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# II Scepticism and Certainty: Moore and Wittgenstein on Common Sense and Philosophy

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

How should we conceive of the relationship between common sense and philosophy? This is a large question, but I want to suggest that we can get at least one interesting angle on this topic by considering a particular historical episode from early analytical philosophy. This concerns the problem of radical scepticism, at least in one of its (now, anyway) familiar guises.

In one corner we have G. E. Moore, who offers a distinctive account of how we should handle dialectical standoffs between philosophy and common sense, and who demonstrates the utility of his proposal by appealing to common-sense certainties in order to respond to philosophical concerns about our knowledge of an external world. In the other corner we have Wittgenstein, who rejects the Moorean account of common-sense certainties and their supposed philosophical import. But that's not because he wants to defend a traditional viewpoint of a kind that Moore was opposing with his common-sense philosophy. Wittgenstein instead offers a kind of inversion of the Moorean position, a position that accords our common-sense certainties a special role to play in our epistemic practices – and thus in our dealings with philosophical problems, such as radical scepticism – albeit in a very different manner to that envisaged by Moore.

As we will see, this debate is more than just of historical interest, since the two parties are outlining distinctive ways in which a common-sense epistemology might be developed.

## MOORE ON COMMON SENSE AND CERTAINTY

Common sense is a recurring *motif* throughout Moore's philosophical corpus, but our interest here, for reasons that will become apparent, is specifically with Moore's treatment of certainty in the context of our knowledge of an external world. The thread that unites Moore's work in this regard is the idea that our common-sense certainties can be employed to push back against philosophical challenges to knowledge of this kind (from radical scepticism and idealism), and hence constitute legitimate dialectical stopping points in a philosophical debate.

In taking this general line, Moore is following in a philosophical tradition, as exemplified most notably by Thomas Reid.<sup>1</sup> Just as Reid countered the sceptical themes of his day, as represented especially in the work of Hume, by appealing to our common sense, so Moore does likewise in response to the prevailing scepticism about the external world of his day.<sup>2</sup> There were two sources of the scepticism that Moore was countering. The first was found in the idealism that was prominent in British philosophy at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> The second was the new forms of (indirect) realism regarding perceptual knowledge and experience that were being developed in the early twentieth century in response to such idealism, which make our knowledge/experience of the world essentially indirect and mediated by 'sense-data'. These latter views are not meant to be sceptical about the external world in the way that idealism is, but by making our knowledge of an external world indirect they inevitably generate sceptical worries of this kind regardless.<sup>4</sup>

Moore's response to these philosophical proposals that call our knowledge of the external world into question was to insist that since common sense tells us that we do have external-world knowledge, so it follows that there must be something amiss with the philosophical reasoning in play. When common sense and philosophy conflict, that is, the former always has priority. But what kind of priority did Moore have in mind?

The first thing to notice in this regard is that Moore doesn't hold that our common-sense beliefs are always true or that they are inherently epistemically justified, much less that they are immune to revision. It follows that we do not automatically have knowledge of these common-sense claims either. Nonetheless, what does seem clear is that Moore holds that common-sense claims have an intrinsic credibility that ensures that they are dialectically privileged relative to philosophical claims that oppose them.

Moreover, Moore also holds that the special status of these claims relates to the *certainty* with which we endorse them. In particular, our everyday common-sense convictions enjoy a certainty that philosophical theses lack. Accordingly, he maintains that where the two conflict it would be more reasonable to retain one's common-sense claims than to instead endorse the opposing philosophical position. Indeed, he also seems to want to say that the degree of certainty in play here is important, in that when it comes to those everyday common-sense claims of which we are optimally certain, it would be especially reasonable to retain one's conviction in the everyday claim rather than accede to the philosophical alternative.

