
Introduction

In our present chapter we propose to study the theory of perception in the philosophy of G.E. Moore (1873-1958). As stated earlier, we will consider his view on perception as part of his theory of knowledge. Moore is a thinker in the British empiricist tradition of Locke, Berkeley and Hume and we will try to show that his views have more affinity with those of John Locke. He is an analytical philosopher like Russell and Ayer.

His article "The Refutation of Idealism" (1903) brought him within the ranks of realists, and his "A Defence of Common Sense" (1905) established him in the philosophical circles as an exponent of common sense position. We will try to examine how far such views about Moore are justifiable.

As we have stated earlier, in our study of Moore’s view on perception we shall confine ourselves to his views about the relation of sense-data and material things. Though Moore talks of perception of other things like fact, propositions and universals, he gives most prominent place to perception of material things by way of sense-data. Also, we will use as our primary material, Moore’s writings from his "The Refutation of
Idealism" (1903) onwards, that is, we will ignore his earlier idealist phase when he remains influenced by philosophers like Bradley and McTaggart. Here we would point out that though at places Moore talks of directly perceiving material things, we will examine how this is possible within his empiricist compass. Moore, we will try to show, takes a realist stand. In the context of perception realism holds that the objects of perception are independent of the perceiving subject. However he does not take a definite stand on the correct analysis of the relation between sense-data and material things. He remains undecided between the three views held by different philosophers in the history of philosophy on the subject of perception. These three views as stated by Moore are as follows:

1. That visual sense-data are identical with the parts of the surface of material things. He says: "...though I don't perceive my hand directly, I do directly perceive part of its surface; that the sense-datum itself is the part of its surface..."\(^1\)

2. Second alternative includes theories ranging from relation of sense-data and material object as an analysable relation of 'appearing' to causal theories resembling that of Locke. Of the different views in this category, one that seems plausible to Moore is that "which holds that R is an ultimate and unanalysable relation which might be expressed by

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saying that ‘xRy’ means the same as ‘y is an appearance or manifestation of x.’”\(^2\)

3. The third, according to Moore, is the Mill-Russell view that a material object is merely a logical construction out of sense-data. Moore says that this view was implied by Mill “when he said that material things are ‘permanent possibilities of sensations.’”\(^3\)

As stated earlier, in accordance with our methodological assumptions we will historically trace and analyse the epistemological and ontological assumptions of GE Moore from Descartes and Locke. Moore’s empiricism has much in common with Locke, as we will try to show later. And among British empiricists Locke is the one who accepts a common sense position in believing the existence of the external material world. Though Locke’s representative realism has not been accepted at once by Moore—in one of its forms it is one of three possible alternatives that Moore wishes to keep open. Locke accepts Cartesian dualism of Mind and Body and this has been inherited by Moore, although it is within latter’s analytic framework. Thus our first objective will be to give an analytic exposition of Moore’s view on perception taking into account his indebtedness to both Descartes and Locke.

As we have indicated earlier, Moore claims to defend common


\(^3\) Ibid.
sense. Basing our analysis on the assumption that various aspects of a consistent philosophical system are interrelated, we will examine to what extent Moore's claim for common sense is compatible with his analysis of perception. We will try to show in the course of our discussion how Moore's acceptance of a common sense position is most crucial in understanding the problem of perception as stated by him. We will attempt to point out that his hesitancy about the correct analysis of perception is rooted in his empiricist legacy coupled with a belief in common sense. The common sense view of perception, it is generally held, is a naive realistic view. It is the view that sense-perception is direct awareness of external things. The 'veil of appearance' problem does not arise for the naive realist. We may point out here that the 'veil of appearance' problem has reference to "sense-data viewed as interposing between the experience and the external world." Does this problem arise for Moore? This we will discuss in this chapter taking into account his common sense claims. Here we find it relevant to discuss the concept of common sense before proceeding further. *A Dictionary of Philosophy* defines it thus: "In general, the kind of opinions about life at large (for example, that the world has existed for a long time or that our minds are incorporeal) that philosophers believe unphilosophical people take for granted." The Scottish school of philosophy, represented prominently by Thomas Reid and William

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Hamilton, advanced arguments in favour of common sense view. Reid equated common sense with 'good judgement' and defined it to be the "degree of judgement which is common to men with whom we can converse and transact business." And in this sense, Reid's definition is closer to Cartesian definition of good sense as something shared by all. Moore's defence of common sense, on the other hand, is mainly directed against philosophical scepticism as we will discuss later on.

