the appropriate maxim: "There are no physical objects existing outside of us," or "There are so." But these phrases would seldom arise in their normal childhood activities. Both children would learn to ask for a pony ride by calling the pony a "pony." The familiar phrase, "pass the milk," would refer to the same jug. The Idealist child might be taught to preface any reference to external objects with a phrase of caution: "Pass me the appearance we call milk." We discussed speech patterns of this nature in Chapter II. The Realist child might be taught to scoff at these prefaces. The point is that the difference in speech patterns would amount to little actual difference. Each child would still refer to external objects even if one child qualified each reference.

Idealists claim that even if we think of the material world as totally dependent on perception for its existence, it would still look the same and we would interact with physical objects in much the same way. But what would happen to many of our familiar institutions such as history, geology, and even looking for something we have forgotten about for

days? If we assume that material things have no existence outside of our perception, the study of history seems meaningless.. What would it mean to say something used to exist? This might mean that it used to be perceived. But how could we ever know that anything used to be perceived? To know this, we would have to perceive the perceiver, and this is something we can only do in our lifetime. History before we were born, then, would have no factual support. Geology would be in a similar bind.

Our project, then, has shifted to trying to imagine what the world would be like without many of our familiar institutions. The project of imagining is assuming gargantuan proportions. How many institutions will fall with the loss of material things? How far-reaching are the effects of each loss? Is an Idealist who demands that we doubt the existence of the physical world also demanding that we imagine what the world would be like without many of our familiar institutions? It is incumbent upon the Idealist to explain a coherent alternative. Here the effort required is vast. It would appear, then, that we are perfectly consistent in maintaining our attitude toward material things--absence of doubt--until such an alternative is explained.

One of the claims repeated in this essay is that the independent existence of physical objects is a knowing that generally goes without saying. This claim, though highly descriptive, is still in need of clarification. Moore called this a common sense knowing, yet it has some striking

differences from what we generally consider common knowings. If we consider a few examples of common knowings, these differences become apparent.

One thing everyone has known since early childhood is which is one's right hand and which is one's left. We can buy children's shoes with the markings clearly printed on each shoe. Knowing our right and left hand is of considerable help in following directions and instructions. If we do forget, we can always refer to these shoes to set us straight. This knowing comes complete with usefulness in our normal activities. We also know that a certain plant with fern-like leaves has a carrot for a root. If we see such a plant, we can pull it up and find the carrot. The usefulness of this knowledge is clear to all who enjoy carrots. In this case we have--in addition to usefulness--a testing procedure as well (at least for those of us who know what carrots taste like).

Another example that has a more curious history is our knowledge that the earth is round. This does not enter into everyone's practical experience (that is, travelling around the world), but we still speak of the orbits of astronauts, the sun and the moon. The usefulness of knowing this is experienced by those who devise travel patterns for planes, ships, or rockets. Years ago it was widely believed that the earth was flat. This theory had not been tested, as no one had been to the ends of the flat earth, but it was commonly considered knowledge. Our knowledge today is based

on scientific reports, but this example does illustrate that we have been wrong about "common knowings" in the past. Simply because something is commonly believed does not make it knowledge. What we want to point out here is that these examples of common knowings exhibit distinct differences from our "knowledge" of ordinary physical objects.

One of the prime reasons that our knowledge of the independent existence of physical objects generally goes without saying is that it has no practical use. What situation normally develops in which we have to assert this knowledge? When we interact with the external--sit in chairs, talk to people, or any of countless normal activities--do we express a confidence in their actually being there? I think a lack of confidence would certainly crimp my activity. But most Idealists do not counsel us to cease any of our normal conduct. They do not feel that these interactions with the external are dependent upon a confidence in its independent existence. It is true that we do not bring any decision about external existence into our normal activities. Thus, there is no active sense in which we use our "knowledge" of external existence.

Another clear difference between ordinary knowings and those that go without saying is the evidence that can be called in defence of the former. We can cook the carrot-like root and taste it. We can orbit around the world and note its contours. On the other hand, no evidence was considered by those who do not doubt external existence. We might be

able to marshal evidence if a sceptic confronted us, but this would be evidence cited after the fact. We can believe something solely on the grounds of faith, but this is not what is meant here. There is evidence for the existence of the material world, but it is not cited because we do not normally form a judgment or draw a conclusion--instances where evidence is usually required. It is also true that evidence does not play a part in the grammatical knowing which is our right and left hand. This we know by virtue of knowing how to use the words "right" and "left." We can trace this knowing back to our early language training. This is also different from our knowings that go without saying. Something that does not have a place in language-practice can hardly be called a grammatical knowing.