In fact, it was these optimally certain everyday claims (in normal conditions anyway), and the special epistemic standing that they have as a result, that most interested Moore. Call these *Moorean certainties*. He presented a long list of Moorean certainties, the most famous of which was of course that one has hands, but which also included such claims as that one is not currently completely naked, and that the earth has existed for many years before one was born.<sup>5</sup> Presumably Moore holds that it is possible that we can be in error even here, though when it comes to these Moorean certainties he seems to want to claim that we simply cannot make sense of them being false (even though they might be). At the very least, the idea that philosophy might call them into question is rejected, as Moore maintains that it would always be more reasonable to maintain the Moorean certainty over any philosophical thesis that conflicted with it, given that the latter would inevitably be less certain. Here is

Moore, talking about philosophical views that challenge our knowledge of the external world:

it seems to me a sufficient refutation of such views . . . simply to point to cases in which we do know such things. This, after all, you know, really is a finger: there is no doubt about it. I know it, and you all know it. And I think we may safely challenge any philosopher to bring forward any argument in favour either of the proposition that we do not know it, or of the proposition that it is not true, which does not at some point rest upon some premise which is, beyond comparison, less certain than is the proposition which it is designed to attack. (Moore 1918–19: 8)

Another crucial element to Moore's common-sense approach to these matters is to explicitly eschew the burden of explaining how one has knowledge of these Moorean certainties. That is, Moore holds that the foregoing demonstrates that it is more rational to endorse these Moorean certainties (and so regard them as known) than to be swayed by the opposing philosophical considerations (which purport to call such knowledge into question), even if one lacks an account of how these Moorean certainties amount to knowledge. Relatedly, one can legitimately reject these opposing philosophical claims even if one cannot explain exactly what is amiss with them. Indeed, Moore is even willing to grant that he finds the opposing philosophical claims credible. He famously contends that our situation with regard to scepticism about our knowledge of the external world is essentially a matter of one person's *modus ponens* being the other person's *modus tollens*, with plausible antecedents on either side (see especially Moore 1959a). But still he insists that it can be reasonable to reject these philosophical claims if they conflict with common sense, and hence embrace the antecedent of the conditional that goes along with our common-sense convictions.

Moore is effectively conceding here that his philosophical opponent has problematized the type of knowledge in question. There is, even by Moore's own lights, a standing challenge to

explaining how our knowledge of the external world is possible. Moore is content to allow that he cannot meet this challenge, but he maintains that he doesn't need to meet it in order to reasonably insist that one has the knowledge in question. This is because he maintains that we can know things without being in a position to explain how we know them, much less being able to prove that we know them. Indeed, he even goes so far as to grant that we can legitimately maintain we have knowledge even if we cannot cite any specific evidence in support of the proposition in question, and even in the context of a philosophical challenge to that knowledge. In fact, Moore concedes that a lack of evidence of this kind is often the case when it comes to these Moorean certainties. Here he is talking about his knowledge of the common-sense claim that the earth has existed for many years before he was born:

I certainly 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. Yet all this seems to me to be no good reason for doubting that I do know it. We are all, I think, in this strange position that we do know many things, with regard to which we know further that we must have had evidence for them, and yet we do not know how we know them, i.e., we do not know what the evidence was. (Moore 1925: 45)

Notice that Moore isn't saying that we lack evidence for these common-sense certainties. Instead, he maintains that we do have such evidence. And yet it is also the case, according to Moore, that we are unable to identify what this evidence is.

A further feature of Moore's treatment of these Moorean certainties, one that is often overlooked, is that he clearly thought that their certainty is completely unaffected by our engagement with the philosophical challenge that is posed to them. So discovering that there is a standing, and credible, philosophical puzzle about our knowledge of the external world, and coming to recognize that one cannot explain how one has this knowledge or even what specific evidence supports that knowledge, is compatible with one continuing

to be, quite reasonably, just as certain of the truth of these propositions as before. Indeed, this much is clear from Moore's own reaction to the philosophical argument in play. His point is not just that those who haven't engaged with these challenges are entitled to their knowledge of these certainties even while lacking a grip on how this knowledge comes about or on what evidentially supports it. Rather, he further claims that even those who, like him, have engaged with these challenges and come to see their plausibility are nonetheless entitled to be no less certain that they have the knowledge in question. This is a quite remarkable stance, and goes well beyond the general idea behind a common-sense philosophical methodology such that common-sense claims should be privileged over philosophical challenges to them.

Moore's common-sense response to external-world scepticism is thus quite radical. It is not just that common sense is a kind of dialectical deal-breaker when it comes to a philosophical impasse, or even that common-sense claims have an inherent (albeit defeasible) epistemic pedigree on account of their certainty. Moore goes further to contend that we are entitled to these common-sense claims even if we recognize the force of the opposing philosophical argument and even if we recognize that we lack an account of how we can have the knowledge of these common-sense claims that we take ourselves to have. Indeed, even if we recognize that we cannot identify the evidential basis for this knowledge, it is nonetheless rational to continue to endorse them, and be no less certain of them.