It seems to us that common sense view can be seen thus: it refers to those generally held beliefs which we, in our ordinary discourse take for granted or never question, since they have been vindicated umpteen number of times by experience, like, e.g. fire will burn, or water will clean, etc. Many a times these beliefs are supported by science, e.g. a common sense belief like, e.g., 'a man can sometimes die of suffocation', is supported by the scientific fact that oxygen is essential for life. Again, the view that 'it is difficult to walk on glass because it is so smooth' is supported by the idea of friction. This also indicates that the common sense beliefs have social context, that is, with the advancement of knowledge these beliefs may get either consolidated (if supported by science) or forsaken (if neglected by science). However any radical U-turn in common sense belief is possible only through some social change or some discovery which can offer a more logical explanation in favour of the new idea. To

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take a familiar example, the heliocentric theory was accepted only when it was put forward with scientifically and logically consistent explanation which answered those questions which the earlier theory was unable to address. The ‘universality’ of common sense view has been accepted by Moore and for him it refers to “certain views about the nature of the Universe which are held, now-a-days, by almost everybody”.\(^7\) We will examine in detail Moore’s view on common sense and its compatibility or otherwise with his theory of perception, as the chapter progresses.

Thus another objective of this study will be that we would like to pursue Moore’s position on sense-data and its relation to material object vis-a-vis his claim for common sense. We will try to show that the moment Moore brings in sense-data as the immediate objects of perception in his analysis of perception, he deviates from common sense. This is so because common sense presupposes the material basis of the self; whereas Moore, following Descartes’ ‘cogito’ leaves the nature of self as pure consciousness not as the concrete socio-historical being that a man is according to common sense. We, on the other hand hold that the direct perception of material object and not sense-data alone can be the main plank of any common sense view of perception. We will attempt to show that Moore was deeply influenced by Cartesian philosophy and the whole

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British empiricist tradition and specially by the views of John Locke. Moore’s philosophy has so many instances of the acceptance of Cartesian dualism and he accepts some of the fundamental elements of Descartes’ ontological and methodological presuppositions. For instance, while explaining the nature of common sense beliefs Moore takes for granted Descartes dualism when he says that common sense accepts that there are consciousnesses and bodies. He also takes for granted Cartesian ‘cogito’ as pure consciousness. Thus Descartes view that Mind can only know its own ‘ideas’ is replaced by the view that consciousness can only know sense-data directly. As Moore asserts while discussing memory: “The difficulty is the same as in the case of sense-perception. When I look at this paper, is anything before my mind except the sense-data which I directly perceive?”

We must point out here that though Moore adopts these Cartesian concepts he does not do it explicitly, nor does he take the whole Cartesian argument as such. Since he is an analytical philosopher, therefore, though he accepts Cartesian rules for acquiring certain knowledge; he turns these rules into his method of analysis and replaces clarity of thought of Descartes by clarity of language. His pluralist empiricist heritage however makes him view particulars as the units of language. Thus Moore’s pursuit

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of analytic method is nothing but an empiricist application of Cartesian rules. However, we must emphasize that we do not mean it to be a rigid formulation since different aspects of Cartesian philosophy are interwoven and the various elements of his philosophy are implicit in Moorean world view, as we will try to show later.

Finally we will examine Moore’s views on the basis of the distinction that is drawn between what a philosopher claims to be doing and what he is actually doing. Moore, we will try to show, does this in two ways: first he arbitrarily defines certain things to be of a particular nature and then on the basis of this he draws his conclusions sometimes ending up in a circular reasoning. For instance, he defines common sense beliefs in a certain manner and then on the basis of this he tries to vindicate some views which are far from commonsensical. Second, he gives those criteria of common sense which he himself never follows. We find that his treatment of the problem of perception certainly exemplifies this.

I

Perception and knowledge

First of all, in accordance with our methodology, we will discuss the theory of perception of G.E.Moore as a part of his epistemology. Thus we would like to begin by stating his epistemological position. Moore takes an empiricist stand. According to him, though there are other ways of
knowing, knowing by way of sense-perception is "the most primitive way of knowing material objects". Other ways of knowing, namely, memory and testimony are based on this primitive source. Though Moore does not define perception as broadly as Locke does, in the case of both these philosophers knowledge by perception amounts to knowledge by 'ideas' (sense-data in the case of Moore).