There is a sense, then, in which we want to say we "know" the physical world is real, but it cannot be considered simply another common knowing. Our knowing that material things exist is not alone in the category of knowings that go without saying. There are many others, and in some respects they are knowings of the simplest sort. Many can be found in Moore's list of common knowings: "The earth had existed for many years before my body was born," "I have had many experiences before." We can even find such knowings in the ethical realm: "My ethical bonds are closer to other human beings than to popsicle sticks." There are many such as these that we would want to call "knowings," but they do not arise in our everyday language-practice.

With any knowing that we arrived at by an examination and evaluation of the evidence, doubt can arise. New evidence can crop up, or we can find errors in our reasoning. These are traditional occasions of doubt. We also know how to go about settling such doubts. The new evidence can be examined; a charge of a logical error can be considered. We can re-evaluate a conclusion. These traditional circumstances of doubt are not available in the case of knowings that go without saying--unless we have come to think of them as conclusions. To offer new evidence or a new evaluation of the evidence is not relevant as long as I remember what sort of knowing this is.

How we acquire a knowing is an important aspect of it. Most of us accept the scientific report that the earth revolves around the sun. If someone claims this is untrue, we leave the response to the scientists. We know our height by direct measurement and are generally willing to submit to a re-measurement if a dispute arises. How is it that we have come to know the kind of simple knowings that generally go without saying? This question touches upon a key difficulty in considering these as simple "knowings." The fact that these knowings generally go without saying implies that they have no typical formulation. The "illiterate bulk of mankind" do not find their peace by checking Berkeley's claims against their own metaphysical convictions. We do not have these convictions recorded like short metaphysical manifestoes or empirical knowings that we memorized in school.

This knowing comes to the surface--is formulated--only when we are confronted by an Idealist charge that we can never justify the independent existence of the external. This charge conflicts with our linguistic confidence in referring to things outside of us. The Idealist charge does not conflict with anything we can call a conclusion. We know how to use the names of physical objects and do so with no qualification. The Idealist doubt grates against our confidence in history, or against our homely practice of looking for something that has been forgotten for several days. Our "knowing" can be said to come from this conflict, inasmuch as it becomes formulated in response to Idealist claims. Often the wording of this "knowing" borrows from the Idealist question.

This still does not explain how we come to know this simple knowing; and as long as we speak in these terms, we tend to look for such things as evidence and reasons. It might be safer to say we come to know such simple knowings as we learn our way about, as we learn how to speak, as we learn about our practices of studying history, or learn to look for forgotten objects. For us to doubt them would be to go against all this early training. This is certainly not something we could be expected to do at an instant's notice.

Have Idealists acquired a special ability to doubt? If we look at the historical example of Idealist thinkers, it is apparent that this "doubt" is not a doubt in the ordinary sense. When Descartes suspended belief in material

things, it was only for a few hours at a time--while he wrote. During his hours away from his desk, he regarded material things with the same confidence as the rest of us. Hume also expressed his inability to carry his doubts to the dinner table. Doubt for these thinkers was an exercise of suspending belief, carried on within a philosophical program, and each found little difficulty in turning it on or off at will.

Berkeley also found his philosophic doubt difficult to reconcile with his everyday existence. Instead of suspending his "suspension of belief," Berkeley re-established all the familiar institutions that were lost by placing them in the all-encompassing perception of God. In this way he could explain the uniformity found in our intermittent perception of physical objects as well as give credence to such studies as history. The need for this initial suspension of belief in the external was to give each thinker an objective position from which to examine the justification for the independent existence of physical objects. Only with all former convictions annulled, he believed, can one objectively justify any claim about external existence.

As we have pointed out, there is no need to justify what is not a conclusion; nor do we have a need to make such a conclusion. What belief does this suspension of belief suspend? Is our knowledge that material things have an existence independent of our perception of them--a knowing that generally goes without saying--the sort that can be easily suspended? Suspending belief in material existence

means that one is to make no judgment which depends upon it as a supporting premise. We have found no role for this knowing. It does not support any of our normal judgments. The sort of judgments Idealists want to make, for which this knowing would be inadmissible as a premise, is not the sort of judgment that we need to make.

