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do much to influence morals, only opinion can sustain them, just as only sound opinions and good morals, not the laws, make for the precision of discernment that enables a body of citizens to reward their fellows solely in proportion to their contribution to the common good, that is to say, always to judge according to the principles of distributive justice that inform a just and free political society.

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THE LEGACY OF SKEPTICISM *

THE question I intend to explore, much too briefly, is twofold. What is the skeptic examining: our most fundamental beliefs, or the product of a large piece of philosophizing about empirical knowledge done before he comes on stage? And what do his reflections, properly construed, reveal? The one thing I most regret is that I have not sufficient space to examine certain deservedly renowned doctrines which bear on these questions.

I may best begin with Hume's compelling thought, that the skeptic is calling in question whether we can know the most fundamental kinds of things that "outside our studies" we believe without question.

MOORE: THE INVETERATE PLAIN MAN

The intriguing question, whether Moore's Defence¹ and Proof,² standing pat, can be rational and effectual, or, unless heavily reinforced, are to be adjudged impotently dogmatic, must be broached by inquiring what "general propositions of Common Sense" Moore sets out to uphold.

A salient fact is that there is a large, important domain of questions, claims, and the like, ideal for Moore, where a "proof" like his is a proving, where knowing stands in need of no argued defense because the epistemic is immune (oversimplifying slightly) from skeptical assault. The domain, of course, is the everyday, the particular questions, claims, *et al.*, occurring within specific, elaborate, contexts of everyday life, instances *par excellence* of what I

* To be presented in an APA symposium on Epistemological Skepticism, December 28, 1972. Commentators will be Keith Lehrer and Barry Stroud; their comments are not available at this time.

¹ George Edward Moore, "A Defence of Common Sense," *Philosophical Papers* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1959), pp. 32-59.

² "Proof of an External World," *ibid.*, pp. 126-148.

shall call "plain" questions, etc. The skeptic's doubts notoriously fare badly if "implied," that is, if raised *inside* these contexts, without "changing the subject," *directly* against the epistemic, to show such claims unequivocally wrong. To remove the oversimplification, it is skeptical doubts so raised, with this intention, from which the plain is immune, for these implied doubts are ignorable—either absurd, irrelevant, or out of place. An appealing daydream for a Moorean would be Moore as a Lilliputian philosopher, his logical horizon encompassing only this plain, his sole opponent a Lilliputian implied skeptic. How well off would be a Moore in such a land! Sadly, life-size Moore, cognizant of their existence, wishes to champion the *very general* propositions of Common Sense (henceforth abbreviated, 'CS'). Nevertheless, under a certain conception of CS, reality exceeds this daydream. CS, as conceived, is "meta": its propositions are summings up of how things go with the relatively particular plain, the sole concern of a Lilliputian Moore. Of course things do go well, because it is part of this conception also that the skeptic, and his doubts, are implied. But Moore, this defender of a meta-CS, is a Moore redesigned.

Moore is not observing us talking in particular contexts, not making general records of the results (meta-CS); he's not, as it were, a botanist studying and recording how we plants fare in contexts varying in soil and climate. Moore's general propositions wear their logical type on their face. This is true of his proposition, "I know there are material objects," in general logical type like the assertion, made in an everyday circumstance, "I know there are two bottles of milk on my neighbor's doorstep"; it is not really, in disguised form, the thesis that there are certain particular contexts in everyday life within which we can know, but a first-order proposition directly about material objects, the public world.

Moore would, nevertheless, be quite reasonable in his own terms if *his* (first-order) propositions were plain, *even though* very general and context-free. It is, seemingly, "the meaning" of the relatively particular plain that is responsible for its immunity from implied skeptical assault. This "meaning," however, is not to be identified with the meaning of words, alone or in combination, but with "meaning" in a different dimension, with what *we* mean, say, or imply, *in* uttering the words (with their meanings). Could Moore's general propositions, as meant by him, have the same meaning in this dimension as the relatively particular plain of everyday circumstances?

Our question is, then, how broad may be the dimensions of the circle of the plain. Each CS proposition has a verbal twin which, figuring in one or another general context, is plain. To illustrate:

Suppose a physiologist lecturing on mental abnormalities observes: *Each of us who is normal knows that he is now awake, not dreaming or hallucinating, that there is a real public world outside his mind which he is now perceiving, that in this world there are three-dimensional animate and inanimate bodies of many shapes and sizes. . . .* In contrast, individuals suffering from certain mental abnormalities each believes that what we know to be the real, public world is his imaginative creation.