Moore’s empiricism, like Lockean empiricism, is a way of positing idea or sense-data between the perceiving subject and the external world. This is clear in Moore’s case when after laying down the rule that "...no man could ever know of the existence of any material objects at all, unless he first knew of some by means of his senses" he queries, "...what sort of thing this evidence of the senses is..." only to come to what seems to be an obvious answer to him—that sense-data are the "sort of things" that stand between the material things and our knowledge of them.

His empiricism is closely allied to his view on perception since knowledge by sense-experience is knowledge through sense-data, sense-data being the "things given or presented by the senses". He defines

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10 Ibid., pp.28-29.
11 Ibid. p.29.
13 Ibid., p.31.
sense-data to be such things as "the colour and size and shape"\textsuperscript{14}. In Moore we also find the inkling of Locke's division between sensation and reflection. As when he says in his paper of 1905-06: "...the 'contents' which I actually observe may be divided into two classes: on the one hand, those which, as we commonly say, we perceive 'through the senses'; and, on the other hand, my perception of these last, my thoughts, and my feelings."\textsuperscript{15}

Moore, as elsewhere, uses a technique while discussing philosophical issues. His method is to "consider carefully single concrete instances, so that there may be no mistake as to exactly what it is that is being talked about."\textsuperscript{16} This technique of Moore can be traced from the following Cartesian rules for reaching indubitable knowledge. They are: (1) not to accept anything as true unless it is clearly and distinctly present to the mind; (2) to analyse the problem into simpler parts; (3) to start from simple and certain truths and proceed gradually to the more complicated ones; (4) to review so meticulously as not to leave out any details.\textsuperscript{17} While the first rule has been accepted by Locke as well as Berkeley and Hume. It

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Rene Descartes, \textit{Discourse on the Method}, \textit{Descartes:Selected Philosophical Writings}, tr., John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p.29.
\end{itemize}
is tacitly accepted by Russell and has been incorporated as an integral element in Moore's technique. However Moore's application of this principle to the analysis of concepts signifies the difference in priority between Descartes and Moore. While Descartes claims that this is for acquiring knowledge and truth; in Moore it boils down to clarification of concepts and meaning.

Now we will discuss the status of sense-data and its relation to material things. As we have already stated, perception for Moore is the most basic way of knowing material things. And by perception he means perception of sense-data. However, he introduces sense-data as real existents on the lines of HH Price and CD Broad, as we have already indicated. Thus in his paper of 1905-06 he says: "I conclude therefore that, unless some of the observed data which I have called sense-contents do exist, my own observations cannot give me the slightest reason for believing that anybody else has ever had any particular perception, thought, or, feeling."\(^{18}\)

In accordance with his method of considering individual instances, Moore introduces sense-data thus:

I propose, therefore, to hold up an envelope in my hand, and to ask you all to look at it for a moment; and then to consider with me

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\(^{18}\) GE Moore, "The Nature and Reality of Objects of Perception". *Philosophical*
Moore explains that when he is asking what exactly happens when we see a material object, the occurrence that he means to analyse is “merely the mental occurrence—the act of consciousness—which we call seeing.”

Here we find that after showing thus the envelope Moore asks the question ‘What has happened?’, only to reply:

We should certainly say (if you have looked at it) that we all saw that envelope, that we all saw it, the same envelope: I saw it, and you all saw it. We all saw the same object.

Here Moore is talking about the material thing which everyone saw. That is why he says that everyone saw the same envelope, an object that “occupied just one of the many places that constitute the whole space.” Moore, like Locke, also accepts the bodily processes that occur when we are seeing.

But then, Moore asks, “What happened to each of us, when we saw that envelope?” and asserts: “I will begin by describing part of what

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20 Ibid., p.29.
21 Ibid., p.30.
23 Ibid.
happened to me. I saw a patch of a particular whitish colour, having a certain size, and a certain shape, a shape with rather sharp angles or corners and bounded by fairly straight lines. These things: this patch of a whitish colour, and its size and shape I did actually see. And I propose to call these things, the colour and size and shape, *sense-data*, things given or presented by the senses—*given* in this case, by my sense of sight.24 Thus "my seeing of the colour" is sensation and "the colour which I saw" is sense-datum.25

We find that Moore here talks of three things: (1) sensation, (2) sense-data, and (3) material thing. The distinction between sensation and sense-data is quite clear even though it may not be legitimate. The things become problematic when Moore talks about the relation between the sense-data and the material things.

