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In Defense of Common Sense of G.E. Moore's Realistic Theory of Truth

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to study analytical philosophy, its problem and beginning. The author concerns analytical philosophy as specific way of thinking. Analytical philosophy is based on analytical method by G.E. Moore. Analysis in analytical philosophy is not only a method of logic. It is the main method of analytical philosophy and G.E. Moore's philosophy, involving all other methods. Many philosophers think that the main problem of analytical philosophy is the problem of truth, like G.E. Moore does. But this is disputable meaning.

Keywords: analytical philosophy, analysis, method, truth, notion, judgment, realism, anti-realism.

Introduction

In the book "One Hundred Years of Philosophy" J. Passmore describes G. Moore as a "pure philosopher" who was far from the "great debate" of that time and whose thought was not influenced by any of philosophers (Passmore, 1994). Moreover, it was G. Moore who actualized many philosophical problems, or rather, specific character of their consideration that became essential for adding him on to "founding fathers" of analytical style of philosophizing. T. Baldwin's was convinced that if G. Moore cannot be classified as a philosopher-analyst, then who (Baldwin, 1985).

To solve philosophical problems, philosophers-analysts are quite active in using such methodological techniques as conceptual and counterfactual analyses. It is doubtless that G. Moore used both of them, but, in our view, with the obvious advantage of the first one. Indeed, the manner of reasoning which later became the hallmark for philosophers-analysts is characteristic for G. Moore. It can be described with N. Rescher's words, in whose opinion, it was necessary to define clear objectives for further work of the philosopher, at the same time, without being carried away with improper propositions, undefended ideas but developing the apparatus of logical and linguistic analysis.

Literary review

In the context of our intelligence, it should be noted that one of the fundamental issues within analytic philosophy is undoubtedly the issue of comprehending the realism-antirealism distinction and the related problem of scientific knowledge truthfulness. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that it was G. Moore who among the first grounded the platform of (neo)realism. In his programmatic article "The Refutation of Idealism" he supported the recognition of reality as independent of consciousness, potentially knowable and recognizing the equivalence of existence of material objects and sensations: "I am as directly aware of the existence of material things in space as of my own sensations; and what I am aware of with regard to each is exactly the same - namely that in one case the material thing, and in the other case my sensation does really exist. The question requiring to be asked about material things is thus not: What reason have we for supposing that anything exists corresponding to our sensations? but: What reason have we for supposing that material things do not exist, since their existence has precisely the same evidence as that of our sensations? That either exist may be false; but if it is 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" (Moore, 1993). Hence, the British version of neo-realism represented by G.E. Moore as well as by B. Russell became one of the sources of analytical trend in philosophy.

Specifying the issue of correspondence of sensibilities to a physical object as one of the main in the dispute of realism-antirealism, it is possible to identify several theories that attempt to solve this problem:

- "direct correspondence theory" (G.E. Moore, S. Alexander) postulates the possibility of coincidence of sense-data and physical objects;
- "critical realism theory" (R. Sellars, A. Whitehead): as long as any act of experience involves the interpretation of sense-data, you can only argue about their certain (sometimes – symbolic) similarity to a physical object. And therefore, no coincidence of an object and its given is possible;
- "the theory of degrees of conformity" by B. Russell represents the hierarchy, typology of sense-data;
- "the theory of epistemological skepticism" by Ch. Brody denies the possibility of coincidence of sense-data with a physical object.

G.E. Moore's analytics acquired "rebellious" (versus "conventional views" which at that time were represented by the theories of the British philosophers-empiricists, as well as the concept of absolute Hegelian Bradley-type idealism) character later supported by Bertrand Russell. G.E. Moore repeatedly pointed to the feature that distinguished his own philosophical position from the other philosophers' position. The philosophical credo of the British philosopher can be defined as "an appeal to common sense" which in the context of British philosophy can be understood as the demand for clarity and consistency of reflections that, in fact, characterizes G. Moore as an analytical philosopher. G. Moore's works are not the result of sudden inspiration. They mostly resemble reports. And it was just such stylization that became popular among analytic philosophers. The first analytic philosopher G. Moore sought to identify all the positive aspects of the concept under consideration and only later - those cases and difficulties that the opponent probably had not taken into account.