#### WITTGENSTEIN ON CERTAINTY AND SCEPTICISM

Wittgenstein's final notebooks, published as *On Certainty*, are centrally concerned with the status of Moorean certainties.<sup>6</sup> Wittgenstein agrees that they play a special role in our practices, but he doesn't understand this role along the same lines that Moore did. In particular, while Moore holds that the optimal certainty that attaches to these propositions ensures that they have a special rational status, Wittgenstein holds that they have no rational standing at all.<sup>7</sup> Even so, he agrees with

Moore about the importance of these common-sense certainties when it comes to dealing with challenges to our knowledge of the external world. We thus have two very different conceptions of the role of common sense in philosophical methodology in play, with Moore representing a contemporary twist on the common-sense philosophical tradition and Wittgenstein presenting, in contrast, something much more iconoclastic.

The source of the divergence between Moore and Wittgenstein when it comes to these Moorean certainties is a radical difference in how they each take these certainties to relate to other, more mundane, everyday claims that we take ourselves to know. Right now, for example, I take myself to know that my car is parked outside my house. But while I take myself to know this, it is clearly not a proposition that is optimally certain, and much less is it the kind of claim that could play any kind of dispute-settling role in a philosophical debate. Interestingly, it is also something that I not only think that I know, but which I could easily tell you how I know (I remember parking the car there earlier, and have no reason for thinking that it has been moved since). Relatedly, I would have no problem articulating what evidence I had in support of this belief.

Moore effectively treats the relationship between the Moorean certainties and these mundane everyday claims as merely a matter of degree, where the former is simply more certain than the latter. We noted earlier that while Moore grants that we often can't identify the evidential basis of these Moorean certainties, he also held that one could not reasonably doubt that they were known, and thus that they did enjoy an adequate evidential basis. Moore seems to think that the fact that the evidential support for these Moorean certainties is not easily identifiable is merely a by-product of their common-sense status, in that they are so familiar and long-standing that it is understandable that their original evidential basis should now be long forgotten.

Wittgenstein takes a strikingly different line in this regard. He maintains that the optimal certainty that is associated with these

Moorean certainties means that we can make no sense of there being rational support in their favour (or against them, for that matter). In this regard they are very unlike our ordinary mundane claims to knowledge, where evidence for or against them can easily be marshalled. Wittgenstein focuses, in this regard, on the Moorean certainty that one has two hands. He writes:

My having two hands is, in normal circumstances, as certain as anything that I could produce in evidence for it.

That is why I am not in a position to take the sight of my hand as evidence for it. (Wittgenstein 1969: § 250)

The point is that the optimal certainty that applies to these Moorean certainties far outstrips any evidential basis that we could provide for them. Rather than this showing that there is something epistemically amiss with these certainties, however, Wittgenstein instead claims that it highlights the special role that they play in our epistemic practices, one that by its nature excludes them from rational evaluation altogether.

This point is further brought out by considering what doubt of a Moorean certainty would involve. Consider this passage:

If a blind man were to ask me ‘Have you got two hands?’ I should not make sure by looking. If I were to have any doubt of it, then I don’t know why I should trust my eyes. For why shouldn’t I test my *eyes* by looking to find out whether I see my two hands? *What* is to be tested by *what*? (Wittgenstein 1969: § 125)

In normal circumstances, determining that one has two hands by looking would be simply bizarre. Having hands is not like having one’s keys in one’s pocket, where one might verify their existence by looking for them. Wittgenstein is again emphasizing the differences between Moorean certainties and our everyday knowledge claims, in that the former are nodes of a general backdrop of certainty

against which our rational practices – and in particular our practices of offering reasons for and against propositions – take place.

This is why the Moorean certainties are characterized by Wittgenstein as having a ‘hinge’ status, and why the propositional attitude in play is often referred to as a *hinge commitment*. Consider this famous passage:

[T]he *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend upon the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn.

That is to say, it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are *in deed* not doubted.