Some important questions arise even as he explains why he distinguishes between sensation and sense-data. The two reasons given by him are these:

First, Moore says that it seems *conceivable* to him that the sense-data should still be existing even when he turns away his eyes and the sensation has ceased to exist.26 Here Moore asserts that it seems conceivable to him that sense-data continue to exist even when we do not

26 Ibid.
see them and our sensation has ceased to exist. The second reason for
distinguishing between sense data and sensations is that "some sense-data—
this whitish colour for instance—are in the place in which the material
object—the envelope, is. It seems to me conceivable that this whitish
colour is really on the surface of the material envelope. Whereas it does not
seem to me that my seeing of it is in that place. My seeing of it is in
another place—somewhere within my body."²⁷ We may point out that a
similar kind of reasoning can be seen in Locke.

These two points made by Moore suggest that he is in favour of
giving an objective and independent status to sense-data. This view,
however, we may point out, is inconsistent with his earlier view of seeing
as a 'mental occurrence' and his view about the private nature of sense-
data like, e.g., their dependence on the strength of the eye-sight, or one's
distance from the paper. But after asserting this Moore finds it difficult to
explain how these sense-data are related to material things. Thus he brings
in the distinction between direct and indirect apprehension.

Moore, we find here, talks in a material mode of speech, unlike
Ayer, who claims that sense-data are only linguistic tools as we will
discuss in our next chapter; Moore begins with factual examples in order to
reach his conclusions. Another important point that comes to light is that

Moorean concept of sense-data implicitly incorporates following points: first, they are subjective. That is, going by his present example, a person's immediate perception, the immediate occurrence whenever he sees something, an envelope in this case, is what he means by sense-data. Second, going by what Moore says, sense-data are momentary: it is what you see when you look at the envelope for a moment. Third, sense-data, seen in this way, are particulars. However, as we have indicated earlier, Moore emphasizes the public nature of sense-data when he explains the reasons why he introduces them. The first reason is that even when the seeing of sense-data ceases, the sense-data continue to exist, e.g., looking at the envelope, we see a "sense-datum, a patch of a whitish colour", if we turn away our eyes, we do not see the sense-datum, but it is "still existing". This we may point out, causes in consistency in Moore's position. First, he is accepting Lockean 'idea', which confines him to his own circle of ideas. And the fact of 'seeing', as he claims, does not liberate him from this circle. Now his acceptance of their public character, makes his position inconsistent. Moore says that he has 'a strong inclination' to believe this. The second reason adduced by him is: "...it seems to me conceivable that this whitish colour is really on the surface of the material

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Ibid.
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envelope. Whereas it does not seem to me that my seeing of it is in that place."\textsuperscript{31} This point is put forward in support of his first point and is an attempt at showing that perception, or more broadly sense-experience, liberates one from the circle of one's own ideas.

Two more points can be made here. First that at least here Moore is upholding the view that sense-data are parts of the surface of material objects. Second, Moore is making the same mistake for which he criticizes subjective idealists. By objectifying sense-datum as part of the surface of the material object and by asserting its continued existence even when no one perceives it, Moore brings it on par with his definition of material object. This view, however, cannot explain perceptual error.

We believe that this way of looking at perception can be traced back to the philosophy of Locke who accepts Cartesian dualism, and also to the view that mind can know only its own ideas or sense-data. We may refer here to the concept of 'possible sense-data' accepted by both Ayer and Russell to explain the continued existence of public object when no one perceives it (an idea foreshadowed in Berkeley's philosophy)—that if no one perceives it, at least God perceives it.

Another notable point that follows from our second point given above, is that the same criterion which Moore uses to criticize Berkeley's

subjective idealism, has been used further by him to establish sense-data. That is, first he points out against subjective idealism that we must differentiate between the act of sensation and object of sensation. Then he posits sense-data as the objects of sensation. Thus, his argument for sense-data runs like this: "Many philosophers have called these things which I call sense-data, sensations.... And when, therefore, we talk of having sensations, I think what we mean by 'sensations' is the experiences which consist in apprehending certain sense-data, not these sense-data themselves". 32

Moore's argument brings to the mind the argument that Berkeley goes on to criticize. We may here point to what Hylas says: "The sensation I take to be an act of the mind perceiving; besides which, there is something perceived; and this I call the object. For example, there is red and yellow on that tulip. But then the act of perceiving those colours is in me only, and not in the tulip." 33 This position is however criticised by Berkeley. We may mention here that in The Problems of Philosophy(1912) Russell also takes a similar position like Moore distinguishing between sense-data and sensation, a view that he rejects in his later writings.