Not only do we have no need to justify accepting the existence of physical objects, but this project itself raises some serious questions. The aim of a suspension of belief in the external is to use only evidence which can be exclusively supported from one's internal states in seeking to justify the external. Can we withdraw all our beliefs in the external and still function well enough to perform this project? Is there anything that is necessary to this project that we must let go of during this philosophic exercise? One thing that seems absolutely necessary to the work of Idealists is the ability to use language correctly. Without a consistent use of words, we can only speak nonsense. Our process of learning to speak correctly is to a large degree dependent upon our entering into a language community. Since we learn how to use words in a way that conforms to our language community, the meaning of a word or phrase is heavily dependent upon its public use. In this sense the reactions of those around us are a basic influence in learning how to use language correctly and knowing when we are doing so.

How are we to know if we are using language correctly if we accept no feedback from the outside community? Are

we able to trust the use of language that we learned from others? As children we learned how to use the words of our language. We learned colour words, the names of hundreds of things, action words, and so on. If one day we learned to call our balloon "blue" and the next day called it "red," we were corrected. Left on our own we would have only our memory to tell us how we used "blue" the day before. Can we explain our consistent use of words entirely with reference to our memory? To answer these questions would require another thesis. There have been a number of studies done on the possibility of a private language (some are listed in the bibliography). An Idealist who uses his language after he has suspended all belief in the external world has thereby, it seems, accepted the view that a private language is possible. We can ask of him that he justify this position before he can cogently demand that others take part in his project.

At this point I feel far less concerned with the Idealist problem. Instead of feeling the burden imposed by a belief in need of justification, I am reminded of my ability to use language correctly. My normal activities can go unhampered by any need to provide a philosophical foundation for them. I simply do not normally make judgments about the existence of the external world; and my confidence in it is reasonable in the light of my language ability, plus other things that we might call evidence, as well as the lack of coherency in the Idealist alternative. There are many unanswered questions the Idealist owes us answers to if he wants to insist that his problem is also mine.

One Other Logical Possibility

We have made the point that these knowings that generally go without saying are not conclusions. We do not establish them from more basic premises. In this respect they remind us a little of mathematical axioms. Can an Idealist claim a role like that of Gauss or Riemann who developed new sets of axioms and thus new systems of mathematics? Can we find a new set of basic beliefs about the world that is somehow more efficient? What I want to do in this section is look at a comparison between basic axioms and these simple "knowings."

The notion of an axiom in mathematics has not been with us nearly so long as mathematics itself. As later mathematicians tried to prove every law that their earlier colleagues had accepted, it was discovered that some of the most simple mathematical truths resisted proof. No amount of effort could establish a deduction for these obvious truths. This search for proof led mathematicians to attempt proofs by contradiction. Here they assumed propositions that were in opposition to the accepted laws and examined the conclusions that resulted from these new assumptions. They were looking for results that contradicted one another. At this point they discovered completely coherent systems could be established upon what appeared to be absurd postulates. It turned out later that some of these systems were highly useful.

From this point on, the notion of axioms has developed. They are the accepted postulates upon which a system is

grounded. All proofs and laws are based on these axioms. Axioms are not established from anything more basic, thus we cannot question their foundation in the way we can for laws and theorems. If we accept a system, we thereby accept the axioms in that system. If someone disagrees with these axioms, it is not because they are true or false, but rather because they are deemed not useful for the project at hand. Rejecting a system is not a matter of a proof, but rather of demonstrating a superior system for a given task. It can be shown that Euclidean geometry is inaccurate for global surveys. A new system having a different set of axioms is used for surveys on a global scale.

In other sciences, we can see how theoretical frameworks have changed from time to time, in a way at least comparable to the way axioms have changed. Phenomena which new technology displayed for the scientist could not be explained by the existing postulates. In physics the Newtonian system gave way to the Einsteinian. In optics the particle theory gave way to the wave theory, and then to the quantum theory. In most sciences similar transitions can be traced. As our ability to observe the universe expanded--with microscopes as well as telescopes, and many other devices--science had to reach for new explanations. Existing postulates occasionally proved insufficient; a new system was born, and new explanations found.

Is Idealism banging at the door with a new set of axioms to replace our time-worn set of knowings that go

without saying? We regard material things as having an existence independent of our thinking about them. Is this comparable to an axiom in a system that is outdated? Is this like an axiom at all? Axioms generally are such simple mathematical truths that they seldom appear in written proofs. Larger steps are used which incorporate the axioms but make no mention of them. Yet there are occasions when axioms are raised--when a student questions a step or the axiom is reconsidered along with the system. But knowings that go without saying do not play a role in our everyday reasonings, nor do they even appear.