But it isn’t that the situation is like this: We just *can’t* investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put. (Wittgenstein 1969: §§ 341–3)

Wittgenstein’s point is that it is this backdrop of certainty that enables rational evaluation to take place. Rather than the optimal certainty associated with the Moorean certainties reflecting the fact that they enjoy a special level of rational support, it instead reveals how they are immune to rational evaluation since they constitute the framework relative to which rational evaluation occurs. As such they can be neither rational nor irrational (and hence are a-rational).

This last point is especially important to understanding Wittgenstein’s account of hinge commitments. As he puts it in the passage just cited, it is not as if the hinge commitments are mere assumptions that we could rationally discharge. Indeed, they are not assumptions at all, since there is nothing remotely hypothetical about our commitment to them. On the contrary, Wittgenstein emphasizes how such certainty is rooted in our actions rather than being the result of ratiocination, how it is primitive, visceral, ‘animal’.<sup>8</sup> Relatedly, it is not as if we could imagine a system of rational evaluation that lacked a-rational hinge commitments. Wittgenstein explains why by showing how the very idea of a universal rational

evaluation – whether negative (sceptical) or positive (anti-sceptical) – is simply incoherent. As he remarks at one point (Wittgenstein 1969: § 450): ‘A doubt that doubted everything would not be a doubt.’ One needs somewhere to stand, from a rational point of view, in order to rationally doubt, and that constrains the scope of the doubt. Wittgenstein’s insight was to recognize that what needs to be kept in place are our basic certainties, and that this is a point that cuts both ways. It is not just doubt that requires a backdrop of certainty, but belief too. That which cannot be rationally doubted cannot be rationally believed either. But the attempt to rationally doubt, or rationally support, a hinge commitment is tantamount to undertaking a universal rational evaluation. Although the propositions in play look mundane, their optimal certainty reflects the fact that they are codifying our fundamental relationship to the world. If, in normal conditions, I am wrong about whether I have hands, then everything is called into question (in contrast, for example, to being wrong about whether I have my keys in my pocket).

This is also why Wittgenstein is so keen to highlight the oddity of the way in which Moore enumerates these Moorean certainties (see, e.g., Wittgenstein 1969: § 6). Moore clearly thinks that in making these claims explicit he is simply highlighting some ordinary commitments that we hold which are especially certain. As noted above, he doesn’t think there is any difference of kind in play when it comes to these Moorean certainties, in contrast to their more mundane counterpart everyday claims that are not optimally certain. But Wittgenstein shows us that the special status of these hinge commitments is revealed in our normal epistemic practices, and in particular in how these commitments are usually entirely tacit. Wittgenstein notes that we are not taught hinge commitments, but that we instead ‘swallow them down’ with the specific claims that we are taught (see Wittgenstein 1969: § 143). (For example, we are not taught that we have hands, but only how to do things with our hands.) Relatedly, we do not normally even notice these hinge commitments, as they ‘lie apart from the route travelled by enquiry’ (see Wittgenstein 1969: §

88). It takes an unusual philosophical context, such as the one that Moore is engaged in, in order to make these certainties explicit. In stating the Moorean certainties as he does, as if they are essentially no different from other empirical claims that he believes he knows, Moore is thus failing to recognize the distinctive role that they play in our epistemic practices.

#### WITTGENSTEIN ON COMMON SENSE

Wittgenstein thus offers a kind of ‘inversion’ of the Moorean picture. Whereas Moore holds that the optimal certainty enjoyed by the Moorean certainties means that they have a special rational status that enables them to be a dialectical stopping point in a philosophical dispute, Wittgenstein maintains that their optimal certainty in fact excludes them from having any rational status at all. Does that mean that Wittgenstein is an opponent of a common-sense philosophical methodology? I think that drawing this conclusion would be far too quick, for one could just as well regard Wittgenstein as developing a more refined version of a common-sense philosophical methodology.

In particular, Wittgenstein isn’t disputing Moore’s claim that these common-sense certainties play an important philosophical role. Rather, his point is that Moore has misunderstood their nature. Wittgenstein’s criticism of Moore in this regard mirrors a broader critique that he offers of philosophy – a recurring theme in his earlier *Philosophical Investigations* – in terms of how it misuses our everyday language and, in the process, manufactures illusory philosophical puzzles that trade on this misuse of language (see Wittgenstein 1953). Moore misuses language by thinking that he can simply enumerate these Moorean certainties as if they were just like any other mundane empirical claim. In doing so, he fails to see their true significance.