According to Moore, another important point about sense-data is

that they are directly apprehended. He defines direct apprehension as something "... which happens when you actually see any colour, when you actually hear any sound..."\textsuperscript{34} and so on. Thus, according to him, we directly apprehend sense-data of colour, sound and smell etc. The question arises, then, how do we know the material things and what is the relation between sense-data and material things in his view! Moore distinguishes between 'seeing' the sense-data or the "thing given or presented by the senses"\textsuperscript{35} and 'perceiving' the material thing: "The seeing of sense-data consists in directly apprehending them. But the seeing of a material object doesn't consist in directly apprehending it. It consists, partly in directly apprehending certain sense-data, but partly also in knowing, besides and at the same time, that there exists something other than these sense-data".\textsuperscript{36}

As is clear from the above passage, according to Moore, we do not know material things by direct apprehension, that is, in the way we know sense-data. Our knowledge of material things consists thus in knowing that there is 'something' other than these sense-data. Moore is an empiricist and holds that the sense-experience is the most basic way of knowing. Thus, we find for him material things cannot be directly apprehended since we cannot go beyond the veil of sense-data.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p.31.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p.51.
Thus we find that for Moore the knowledge of material things is always indirect. Therefore, in his “The Refutation of Idealism” (1903), though Moore does not introduce the concept of sense-data, he accepts that perception of material thing can only be indirect. Thus Moore asserts here that when “we know that the sensation of blue exists, the fact we know is that there exists an awareness of blue. And this awareness is...utterly different from blue.” Thus he concludes that to be “aware of the sensation of blue...is to be aware of an awareness of blue.” And this awareness, for him, constitutes every kind of knowledge. Richard McKeon interprets this distinction between ‘awareness’ and ‘awareness of awareness’ to be the distinction between “the idea of an object and the idea of an idea.” We, however, hold the view that this ‘awareness’ becomes sense-datum in his later writings. So, Moore’s present scheme:

{CONSCIOUSNESS} aware of {AWARENESS} of {BLUE}

can be interpreted thus:

{CONSCIOUSNESS} aware of {SENSE-DATA} of {BLUE}

As is clear from the above representation Moore always holds perception of material thing to be indirect only. Thus, in Refutation we are

38 Ibid., p.25.
aware of 'awareness of blue' and not directly aware of 'blue'. This finding thus, does not support the widely held view that Moore was advocating direct perception of material thing in this paper.

Here we may point out that in his *Sense and Sensibilia*, Austin criticizes the notion of indirect perception in a different context which may aptly be applied here. He says: "The notion of indirect perception is not naturally at home with senses other than sight...do I hear a shout indirectly, when I hear the echo? If I touch you with a barge-pole do I touch you indirectly?" He further points out: "...we should not be prepared to speak of indirect perception in every case in which we see something from which the existence (or occurrence) of something else can be inferred; we should *not* say we see the guns indirectly, if we see in the distance only the flashes of guns."41

Similarly in his later writings Moore holds that we perceive material objects only through the apprehension of sense-data. That by 'blue' Moore means to indicate physical thing is clear from his suggestion that 'blue' is as much an object "of my experience, when I experience it, as the most exalted and independent real thing of which I am aware".42 Bouwsma argues here: "If you attempt to describe what you see, the same words

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41 Ibid., p.17.
42 Ibid., p. 27.
which you use to describe the lemon or the cloud, will also serve to describe the purported sense-datum. So, if there is a sense-datum in these last cases, a new vocabulary will have to be engaged to perform the service. And so we get two different meanings for “is red” in the sentences “This (sense-datum) is red” and “This rose is red”. This sort of accommodation is the consequence of the assumption that just as there are auditory sense-data so there must be visual sense-data. We make up for the deficiency in the facts from which we start by inventing a new vocabulary.”  

In other words, he says: “The obvious distinction between sounds, tastes, and smells in hearing, tasting, and smelling leads us to expect a corresponding something or other in the case of seeing and touching. So when I look at my hand, I am led to expect that there is a sense-datum in this case. So I may say that I can pick it out. But when I try to pick it out I am at a loss. There is only my hand.” Moore rejects Bouwsma’s argument that he has been “misled by the linguistic similarity between ‘I hear a rat’, ‘I smell a rat’, ‘I see a rat’, to suppose that there must be some kind of object related to the last, as a physical sound is to the first, and a physical smell is to the second.” Moore recognises here that