Intuitively speaking, these (italicized) twins of CS propositions are plain: each has the right kind of plain meaning; each is immune from implied skeptical assault.

But the ultimate logical sin, in the eyes of certain philosophers, is "propositions" outside contextual wedlock. The purported result, "language on a holiday," is language on a very poor holiday, a shell of itself, limp, ersatz. Moore's CS propositions—unless recast as meta-figures, one motive for so doing—are guilty of this alleged sin. But this renowned condemnation of Moore has never been grounded on anything but sand. There is, in its background, a valuable rule of thumb. The segments of language preoccupying epistemologists can be absolutely secure when inside elaborate everyday circumstances, especially if used to request or convey information. Language can with impunity travel farther afield but, as a rule of thumb, such excursions, ventured by philosophers, should be endeavored with bankerish caution. Moore, though, has been victimized, for this practical guide has sometimes created a myopic fixation with one "use" of language, and has insidiously been converted into a narrow dictum about conditions of meaningfulness, with Moore as target. What sense, *if any*, Moore could make is investigated by seeing how he fares when the more particular versions of his affirmations are taken as intended, in certain contexts, to convey novel information—the myopic fixation—the conclusion drawn being that the legitimacy of Moore's propositions is, regarded charitably, *most* suspect, a conclusion, incidentally, conflating oddity of assertorial performance with meaninglessness of what's asserted, a mistake long since buried by Grice.⁸ Moore is not intending a magnanimous enrichment of our stock of knowl-

⁸ Herbert Paul Grice, *Logic and Conversation* (unpublished), William James Lectures, Harvard University, 1967.

edge, but to be drawing up a compendium of the basic kinds of things we know: there is nothing assertorically odd in his performance. But still, in a different way, Moore's performance can seem peculiar, i.e., oddly dogmatic, unless what he's saying can legitimately be understood as plain, even though his propositions are bastard, conceived out of context. Thus, it might seem, this large issue remains. But without its underpinnings, viz., the fallacies just considered, the issue ceases to look like an *issue*. For the suggestion that Moore's contextless propositions probably lack full meaning, if not to be taken as the rule of thumb raising a cautionary finger, is a doctrine plausible only because of its power to explain why Moore's propositions seem illegitimate; but *that* conclusion, itself the product of two fallacies, is best ignored. On the other hand, if the suggestion is counseling by the rule of thumb, it can be humbly ignored, for all the signs point in the opposite direction.

Imagine individual *I* compiling a record of human knowledge, because, alas, humans have to abandon earth, but wish to leave behind, in a time capsule, complete records of human knowledge, for who knows what strange eyes. *I*'s list must include, among innumerable others, the physiologist's (italicized) plain propositions. Now what if *I* drew up his list not against a purposive backdrop of human tragedy, but *purely for its own sake*? Are we to suppose that the propositions on *this* list are unable to enjoy the same legitimate, plain meaning as when spoken by the physiologist, unless *this* list is taken and used for the original funereal purposes of the first? But Moore is *I*, drawing up his compendium, primarily for its own sake.

There *is* a truth lurking here requiring acknowledgment. Contextual features, their presence or absence, do matter, but not in the way envisaged by Moore's opponents. Such features exercise control, on us and on how the language segments within the context are to be understood. The fewer the contextual features, the more option we have, the larger the role of our decision and resolve. Moore's propositions on his list are virtually, perhaps entirely, context-free; this is the reason it is open to us either to understand his propositions as "philosophical" (discussed later), Moore seeming blatantly dogmatic as a consequence, or to understand them as plain, which Moore does effortlessly, automatically, almost as though he had had a philosophical lobotomy.

There is (I see no reason now to forbear saying it) a *plain* species of Common Sense (CS_{pi}). Moore rightly sees his Defence and Proof as deserving full marks, *if* the only Common Sense there is is

plain Common Sense and *if* the skeptic is really impounded within the plain—nonexistent “if’s” for Moore, the inveterate plain man, for whom there *is* nothing outside the circle of the plain.