Notice too how the conception of rational evaluation that Wittgenstein offers, which has hinge commitments at its heart, offers a much more powerful way of dealing with the sceptical problem than that proposed by Moore. One of the standard

criticisms of a common-sense philosophical methodology like Moore's is why we should privilege common sense over philosophy, particularly when (as in Moore's case) we are offered no explanation for why the common-sense claim is true (and it is even granted that the opposing philosophical claim appears credible).<sup>9</sup> Wittgenstein's approach is not merely to accurately describe our epistemic practices and maintain that this correct description by itself should suffice to resolve the sceptical problem. Instead, he provides us with a compelling diagnosis of where the sceptical reasoning goes awry.

We can bring this point into sharper relief by comparing Wittgenstein's anti-scepticism with the kind of ordinary-language approach to the sceptical problem exemplified by J. L. Austin (another philosopher who could arguably lay claim to being part of the common-sense philosophical tradition). Like Wittgenstein, Austin also highlights how very different our everyday epistemic practices are when compared with the epistemic practices described by the radical sceptic (and also, for that matter, by philosophers attempting to deal with the sceptical problem; see, e.g., Austin 1961a). But as Barry Stroud (1984) powerfully argued, merely noting this difference is of dubious import to radical scepticism. This is because the radical sceptic can persuasively contend that what she is doing is presenting a *purified* version of our everyday epistemic practices – that is, once we strip away everything that is extraneous to those practices. After all, it is surely not contentious that in ordinary epistemic contexts our practices are influenced by all kinds of considerations – lack of imagination, lack of time, and so on – that have no bearing on the epistemic standing of our beliefs.<sup>10</sup> If that's true, however, then our 'purified' everyday epistemic practices might well be rather different to our actual everyday epistemic practices, and yet nonetheless be properly rooted in them. The radical sceptic could thus employ distinct epistemic practices while even so maintaining that she wasn't doing anything that wasn't licenced by our ordinary ways of conducting rational evaluations.

Wittgenstein's anti-scepticism blocks off even this style of response, however. For he demonstrates that the differences between the philosophical (i.e., sceptical/traditional anti-sceptical) description of our epistemic practices and our actual epistemic practices cannot be captured in this manner. This is because the former, far from being an extension (or purified version) of the latter, is in fact simply incoherent. We are not ignorant for lacking rational support for our hinge commitments, since there could be no such thing. To aspire for such would be to aspire for universal rational evaluations, and Wittgenstein has argued that this is impossible. We are consequently not lacking, from an epistemic point of view, in being unable to undertake them, any more than we are lacking, from an artistic point of view, in being unable to draw a realistic circle-square.<sup>11</sup>

The style of response that Wittgenstein is offering to the sceptical problem is thus very different to that attempted by Moore. In particular, Wittgenstein is showing how, by attending to the relevant features of our epistemic practices and characterizing them correctly, we can diagnose the philosophical confusion that is generating this puzzle. This is the sense in which what Wittgenstein is presenting is an *undercutting* anti-sceptical strategy, in that he is showing how what can seem like a genuine philosophical conundrum is in fact nothing of the kind. This is in contrast to the kind of *overriding* anti-sceptical strategy that Moore's style of common-sense line offers us. For remember that even while embracing the common-sense alternative, Moore nonetheless grants that he cannot explain where the sceptic/(idealist) goes awry or even explain how the contested knowledge is possible. Accordingly, he cannot possibly be in a position to offer an undercutting diagnosis of this problem.