44 Ibid, p.220.

the “substantial point”\textsuperscript{46} on which Bouwsma disagrees with him is that why
we cannot see the physical surface directly instead of seeing sense-data, and assets that he “cannot agree with him about this”.\textsuperscript{47}

In 1913-14 (“The Status of Sense-data”), Moore uses the term ‘sensible’ instead of ‘sense-data’ since he feels that the latter term ‘sense-data was “ambiguous”\textsuperscript{48} and referred to “the sort of sensible which are experienced in sensation proper”\textsuperscript{49}; whereas the term sensible is “perhaps more convenient”\textsuperscript{50}. Thus according to this definition images would not be sense-data. For Moore, ‘sensibles’ include images, after-images as well as entities experienced in sensation proper. It also includes “any patches of colour, or sounds, or smells, etc.,(if such there be), which are not experienced at all.”\textsuperscript{51} We find that Moore uses the term ‘sensible’ basically to include images too within the meaning of sense-data. And for him being experienced or sensed is a sufficient but not a necessary condition for being sense-data. We see that unlike Ayer, however, Moore takes a realist stand by giving an independent status even to ‘sensibles.’ We will try to show in our next chapter, how Ayer takes a subjective idealist stand following

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, p.648.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., p.171.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p.170.
Berkeley and Hume. Moore’s position is quite different as he says, “that the distinction between sensory and non-sensory experience is derived from that between ‘sensibles’, and non-sensibles and not vice versa.” However, for him too the element of subjectivity remains important as we find that in the beginning of this paper he calls such sensibles as the images, dream experience, hallucinations, after-images, and sensation proper as ‘mental events’.

Here Moore’s definition of direct apprehension remains the same as he defines it as actually seeing or hearing the sensible. Here he makes a distinction similar to Lockean distinction between sensation and reflection. Thus he distinguishes between (1) actually seeing and hearing a sensible and (2) only thinking of or remembering the sensibles. However, Moore in this paper, deviates a little from his previous stand in that he does not commit himself here regarding the nature of the subject which apprehends sensibles. Thus he says that “...the something which directly apprehends it may quite possibly not be anything which deserves to be called “I” or “me”. It is quite possible, I think, that there is no entity whatever which deserves to be called “I’ or “me” or “my mind”...” And as usual, he concludes by saying that he is not certain about the correct analysis of the

53 Ibid., p.173
54 Ibid., p.174.
relation between mind and the sensibles. However, what Moore asserts the very next moment, perhaps, takes him nearer to Humean pluralism. He says that it may be the case that one and the same entity apprehends in all cases or else this also is quite possible that this entity is “numerically different in every different act” of direct apprehension.

Though Moore is an empiricist, at this point he introduces ‘instinctive belief’ as a source of knowledge without assigning it the importance of being a conclusive proof. And this he does in order to support the independent status of sensibles. Thus to the question whether sensibles exist when they are not experienced, Moore replies that “a certain amount of weight ought to be attached to our instinctive belief that certain kinds of sensibles do...” Moore does not change his earlier stand (1910-11) on the relation between physical objects and sense-data. In addition, though he says that in the ordinary usage we mean by ‘seeing’ the seeing of physical objects, e.g., coins; he drifts away from this ordinarily understood sense of seeing. Thus while dealing with the question of the relation between physical objects and sensibles he maintains his earlier stand of distinguishing “that sense of the word ‘see’ in which we can be said to ‘see a physical object, from that sense of the word in which ‘see’ means merely to directly apprehend a visual sensible.” Moore’s view regarding the apprehension of material object thus remains unchanged here. They are

56 Ibid., p.185.
57 Ibid., p.187.
never directly apprehended. He concludes that we can never know any proposition regarding physical objects if we “never directly apprehended any sensibles nor perceived any relations between them.”58 Thus, for Moore perception of material things remains rooted in “the direct apprehension of sensibles and in the perception of relations between directly apprehended sensibles.”59

In his paper “Some Judgments of Perception” (1918-19), Moore begins with the assertion that we frequently make judgments like ‘That is an inkstand’, ‘That is a table cloth’, ‘This is a coin’. He says: “Judgments of this kind would, I think, commonly, and rightly, be taken to be judgments, the truth of which involves the existence of material things or physical objects. If I am right in judging that this is an inkstand, it follows that there is at least one inkstand in the universe; and if there is an inkstand in the universe, it follows that there is in it at least one material thing or physical object”.60

Thus, by using his method of considering particular instances, Moore claims to establish the existence of material things. However, as usual, he suspends his judgment here too and says that his assertion here may be disputed. Yet, we find that in the very next paragraph, Moore asserts that all our judgments of perception are about things which we are

59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., p.221.
perceiving at the moment; judgments of perception can never break the barrier created by Moore's sense-data.