Moore is especially illuminating because he is not a philosopher’s philosopher, but a philosopher’s plain man: he drags us down from our ivory towers, we reflective, ethereal beings, back to our earthly selves, and confronts us with the plainness of what we do believe as plain men.

BEYOND THE PLAIN

Yet there must be more than just the plain. Witness the questions of perennial philosophical concern that could not otherwise even be asked. True, their plain versions could be, but, plain, would be wrongly asked. What are these questions?

One favorite, “Are there material objects?” could be asked (indulging a fancy) by an immaterial being born and bred in a non-material portion of the universe; but this is not what we ask “inside our studies,” using these words. It is not a plain question like “Are there really trees?” asked by a child born and raised on the moon, a question to be settled by going and looking, not the question as understood by Moore, which, because plain, is amenable to his proof. What *are* we (philosophers) asking? Our special interest, it might be suggested, is whether we can *know* that there are material objects, and this question is philosophical when asked in the light of our peculiarly philosophical worry about dreaming and hallucinating. The question we really want to ask, the underlying issue, is, Can we *ever know* that we’re not dreaming? Yet even this question, uniquely philosophical if any are, is equivocal. Consider this example:

Suppose a scientist is experimenting with soporifics, himself the guinea-pig. He is in a small room. He keeps careful records. Experiment #1. “1:00 P.M. Taking x dose of drug Z orally . . . 1:15 P.M. Beginning to feel drowsy. I am not focusing clearly on . . . 6:15 P.M. I’ve been asleep but am wide awake now, rested and feeling normal. *I know*, of course, *that I’m not dreaming now*, but I remember, while asleep, actually thinking I was really awake, not dreaming. I dreamt I was a boy living with my parents (dead now for two years). The “experience” seemed very real. At first, as I was gradually waking up, I could hardly believe that I had been dreaming.”

The general question can be so understood that it is to be answered in the affirmative, simply on the basis of the experimenter’s (plain) knowing. And that, obviously, is *not* our intended philosophical question. Note, incidentally, that *Moore* (we) can say *now*

what the experimenter says (*italicized*), meaning what he means, if we so decide. The general *plain* question can even, therefore, be asked of ourselves in the present.

What, then, are philosophical questions? How do they differ from plain questions? Differ they do, and significantly, for the philosophical questions satisfy a deep intellectual need, unfulfilled by their plain versions. How frustrating if we could ask only what the immaterial being asked concerning material objects or only what we asked a moment ago (the plain question) about dreaming! Something important would be denied us, which "inside our studies" we seek, not questioning its availability. But what? A philosophical question and its plain analogue are not just *verbal* twins, but in one sense *meaning* twins also, for the words used have the same meanings in each version. Could it plausibly be otherwise? Which words, with what different meanings, might be responsible for the two versions of "Are there material objects?"? To rephrase the issue, what is *philosophical* Common Sense (CS_{ph}), those general propositions which answer general philosophical questions affirmatively? And what is the source of CS_{ph}'s intellectual grip? Why have so many cared so much, passionately desiring either to defend or to repudiate CS_{ph}—for it is this which the *real* skeptic cross-examines directly—instead of resting content at home like Moore, inside the plain, and, if inclined to a little defending or cross-examining, concentrating on *plain* knowing? What is the siren call of whatever lies outside the circle of the plain?

PHILOSOPHIZING: ITS CHARACTER AND PURPOSE

Studying the skeptic, I hope to show, can pay large dividends, *partly* because of his large nonskeptical side. I begin by describing a state of affairs that illuminates, by analogy, certain conceptions explicit, or adumbrated, in the skeptic's position:

Pilots are being taught to identify enemy aircraft. Ten kinds of enemy aircraft, *A, B, . . . J*, are characterized in terms of their capabilities and mutually distinguishing features. The pilots are instructed to identify *any* enemy aircraft by running through a provided checklist of features. It is recognized that this may result in misidentifications: there are types of enemy aircraft, antiquated, rarely used, intentionally not covered by the checklist, which specifies features sufficient for distinguishing the ten types one from another but none from *X, Y, Z*, the antiquated types which the pilots are instructed to ignore. This procedure is adopted for certain overriding practical advantages.