This aspect of the Moorean line is apt to be overlooked because of how Moore presents the dialectic as being a clash between common sense and a philosophical *position*. This is in part because a significant element of what is driving his concern with our knowledge of the external world is the challenge to this knowledge posed by idealism, and that is of course a philosophical stance (indeed, a fairly popular one,

in British philosophical circles at any rate, at the time he was writing). Radical scepticism, however, is best understood as a putative *paradox*, in the sense of a series of claims that look independently plausible – indeed, which seem to be rooted in our everyday practices – but which are collectively inconsistent. Radical scepticism as a position, after all, doesn't seem all that credible. Can we really make sense of someone who claims to doubt everything, and therefore doesn't know anything? (And why would we listen to the arguments offered by such a person?) But a paradox is a very different dialectical beast. In particular, in proposing a paradox one is not thereby committed to specifying which of the claims that make up the paradox should be rejected. So while radical scepticism as a position might be committed to maintaining that external-world knowledge is impossible, radical scepticism as a paradox can merely note how such knowledge is inconsistent with other independently plausible claims that we hold.<sup>12</sup>

Insofar as Moore is dealing with radical scepticism qua position, it seems perfectly reasonable to insist on common sense rather than embrace the radical sceptical conclusion, particularly if one grants that the two stances are in the dialectical impasse that Moore describes. With the debate so construed, it might not seem to be all that significant that Moore is unable to diagnose where the radical sceptic's reasoning goes awry or explain how external-world knowledge is possible after all. But this dialectical line is far less credible when cast against radical scepticism qua paradox. This is because Moore's common-sense response effectively leaves the paradox entirely intact, since he doesn't offer any theoretical diagnosis of what is amiss with it. But how then could the appeal to common sense possibly offer us any philosophical comfort in our dealings with this paradox? In effect, all it tells us is that there is a genuine paradox concerning our knowledge of the external world but that common sense assures us that we do have such knowledge. If anything, doesn't that simply exacerbate the mystery regarding our external-world knowledge, rather than do anything to remove it?<sup>13</sup>

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

What does this contrast between Moore's and Wittgenstein's approaches to the problem of external-world knowledge tell us about appeals to common sense in philosophy? I think there are two broad conclusions that we can reach, which are intersecting in important ways. The first is that there are limits to the kind of philosophical satisfaction that we can achieve by simply appealing to common sense in the way that Moore did, without also at the same time offering an undercutting theoretical diagnosis of the philosophical puzzle in play. This is especially so when it comes to paradoxes (in contrast to challenges posed by philosophical *positions*), where mere appeals to common sense of this sort seem to offer no philosophical comfort whatsoever.

The second conclusion is that we cannot take common-sense claims at face value in the way that Moore supposes. In particular, the very articulation of common sense, far from being a straightforward task, requires philosophical acumen. Moore thought that his presentation of these Moorean certainties as articles of common sense was entirely unproblematic. But while he was right that they do tell us something about the fundamental nature of our everyday practices, their articulation in this manner in fact served to obscure their philosophical import. Far from being akin to ordinary empirical claims that happen to be optimally certain, they are in fact claims that play a distinctive role in our epistemic practices – one that is normally entirely tacit, and for good reason (as these claims provide the framework for these practices and hence are not themselves subject to that framework).

These two conclusions are intersecting because they each have a bearing on the other. Moore's failure to properly characterize our common-sense commitments lies at the source of his inability to diagnose where the radical sceptical puzzle goes awry. Conversely, any theoretical diagnosis of the sceptical problem of a kind that can undercut this puzzle will involve a philosophical account of what

constitutes our common-sense commitments in this regard, and will not simply involve a bare endorsement of them.

Both Moore and Wittgenstein treat our everyday practices – and thus the everyday epistemic practices that presently concern us – as holding the key to resolving philosophical puzzles. In this broad sense they are both common-sense philosophers. But we have also seen that their approaches to dealing with philosophical puzzles are importantly different. Whereas the Moorean common-sense philosophical methodology holds that we can unproblematically identify common-sense claims and then straightforwardly employ them to resolve philosophical disputes, the Wittgensteinian philosophical methodology is much subtler. What might strike the philosopher as articles of common sense ought to be interrogated, and that requires philosophical acumen. In undertaking such an exercise, the philosopher is able to tease out the genuine features of our everyday practices from the theoretical claims that are imported into our descriptions of these practices by the philosopher. In doing so, she is able to unravel the problematic reasoning that led to the philosophical puzzle in hand.<sup>14,15</sup>