If we look at an example of a simple and common rumination, can we see any role for the simple "knowings" of Moore? If I misplace a book, I might retrace my steps in imagination to try to remember where it was left. As I recall going into the pantry, it may occur to me that I left it there. I return and there it is. At no time do I assure myself that the book did not leave existence while I was not thinking about it. Do any of the propositions I might utter, such as "I remember now, I left the book in the pantry," depend for their justification on any of the propositions Idealists demand we prove? Such premises as "The book existed even while I was not thinking of it," "Objects have existence independent of my consciousness," or "This book rested comfortably in the mind of God while it was not in my consciousness" are not the sort that have any role in this simple rumination. Why would someone want me to justify this statement by doing

anything other than going to the pantry and having a look?

This proposition is not generally given a defence, thus thinking about defending it is peculiar. Further, what clear alternative is there to the book's existing when I am not thinking about it? The kind of statements we make or think in such situations are not in need of rational justification.

What makes knowings that go without saying radically distinct from axioms is that they do not play a role, as far as I can see, in our reasoning. We can find simple knowings (other than axioms) associated with mathematics that compare with these in that they go without saying and play no active role. "We are the sort of beings that can draw lines, angles, and closed plane figures." This contrasts clearly with axioms and is not the type of knowing any mathematician desires to replace.

The essential claim made by those who argue for a new system--new axioms in mathematics or a new theoretical framework in science--is that the old system is not efficient or is simply inaccurate. If the knowings Moore gathered in his "Defence" do not play any role in our reasoning, how could a new set of knowings play a more effective one? It is a mistake to look at these knowings as axioms. They do not fit into anything that can be called a system, nor can we replace them at will. Nor can we say these basic knowings form a system themselves. The concept of a system as we know it in mathematics entails a group of axioms and laws that work together to generate a consistent set of laws and theorems,

but Moore's and similar propositions do not work to generate any of our common knowings, or any of our confidence in external things. The new basic postulates of Idealism (for example, all external existence is dependent upon perception) do not serve us better. They introduce a number of problems as to the fate of our familiar institutions, but offer us no improvements. We can only think of Idealism as providing a new set of axioms if we fail to notice the difference between axioms and knowings that go without saying.

CONCLUSION

In our first two chapters we found that the refutation of Kant and Moore were not completely helpful in solving the Idealist problem. Both thinkers accepted the Idealist charge that we justify our belief in material existence. In their minds this was a logical issue, a matter of finding support for that belief. In short, they treated Idealism as if it were a clear thesis. In their opinion Idealist arguments were well ordered and coherent but failed to take certain facts into account. Thus each refutation centred on a weak Idealist premise.

Our point in the third chapter was that the Idealist thesis is less than clear. We have suggested a number of facts that point to Idealist confusions. Some of these facts are linguistic or grammatical. First, we generally make reference to external objects without qualifications. Secondly, the propositions of Moore's list are different from what in these pages we call "common knowings," and different also from mathematical axioms. Thirdly, our language-practice does not reflect a strict division between the internal and external realms. Other facts we have pointed out might better be called empirical. For example, we doubt something only when we are confronted by a coherent

alternative, and we normally rely on clocks and calendars. The important Idealist project of suspending belief in the external is itself fraught with difficulties. Many points need an explanation before we can regard Idealism as a coherent thesis.

Idealism is not in need of a refutation in the traditional sense. What inspires a philosopher to refute Idealism is not a doubt of material existence, but rather the charge that he should doubt it. We have found this charge to be less than coherent. We have found the arguments for Idealism unconvincing and our ability to doubt material existence, or to suspend belief by means of a philosophical exercise, has been put in question. Further, we do not as a rule conclude that material things exist. External existence is not a premise in our ordinary reasonings. Since this knowing is neither a conclusion or a premise in our ordinary reasonings, it does not come with an obvious need for justification. Nor can we simply say we must justify any claim to knowledge. There is a real sense in which we can say that we know material things exist, but this is a knowing that generally goes without saying. It is the kind of knowing that comes with learning our way about. As we learn to trust history, to look for things we have forgotten, and to speak our native language (which involves such things as making unqualified references to external objects), we acquire this confidence in the external. To demand a justification is to say there

is some coherency to the proposition that material things do not exist. It is this coherency that we have failed to find.

I have reached the point where the problem of how I can justify my confidence in the independent existence of the external world has almost disappeared. There seems to be a residue of habit that pinches my conscience now and then with the simple question, "What about a proof?" This may fade in time, but the disappearance of a problem is not a mystical result of some revelation. It happens as an individual comes more and more to see that this problem is not his problem. I hope to have pointed out that for one individual, myself, there is no need to justify people's acceptance of the external. Our attitude--the absence of doubt--is a perfectly consistent and reasonable position.

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