For later argumentation we will picture this state of affairs as the

significant part of a small, independent universe of humanoids, who never dream or hallucinate, whose senses are unerring, and, most important, who have only the concepts presented, plus any others needed for what the humanoids do, ask, and say in this state of affairs.

These creatures, obviously, are not in a skeptical position. They can know several kinds of objective empirical facts, including even, if they ignore the restrictions of the identification procedure, the real type of an aircraft; for types X, Y, Z, too, are "defined" in terms of distinguishing features.

The plain. The plain man's practice, the skeptic tells us, is like the humanoid's *hors de combat*: for practical purposes he consistently ignores certain kinds of remote possibilities. What he asks and says is the product of meanings, bridled by this nonsemantical practice. The humanoid's identifications and epistemic claims, made in accordance with the identification procedure laid down, are "restricted." In identifying an aircraft as of type *A*, he is saying, meaning, implying, committing himself to *less* than would his words *per se*, if untrammelled by the practice prescribed by the identification procedure. In the eyes of the skeptic, plainness is restrictedness.

Philosophizing. To philosophize, to step outside the circle of the plain, is to step outside the nonsemantical practice, then, speaking simple English, ask, affirm, assess, but, as a consequence, in unrestricted, untrammelled fashion. The peculiarly philosophical character of questions and propositions is their "purity." What *we* ask, or affirm, is what the words with their meanings do *per se*. Our commitments, implications, are dictated solely by meanings.

That the philosophical is the pure—a truth—implicitly involves much more than has yet been said. To step back, outside the circle of the plain, and, speaking English, ask and affirm, is fully legitimate; the resulting pure questions and propositions are full-bodied in meaning, only if, speaking in general terms, our conceptual-human constitution is of a "standard" type, the same type as the humanoids'—provided their setup is genuinely conceivable.

The pure results are full-fledged only if (1) each concept is a self-sufficient unit or retains its independent identity within a conceptual scheme that in its entirety is the self-sufficient unit; i.e., either each concept itself or the conceptual scheme is capable of standing alone, apart, on its own two feet, and is not parasitic on,

inextricably and dependently interwoven with, other factors. Each concept or the conceptual scheme must be divorceable intact from our practices, from whatever constitutes the essential character of the plain, from elemental parts of our human nature.

In stepping back, asking pure questions, etc., one represents that (2) there are, fully separate from concepts, one or more domains of "items." Included among the concepts may be Dream, Hallucination, or others "having reference" to aspects of one's self, these then being "items."

One also represents one's self as in a certain role: (3) We, apart from "creating" concepts and providing their mental upkeep, are outsiders, standing back detached from concepts and items alike (even when items are aspects of ourselves), purely ascertaining observers who, usually by means of our senses, ascertain, when possible, whether items fulfill the conditions legislated by concepts.

We *can* philosophize legitimately if (1) and (2) are true and if we can validly be in the position and role described in (3), if, in short, our conceptual-human constitution is of the *standard* type. We *are* philosophizing, contingent on this, asking philosophical questions, *et al.*, when any extraneous factors, especially inhibiting procedures, are debarred.

I rest my case that philosophizing is as characterized on this example: In asking "Are we awake now, or dreaming?" as a philosophical question, are we not standing back detached from our experiencing (the "item"), as observer and ascerner—as would, I imagine, the Martian, upon whose brain had just been grafted that portion making visual experiencing, veridical and nonveridical, possible—asking a pure question, the question, Under which of two independent, competing concepts, on a par, is our experiencing to be subsumed?

Our humanoids can philosophize legitimately, apparently. Can we? Why do we care? What *is* the wellspring of philosophizing?

The Intellectual Quest. Imagine we were certain humanoids, confined forever within the circle of the restricted, asking and answering only restricted questions. We should be intellectually frustrated just because prohibited access to the *objective*. We could ask "What type is this aircraft?" but we wouldn't thereby be managing to inquire what the objective fact really was, to raise an issue to be settled solely by the concepts and the item. Nor could we assess our epistemological position *objectively*. We could ask, "Could we *ever* be in a position to *know* of what type an

aircraft is?"; but, again, not so intended that the only creatures on stage were features sense-able, and concepts, their requirements. The limiting eyeglasses of the restricted would prevent us from seeing, even trying to see, things and ourselves as they and we really are.