G. Moore's "common sense" is neither a system of timeless, a priori truths, nor changeable generally accepted standards. It is empirical rather than transcendental, and hence nondetermined. Common sense judgments are authentic, they organize experience. According to the British philosopher, judgments if they "are part of the common sense philosophy, are true" (Moore, 1993). However, belief in the truthfulness of common sense judgments does not confirm the source of such belief. Hence, there is no guarantee that this kind of belief can be considered as superstition.

This kind of strategy is so effective since it minimizes the necessity of proof. For if we prove common sense judgments, they will not be common sense judgments, which creates the paradox of infinite regress.

Generally, the nature of judgments can be expressed using two G. Moore's doctrinal ideas:

- a) "atomic" units, the components of a judgment (a "concept" in G. Moore's terminology) are entities which are stated in this judgment;
- b) internal connections are not typical for concepts; relations between them are not attributive.

Both ideas are directed against Bradley-type idealism, namely, against the belief that when the idea of something is available, exactly this something conceivable is part of the idea itself. In G.E. Moore's criticism, propositions are the objects of judgments, therefore, the concepts composing their structure are part of what we think, and it does not matter whether anyone else think of them or not.

The second doctrinal idea establishes that the truth of statement determines the external method of concepts connection from the structure of this assertion. According to G.E. Moore's opinion, the act of judgment establishes only external connections between the judgment proper and the subject of judgment; that is, the very act of judgment does not change the subject of judgment. The British philosopher's position is opposed to F. Bradley's conviction in the absence of any real external connections. It logically follows that in G. Moore's representation, judgment says about the "atomic" units of this statement, that is, about concepts, while in F. Bradley's judgment it is stated about an object. But if knowledge is understood as the internal relationship between

someone who knows and what he knows, the act of knowing a judgment changes it because from now its peculiarity consists in the fact that it is recognizable (in terms, previously cognized) and therefore is no longer the way it had been before I learned about it. As a matter of fact, the goal declared by G. Moore continues the tradition of F. Brentano and A. Meinong confirming objectivity and independence of the objects of thought.

This is how A. Meinong writes about this: truth is the attribute of the objective if a judgment on it is made effectively and reliably concerning the objective of the concept of truth. But a judgment is also true if it with certainty grasps the facts relating to the experience of the concept of truth. Truth without evidence means the fact of external, while truth with evidence simultaneously means the fact of internal justification.

There was a period when G. Moore sympathized with the idealistic ideas admiring the reflection of ontological issues. Even more, he cognized the idea that reality could be expressed in words, thus foreseeing one of the most important collisions of analytic philosophy. G. Moore's anti-idealistic convictions thereby testified (the British philosopher was convinced of that) the falsity of F. Bradley's intuitions who had described reality as inaccessible for sensory perception.

G. Moore refutes the opinion of abstract experience possibility (experience as such): "The fact that the thing was or is the object of possible experience does not mean that it was or will be imaginary" (Moore, 1993). So, the fact of dependence of predicate "reality" on perception is unacceptable for G. Moore, as a representative of realistic tradition in philosophy. G. Moore and his supporters' position can be called "optimal" in the sense that they adhered not to the idea of obligation of adequate perception of reality, but only probability of such and which could be expanded by means of epistemological analysis.

At the same time, G. Moore categorically denies the possibility to describe sense-data through the concept of "truth" or "error." All our beliefs, according to the British philosopher, can exist only in a conceptual form whose content is sense-data. Proceeding from the ideas outlined in his "A Defence of Common Sense", there are truths that represent everyday experience, knowledge, for example, his well-known "proof of the left hand." The philosopher was sure that this way, he proved the existence of the external world, independent of consciousness.

But, "What does it mean: there exists an external world, independent of my mind?" - asks the famous philosopher, logician G. von Wright. And he continues: "The problem is related not to the truth of views and common sense assertions, but to their value ... The difference between the issues of truth and issues of value is of exceptional importance for understanding which is specific not only for Moore's philosophy, but for the whole analytic movement as well. The task of analysis is formulated for philosophy - to clarify the meaning of statements" (Wright, 1993). It is the method of analysis suggested by G. Moore that specifies clear confines of the reality perception dependence on the very object of perception. In this context it is important that G. Moore delineated the process of thinking and the content of thought.

For G. Moore, the question of truth contains the problem of proving the real existence of a thing, and the very theory of truth is reduced to the assertion that the property to be true, expressed in an utterance and attributed to an object, is meaningful when and only when it complies a fact. Truth, therefore, seems to be simple, non-analyzed property conditioned by the fact of the real existence of imaginary conceivable.