It is obvious then, that for Moore the perception of material things remains indirect only. Here, however for the first time he makes use of inference in order to explain the knowledge of material things. Here we find some similarity with Ayer that in the knowledge of material things, there being no direct access to them, some kind of unconscious inference is involved, from our apprehension of sense-data to our perception of material things. Thus Moore claims that his use of the term 'perceive' is perfectly correct, when he says: "...that I do now perceive that that is a door, and that that is a finger. Only, of course, when I say that I do, I do not mean to assert that part of what I 'perceive', when I 'perceive' these things, may not be something which, in an important sense, is known to me only by inference. It would be very rash to assert that "perception" in this sense of the word, entirely excludes inference. All that seems to me certain is that there is an important and useful sense of the word 'perception', which is such that the amount and kind of inference, if inference there be, which is involved in my present perception that that is a door, is no bar to the truth of the assertion that I do perceive that it is one". 61

In this paper, Moore again reverts back to the older term 'sense-

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data' and gives up the term 'sensibles', and asserts that our judgments of perception are about sense-data which mediate "my perception of the inkstand." And our perception of inkstand is dependent on our perception of the sense-data in the sense that "...if there is anything which is this inkstand, then in perceiving that thing, I am knowing it only as the thing which stands in a certain relation to this sense-datum." Thus, for Moore, the immediate objects of perception are sense-data in the similar manner in which the British empiricists hold that the immediate objects of perception are 'ideas'. And this is because Moore, like the empiricist Locke takes for granted the Cartesian dualism. If mind can know only its own ideas there can be no direct apprehension of material objects. Therefore, Moore’s judgement about the inkstand is basically a judgment about sense-data. Moore clarifies his stand further by saying: "Suppose I am seeing two coins, lying side by side.... I identify them only by reference to the two visual presented objects, which correspond respectively to the one and to the other.... every judgment which I make about the one is a judgment about the sense-datum which corresponds to it...."

Moore here takes the position that sense-data are not the whole of material object, but only part of the surface of the material object. He says:

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63 Ibid., p. 233.
64 Ibid., pp.234-35.
"...I do not take this presented object to be a whole inkstand: that, at most, I only take it to be part of the surface of an inkstand."\textsuperscript{65} He says that sense-data is really identical with the part of the surface of material object. However, as usual he suspends his judgement by saying that there may be serious objections to this view.

Moore refers to these serious objections in his private notebook written some time around 1919. While indicating the possible objections against the view that sense-data are identical with the part of the surface of material things, Moore refers to arguments like, first, our sense-data really have all the characters which they are given as having. Second the claim that my sense-data are experience of my own and that they cease to exist even when the corresponding surfaces do not. After considering similar such arguments, Moore all of a sudden declares: "(D)ooble images have convinced me that the sense-datum of which I am speaking when I say 'That's a sofa' is not identical with any part of the surface of the sofa."\textsuperscript{66}

In "A Defence of Common Sense"(1925), Moore says: "...I'm one of those philosophers who have held that the 'Common Sense view of the


world' is, in certain fundamental features, wholly true."67 We will try to find out in the next section how far his claim is true in the light of his view on relation between sense-data and physical object. Here Moore claims that he is quite certain about the truth of such common sense propositions as 'The earth has existed for many years past', or that 'Many human bodies have each lived for many years upon it' which assert the existence of material things. However he adds that he is not certain about their correct analysis.68

It seems to me quite evident that my knowledge that I am now perceiving a human hand is a deduction from a pair of propositions simpler still – propositions which I can only express in the form 'I am perceiving this' and 'This is a human hand'. It is the analysis of propositions of the latter kind which seems to me to present such great difficulties, while nevertheless the whole question as to the nature of material things obviously depends upon their analysis.69 When Moore is taking both of the incompatible stands (of common sense and of perception in terms of sense-data) his actual position is one that troubles him more. And here we find that the main problem for Moore is the 'analysis in terms of sense-data': his empiricist legacy is much more important to him than