The truth is, I think, that this simple quest for absolute objectivity drives us beyond the plain, moving us to philosophize. Unfortunately, that this is our motive is not so self-evident as that it is the humanoids'; for what would make it completely obvious, viz., our plain being the same as the humanoids' restricted, is, I am about to argue (by implication) not the case, and in this paper I put nothing positive in its place to make the point equally evident. But what *is* frustrating about Moore's plain questions is, it does seem, their not enabling us to ask how things *really* are objectively. Certain intuitive philosophers I respect say that in philosophizing we stand back and treat the world in its entirety as an object apart from us, whereas as plain men we are "inside the world." I hope I have expressed less poetically, if less appealingly, the first half of the contrast drawn; and the other does put a finger on what seems to be a visible fact, that the objectivity attainable within the plain is only skin-deep, *relative*. We want to know not how things are *inside* the world, but how things are, absolutely. And the world itself is one of these things.

CROSS-EXAMINING COMMON SENSE_{ph}

Both CS_{ph} and its skeptical denial are a spurious fiction if our conceptual-human constitution is not standard. The skeptic intends to show up CS_{ph} as nothing more than a mountebank, but his skeptical doubts, properly construed, reveal that CS_{ph} *and* its skeptical denial should both be erased from the books.

In an important way the skeptic has been regularly maligned when depicted as using 'know' in a special sense (way), as requiring of knowing much more than is appropriate for empirical knowledge, and, for this reason, denying that we *can* know what CS_{ph} maintains. Condescending, desultory speculation abounds about what could possibly have led the skeptic down this garden path—an obsession with mathematics as the model of knowledge? The truth is, ironically, that the skeptic is innocent, without an independent thought in his head concerning what knowing requires, the submissive slave to CS_{ph}, itself dictating that knowing meet a certain requirement. For within a constitution of the standard type, when extraneous factors, especially restrictive procedures, are debarred, *knowing* does require *invulnerability*. What is required

for knowing is a function of two factors: the invariant meaning of 'know', and the type of structure within which 'know' is being used. 'Know', its meaning, requires that to know --- we be able to "rule out" any counterpossibility to ---, any possibility which, if it were realized, would falsify ---. But what '---' implies *per se* may be more extensive than what we imply in saying ---, and 'know' will focus on whichever of the two dimensions of meaning and implication is relevant in the setup. This is illustrated by the pure and restricted versions of '---' in the humanoids' universe. Within a standard constitution '*a* is *M*' is unbridled in implication. Hence, knowing that *a* is *M* requires that we have sensed features of *a* incompatible with *any* *C* "applying" to *a*, if *C* is among the concepts in that constitution and incompatible with *M*—the requirement guiding the skeptic.

In short, CS_{ph} is as vulnerable to the skeptic's doubts, properly interpreted, as plain knowing is to certain everyday doubts.

That much is simple, but the details of the skeptic's cross-examination are not. A major complication is that skeptical doubts, too, are equivocal, plain and philosophical, a fact to be reckoned with only at some cost.

It will be best first to draw up a map by looking at the relatively clear humanoids' situation (759/60 above). There possibilities, too, can be pure or restricted. To illustrate. Possibility₁ (P_1): "But that aircraft *x* with features --- could turn out to be of type *J*. If further inspection revealed that it had feature *f*, it would be a *J*." [*J* is one of the ten types to be considered within the restricted practice. Antiquated type *X* also has all the features alluded to, including *f*.] For a possibility to be pure or restricted is for its content to be so understood. Possibility₁, understood as pure, is unacceptable, involving a falsehood; for the aircraft *x* might equally well be an *X*. But, understood as restricted, possibility₁ is genuine. Suppose the humanoids are "philosophizing," inquiring into the pure question, "Can we ever be in a position to know that an aircraft is really of a certain type?" The point of importance later is this: restricted P_1 , though genuine, cannot be cited (raised) within the pure inquiry as a counterpossibility. Suppose, concretely, that individual *K*, intending to settle the pure inquiry, says (the dunderhead!) on the basis of aircraft *x* having features ---, "I know that *x* is an *A*," (understood as pure). Restricted P_1 cannot be raised against *K*'s claim, even though no practical harm ensued—only an underkilling—because a pure (legitimate) possibility, that the aircraft *x* could be a *J* or an *X*, is

lurking about, ready to finish *K* off. But in other setups this would not be true, the best pure counterpossibility to be found being like illegitimate pure P_1 . Irrespective of whether practical harm ensued, to cite, admit, accept, restricted P_1 within the pure inquiry is to mix unmixable types. It would be, in effect, to raise the pure question, "Would an aircraft with features $--- f$ be a *J*?" and allow an affirmative settlement by restricted P_1 . It is confusing the stakes, to pay off a debt of a million dollars with a million lire.