#### NOTES

- 1 In the last century the foremost exponent of this tradition, besides Moore himself, was probably Chisholm – see, for example, his famous defence of particularism as a response to the problem of the criterion in Chisholm (1977). For discussion of Chisholm's common-sense philosophical methodology, see Lemos (2004).
- 2 See Reid ((1764) 1997). For further discussion of Reid's common-sense philosophical methodology, and its particular application to Hume's writings, see Lemos (2004; 2020) and McAllister (2016).
- 3 For an overview of the main trends in so-called British idealism, see Brooks (2017). Of course, idealism is sometimes presented as a way of *responding* to scepticism about the external world.
- 4 See in particular Moore's (1918–19) discussion of Russell's account of perceptual experience and knowledge. Unhelpfully, Moore doesn't

specify which material by Russell he has in mind in this regard, but it is likely to be Russell (1914). Note that Moore (e.g., 1953b) himself endorses a kind of sense-datum theory, though he seems inclined to regard such a notion as picking out features of the world rather than one's perceptual experiences. Sense-datum theory, so construed, is obviously not committed to an indirect realism about perceptual experience (much less perceptual knowledge).

- 5 See, respectively, Moore (1939); Moore (1959a); and Moore (1925).
- 6 Published as Wittgenstein (1969). Note that granting that these notebooks are primarily concerned with Moorean certainties does not entail that Moore's work is the overarching focus of these writings as is often supposed. In fact, there are good reasons to think that Newman ((1870) 1979), which is also concerned with certainties of this kind, was also an important influence on these notebooks. For discussion of this point, see Kienzler (2006) and Pritchard (2015b).
- 7 Note that, following our two protagonists, I will be using the notions of evidence and reasons interchangeably. I think there are in fact crucial differences between these two notions, but since they are not relevant to our purposes here we can reasonably set them to one side.
- 8 Here is Wittgenstein (1969: § 359): 'I want to conceive [*of this certainty*] as something that lies beyond being justified or unjustified; as it were, as something animal.'
- 9 See Lemos (2008) for further discussion of this kind of criticism of Moore.
- 10 I am here setting aside the question of pragmatic encroachment in epistemology. For further discussion of this topic, see Fantl and McGrath (2010).
- 11 This is why it is misleading to simply describe us as lacking knowledge of Moorean certainties, as that implies that they are in the market for knowledge (and thus that we are ignorant of them), which is not the case. For some of the key interpretations of Wittgenstein's treatment of radical scepticism in *On Certainty* (where this includes works that offer epistemological theses broadly inspired by this work), see McGinn (1989); Williams (1991); Moyal-Sharrock (2004); Wright (2004b); Coliva (2010; 2015); and Schönbaumsfeld (2016). I offer my own interpretive line in this regard in Pritchard (2015a). For a recent survey of contemporary work on Wittgensteinian epistemology, see Pritchard (2017).

- 12 For further discussion of the idea of radical scepticism as a paradox as opposed to a position, and the dialectical importance of this distinction, see Pritchard (2015a: part I).
- 13 The distinction between the problem of radical scepticism and idealism as two ways of calling our external-world knowledge into question is also important to understanding *On Certainty*. In particular, the first of the four notebooks that make up this work seems primarily devoted to the problem of idealism (and hence is mostly concerned with Moore's proof of an external world), with the other three notebooks primarily concerned with the sceptical problematic (and hence more concerned with the more general issue of the status of the Moorean certainties). Crucially, however, Wittgenstein's hinge epistemology seems to be directed at the latter rather than the former. This is because he treats attempts to even state idealism (or realism, for that matter, construed now as the rejection of idealism), such as a statement like 'There are physical objects', as being, unlike hinges, simply nonsense – see, for example, Wittgenstein (1969: § 35). For more on this point, see Williams (2004) and Pritchard (2015a: chapter 4).
- 14 Note that this is the sense in which a distinctively Wittgensteinian philosophical quietism is very different from a straightforward form of philosophical quietism that simply eschews philosophical puzzles, and thus philosophy, altogether. The conundrums that we are led into by faulty philosophical reasoning can only be unravelled by further philosophy. In this sense, philosophy is both the cause of, and the solution to, philosophical problems. For more on Wittgensteinian quietism, see McDowell (2009). For a contemporary discussion of varieties of philosophical quietism more generally, see Virvidakis (2006). See also Pritchard (2020), where I draw parallels between Wittgenstein's brand of quietism and Pyrrhonian scepticism (which is very different from the broadly Cartesian scepticism that has been our concern here).
- 15 Thanks to Rik Peels and René van Woudenberg for detailed comments on an earlier version of this chapter.