Proceeding from this, we can ascertain the adoption (at least, hypothetically) by G. Moore of the corresponding theory of truth built on the position of "naive realism". Although G. Moore's principle of correspondence potentially contains the tendencies of deflationist nature, namely: if we assumed the possibility of absolute compliance of statements with factuality, the category of truth would be superfluous. But as long as this is impossible, the procedure of reducing propositions to their verified "atomic" structures is required. That procedure, as it has been already mentioned, is the analysis procedure proposed by G. Moore which predetermined the style and methodology of many generations of philosophers and became fundamental for analytic philosophy.

So, for correspondence theory of truth, the conformity principle of potentially true judgment to factuality is characteristic. We will not examine the possible impacts of this theory of truth associated primarily with the uncertainty of such concepts as "compliance", "actuality", "reality". However, in this theory of truth, judgments that represent factuality are opposed to a representant himself. G. Moore's idea described in "The Nature of Judgment" is illustrative in this respect. The philosopher argues that the matter of judgment is not ideas, but something that they indicate,

concept which is neither a mental fact nor its part. Concept is an object of thought, and if it did not exist independently of it, then there would be no object of thought. Therefore, concepts are eternal and immutable.

According to the philosopher, if judgment is not imaginary conceivable and not a form of words, but an object of imaginary thought, it is obvious that it is not different from reality. To confirm his words, G. Moore gives the example of judgment which he defines as true: "I exist" and which is not different from the corresponding reality of someone's existence. That is, the fact of my existence in no way different from the statement of the fact of my existence. In this context, the term "expression" and "reality" are equivalent.

Therefore, one could argue that it is not conformity or non-conformity with reality that distinguishes true judgment from false one. What then? According to G. Moore, that has already been mentioned, truth is simple property of statements; some statements have the property, while others do not, and therefore are false. So, in this context, truth/verity, error/falsity are considered by G. Moore in ontological terms. It turns out that verity does not depend on the attitude to real things and can be defined only through judgment which, in its turn, has to be true if necessary. If the judgment verity can (or should) be established via reduction to its factuality, doesn't this method remind of *circus vitiosus*? The answer is obvious.

G. Moore denies any possibility of going beyond the relations of concepts and reality which is impossible in principle. Knowledge of something implies the awareness of judgment availability. Hence, knowledge is impossible beyond notions. This also applies to the cases of act of perception, knowledge of which is inspired by the existential judgment, such as "Existence is a predicate." On this occasion, G. Moore reasons: "I think it is worth noting that if we say "Existence is a predicate" using "predicate" in the grammatical sense, then our proposition is a proposition for certain words in the sense that they are often used in a certain way, but, oddly enough, the proposition is not about the word "existence". This proposition that the word "exists" and the other finite forms of the verb "to exist", such as "existed", "will exist" or "exist" are often predicates of the propositions in which they occur".

Existential judgment asserts that the concept which stands for "existence" refers to the concept of existence. And, therefore, G. Moore's "universe" is made up of the eternal and immutable concepts, the correlation of which is called "judgments" by the philosopher. Somewhat later G. Moore revised his attitude to the identification of true judgments and facts renouncing it. First, he was confident in the existence of a false proposition even though it (proposition) tends to be false. The very essence of misconception is in the image of what is not available. If an object of imagination existed, such an idea would be true but not false. Realizing that misconception does not assume belief in this or that judgment, it is natural to deny that real idea contains judgment as its object.

Research results and conclusion

G. Moore explains the reason of such a turn: when we state that something does exist, we, thereby, reaffirm that this judgment is true, whereas the "substance" of the fact is reduced to a judgment together with its true value. In fact, G. Moore denied the existence of any judgments. He expressed his belief that "I think (am convinced) that p" does not assert the relationship between the conviction itself and the judgment. Undoubtedly, the truth of *p* consists in its compliance with the fact and to be convinced in "p" – means to believe that it accordingly corresponds to the fact.

Summing up, let us quote one of the admirers of the analytic style of philosophizing, G. Moore's ideological follower, N. Malcolm, "Moore's role ... in the history of philosophy is basically destructive ... To understand to what extent philosophy is the criticism of ordinary language and common sense and to see that everyday language should be correct – means to understand the importance and justification of Moore's destructive activity" (Malcolm, 1964), the essence of which "consists in identification of their (philosophical propositions) contradiction to everyday language" (Malcolm, 1964).

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