Suppose a humanoid *H*, philosophizing, did cite restricted P_1 against *K*'s pure claim, caught himself out, queried P_1 pointedly, asking, "But couldn't aircraft x with features $--- f$ be an *X*?", and, because it could, threw P_1 away. Which P_1 ? What *H* is doing in his querying of restricted P_1 is to treat its ingredients as pure, thereby *converting* it into pure P_1 , and simultaneously determining whether pure P_1 stands up, thus, finally, rectifying the error of his ways. Restricted P_1 , if treated properly, is not discarded but de-cited, allowed to return intact to its rightful home within the restricted.

The skeptic doesn't blunder crudely as my remarks might imply. But certain questions, suggested, provide a useful map, a means of orienting ourselves, while following the lines of his assessment of CS_{ph} . (The questions, by way of anticipation, take a certain amount for granted.) Which version of a skeptical possibility, plain or philosophical, do we, with the skeptic, initially find conceivable? Which version is cited initially, then finally, against CS_{ph} ? How does the philosophical version legitimately citable against CS_{ph} fare? What is the fate and import of the plain skeptical possibilities?

The skeptic's epistemic possibility (P_e): All this now might turn out to be a dream: I might wake up later in different surroundings, remembering what had really happened in the past, and *discover* I had just been dreaming.

What am I envisaging? I picture myself, the actor in the imagined scene, a plain man, operating (thinking and speaking) within the circle of the plain. What the experimenter with soporifics (758 above) thinks and says, I think and say; the meaning of what we both say is the same, *plain*. My waking up, my knowing I'm awake, my discovering I had been dreaming, all as envisaged is plain, like the experimenter's knowing. P_e as initially conceived is plain!

I think plain P_e genuine. It is of the utmost significance, an important legacy of skepticism—but is in grave danger of getting lost in a shuffle. Let's watch carefully what happens.

The skeptic cites plain P_e against Common Sense_{ph}, in particular, against the philosophical proposition that we can know we're awake, not dreaming. Then, catching himself out, he turns on P_e and asks (pointedly) how, therefore, we could *know later* that we were awake *then*, not just dreaming. Finally he throws P_e in the trash can.

What exactly, though, has been thrown away, and why?

The skeptic, like humanoid *H*, rectifies his mis-citing through his querying of plain P_e , which converts it into philosophical P_e , revealing that, thus understood, it falls short. Philosophical P_e collapses because, in brief, the overriding epistemological characteristic of a constitution of the standard type is that knowing requires invulnerability. Philosophical P_e therefore, of necessity, calls in question (negates) the very knowing it presupposes.

But what of *plain* P_e ? Is the fate of philosophical P_e its fate as well? (a) Plain P_e is to be queried in the skeptic's fashion only if mis-cited, and then only to convert it into philosophical P_e , in effect, to de-cite it. Otherwise its ingredient, the presupposed *plain* knowing (that we're not dreaming) is no more to be directly subjected to the skeptic's querying than is the experimenter's plain knowing (758). Descartes should not, as though a colleague, enter into the experiment on soporifics, asking *philosophically*, "But *how can you know* that you're not dreaming now? Mightn't it be that . . .?" and conclude that the experimenter's records were erroneous. The experimenter's records are not to be assessed in this way: Descartes's querying is out of place, a changing of the subject. Neither, then, should plain P_e 's knowing be so queried: it stands as securely as the experimenter's knowing. (How securely, I discuss later.) (b) But does plain P_e (like its philosophical version) undo itself, calling in question (negating) the very *plain* knowing *it* presupposes? It might look as though it does, but appearances can deceive; whether it really does depends on the (yet unknown) structure of the plain. How it fares there will be well worth investigating, a delicate matter, but, in the meantime, we have no reason for rejecting it.

Plain P_e , the possibility originally found conceivable, still waits in the wings, so far intact.

The skeptic has had one foot within the philosophical, the

other within the plain. His inquisition of CS_{ph} is philosophical, but the possibility he puts to imaginative test is drawn from the well of the plain.

Cognizant of P_e 's shortcoming and of its source, the epistemic presupposition, the skeptic puts his chips on a possibility distilled from P_e .

The nonepistemic possibility (P_{ne}): It might be that we're now asleep, dreaming. . . . There is no implication, pro or con, that we could (ever) find out.

I can imagine, it seems, that I might be asleep now, dreaming, really in surroundings very different from these. But the moment I am conscious that there will be *real* surroundings, I realize I'm taking for granted that these environs could be observed, known to be real, by outsiders, if any, in appropriate positions. What I am doing now, I recognize, in discovering P_{ne} to be conceivable, is the same thing I did earlier, in determining P_e to be so: drawing on ordinary, everyday possibilities and judging that they could have unusual application. Just as I found (P_e) that what could happen to the experimenter, awaking, finding a vivid "experience" a dream, could likewise happen to me *à propos of the present*; so, in finding P_{ne} conceivable, I am finding this parallelism imaginable again. Just as the experimenter could be asleep, dreaming, even never to waken, so could I now, it seems to me: and part of what I'm imagining in so finding it is that, just as the experimenter's true environs could be known to be real, so could mine.

P_{ne} , as I conceive it, is, of course, plain: the knowability by outsiders of what's real is quite obviously so. It is reasonable to think that we all conceive of P_{ne} this way, Descartes's Evil Demon, the arch outsider, is so natural-seeming because he fills the shoes built into our conception: he knows in fact what must, as I suggest we conceive of P_{ne} , be *knowable*. Could a leaner possibility P_x that lacked this epistemic condition be genuine, outside knowability irrelevant? We have no satisfactory techniques for handling a question like this objectively: we are forced winetasters of the conceivable. Acknowledging this, I feel confident, nevertheless, that it is inconceivable that I could now be asleep, dreaming, *if* no outsider could know my real environs because in the same boat, for the same reason, because he, too, could not know he was not asleep, dreaming. Does Descartes's possibility even *seem* to make sense, if we ask ourselves how the Evil Demon, or God, could know that he, too, wasn't dreaming—and allow that neither could?

Skeptics reveal their true conception by the character of the examples endlessly manufactured to reinforce P_{ne} . To mention one, we are asked whether we cannot easily imagine that a physiologist using advanced neurological techniques might, by appropriate cortical stimulation, have put us to sleep and produced this very real-like nonveridical "experience" in us. P_{ne} , as I conceive it, is *this* possibility without the *actual* (active) outsider (an updated Evil Demon) and, because readily imaginable, does serve to reinforce P_{ne} . But could it (be intended to) reinforce P_x ? Doesn't the skeptic's use of this example reveal how he and we are conceiving P_{ne} , for if our thoughts were not within the grooves of plain P_{ne} , as described, how could the skeptic or we fail to undo his example by asking how the physiologist could know he was not in the same fix as his patient?

I maintain, then, that P_{ne} is, as initially conceived, plain, with a covert but unavoidable epistemic requirement. Hence the story of P_{ne} is, in detail, the tale told for P_e . Plain P_e now has a companion in the wings; philosophical P_e has a companion in the trash can.

It is time to rectify a misimpression, one though, if what I've been saying is correct, which no longer matters. I emphasized that the skeptic assaults CS_{ph} directly, not the plain. If successful, however, he indirectly and partially undermines the plain also. He would have revealed, if successful, the plain to be at best like the humanoids' restricted. Plain knowing would then be, viewed from an *absolutely objective* perspective, "knowing" in a manner of speaking only. But with the skeptic disarmed, plain knowing, including that presupposed by *plain* P_e and P_{ne} , is secure against outside undermining; hence plain knowing and *plain* skeptical possibilities need to fear only these *plain* skeptical possibilities themselves.

THE FATE OF CS_{ph}

The skeptic fails, if this is correct, to show CS_{ph} as given to excessive claims. (That the possibilities centering on hallucinating fare like those focused on dreaming is obvious.) Does CS_{ph} , therefore, stand intact? Is the skeptic, in his assault, really empty-handed? Possibilities in the trash can are not yet in the incinerator, and can make their presence felt.

How *is* the philosophical question, (Q_1) "Can we ever know we're awake, not dreaming?" to be answered: affirmatively or negatively?

Philosophical P_e or P_{ne} is genuine if its epistemic requirement can be met. (a) Suppose Q_1 is answered affirmatively. Then the philosophical possibilities are genuine, since their epistemic requirements are satisfied. But if those philosophical possibilities are genuine, Q_1 is to be answered negatively. (b) Suppose, then, Q_1 is answered negatively. Then the philosophical possibilities are not genuine, for their epistemic requirements cannot be met. But, then, Q_1 is to be answered affirmatively, for there are no genuine philosophical contravening possibilities. But, then, back to (a) again. . . .

Hence Q_1 can be answered neither affirmatively nor negatively. The "proposition" of CS_{ph} , that we can know we're not dreaming, can be neither affirmed nor denied.

What underlies this argument, as we shall see, is that our concept Dream (Hallucination) cannot be fitted into a conceptual-human constitution of the standard type.

In the development of this thought I now bring the *plain* skeptical possibilities onto center stage, and assume them to be genuine. It seems almost beyond question that what plain P_e and P_{ne} suggest could happen, *could*, indeed, just possibly. Hence one leading question in the study of the plain, shaping our approach, is, What must the structure of the plain be that it can accommodate these possibilities? Now, with these scanty words of justification, let me put these possibilities to use.

(1) Descartes discovers that there are no features of his experiencing, no marks, incompatible with his being asleep, dreaming. Plain P_e and P_{ne} support Descartes in this, signifying that there aren't any such, hence by implication that our concept Dream (Hallucination) is not designed along the lines of "marks-and-features" concepts.

(2) The epistemic requirement of plain P_{ne} signifies that Dream can conceivably be true of an x only if the real environs of x are *knowable* (plain) as real, not just part of a dream, though not necessarily in fact known. Thus it is integral to Dream's being a concept that its antithesis, the real or portions of the real, be knowable (plain) as real, not just part of a dream. For our concept Dream, if not conceivably true of any x , would be bankrupt.

But, therefore, Dream (Hallucination) being incorporable within a constitution of the standard type is an impossible dream. For then the epistemic requirement integral to the concept (2) would have to be satisfied by what is allowable as knowing within this type, viz., a knowing requiring invulnerability. But such knowing would require what is denied by the concept's design (1).

The philosophical question Q_1 begged the question, the question whether it could be a question, in supposing that 'dream' could figure in the question itself. Answering Q_1 affirmatively is incompatible with (1), negatively with (2), for the knowing must be philosophical.

One thing revealed by the *plain* skeptical possibilities is, then, that our conceptual-human constitution can't be of the standard type; for, if it were, it would be seriously concept-impoverished. CS_{ph} and its denial represent, or presuppose, our constitution as being of this kind, and hence are illegitimate.

THE LEGACY OF SKEPTICISM

Skepticism frees us from antiquated problems, including itself, offering us a new, challenging problem. In his practice Moore was, in one sense, the compleat philosopher: outside the circle of the plain does not lie what we wished and presumed. Skepticism leaves us the problem of the plain, of its structure, the character and source of its relative "non-objectivity," and one major tool for unlocking its secrets, the plain skeptical possibilities. How radically that structure must differ from the standard type, if capable of permitting concepts with the characteristics of Dream to be concepts, and the plain skeptical possibilities to be possibilities, is evident enough.

It's a pleasant surprise when skepticism, which has always given us plenty to think about, gives us something new to ponder.

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NOTES AND NEWS

The Society for Social Philosophy is exploring the possibility of a chartered flight to the XVth World Congress of Philosophy in Varna, Bulgaria. The Congress will be held on September 17-22, 1973. Those interested in this charter possibility should write to Richard Ray, P.O. Box 1176, Richmond, Va. 23209. Those seeking information about the Congress should write to Secretariat, Bulgarian Organizing Committee, 27b Moskovska Street, Sofia, Bulgaria. It is important that reservations be made as soon as possible.

The 1972/73 annual meeting of the Association for Symbolic Logic will be held on January 25-26, 1973, at the Fairmont Hotel, Dallas, Texas, in conjunction with the Annual Meetings of the American Mathematical