68 Ibid., p.53.
69 Ibid.
his belief in common sense; the latter itself sometimes justifying the former.

While in accepting the truth of the propositions that assert the existence of material things, Moore comes closer to common-sense realism; he deviates from it in giving analysis of such propositions in terms of sense-data. For example, he says: "...whenever I know, or judge, such a proposition to be true, (1) there is always some sense-datum about which the proposition in question is a proposition—some sense-datum which is a subject (and, in a certain sense, the principle or ultimate subject) of the proposition in question, and (2) that, nevertheless, what I am knowing or judging to be true about this sense-datum is not (in general) that it is itself a hand, or a dog, or the sun, etc. etc. as the case may be."²⁷⁰

Here Moore wants to make two points that Locke too tried to establish: first, an implicit assumption of Cartesian dualism of Mind and Matter—that Matter has an independent existence. And, second, a possibility of knowledge of material things in a situation wherein mind can know only its own ideas. Here we would like to emphasize two things. First, these two beliefs have resulted in a kind of inconsistency in their systems. We can say that these are two incompatible points since even if the first point is true the second point makes it impossible to come out of

the circle of one’s own ideas. The origin of this problem lies in the acceptance of the mental side of Cartesian dualism on the one hand, and insistence on experience as the only source of knowledge; since the former premise necessitates a subjective interpretation of knowledge and reality. Thus, for Moore there are bodies on this earth and there are selves ("What is Philosophy?", 1910-11) and mind can know only sense-data or sensibles—the perception of material things reaming indirect—that is, through the veil of sense-data.

We find that though Moore claims to uphold common sense view, he actually takes a stand that is far from common sensical by describing perception in terms of sense-data. He says: "...there is no doubt at all that there are sense-data, in the sense in which I am now using that term. I am at present seeing a great number of them, and feeling others. And in order to point out to the reader what sort of things I mean by sense-data, I need only ask him to look at his own right hand. If he does this he will be able to pick out something (and unless he is seeing double, only one thing) with regard to which he will see that it is, at first sight, a natural view to take, that that thing is identical, not indeed with this whole right hand, but with that part of its surface which he is actually seeing, but will also (on a little reflection) be able to see that it is doubtful whether it can be identical with the part of the surface of his hand in question. Things of the sort (in a certain respect) of which this thing is, which he sees in looking at his
hand...are what I mean by sense-data. I therefore define the term in such a way that it is an open question whether the sense-datum which I now see in looking at my hand and which is a sense-datum of my hand, is or is not identical with that part of its surface which I am now actually seeing.  

At this point, AK Bouwsma examines Moore’s direction for ‘picking out’ sense-data. Bouwsma takes this passage of “A Defence of Common sense” to criticize Moore. He says: “Moore invites his readers to pick out something, but his directions for doing this are not clear. Commonly if one is asked to pick out something, the something is described. Out of this bowl, pick out the red flower; out of this sheef pick out the longest straw.” As he further says: “I confess that I am unable with these directions to attain the desired result. Looking at my hand I can pick out knuckles, finger-tips, nails, lines, veins, etc, but to none of them does the description which Professor Moore gives apply.” The second point made by Bouwsma is that if one is picking out something, he will be selecting something from the given and there will be some remainder, but in Moore’s case there is no possibility of there being a remainder. Moore accepts that he was not clear in giving directions when he used the term

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73 Ibid., p.205.
74 Ibid., p.204.
“pick out”. He asserts: “I ought to have made it clear that the operation of
‘picking out’, of which I spoke, could only be performed if he were seeing

something else besides his right hand.” Even if this something else is a
‘black background’. To the question ‘from what the sense-datum had to be
picked out’, Moore replies: “From his direct visual field”. (p.631). And to
the question ‘What remains then?’ Moore answers: “The rest of his direct
visual field.” (p. 631). Bouwsma makes another point that the nature of
Moore’s doubt is that “it cannot be resolved”. That is, he says: “Once the
doubt arises, there is no way of settling the question whether the thing one
can pick out is identical with the surface of one’s hand or not.” To this
Moore replies: “This is, of course, perfectly true: my doubt is a philosophic
doubt, and, like other philosophic doubts, certainly cannot be set at rest by
any empirical observations.” Moore further says: “There is certainly
something else to do besides going on doubting and that is to go on
thinking about it.” Another point that Bouwsma makes is that Moore
“confines his use of the phrase sense-datum only to what others would
describe as visual sense-data.” Here we may point out that we agree with

76 O.K. Bouwsma, “Moore's Theory of Sense-data”, The Philosophy of GE Moore,
77 Ibid., p.207.
79 Ibid., p.638.
80 O.K. Bouwsma, “Moore's Theory of Sense-data”, The Philosophy of GE Moore,
Bouwsma in saying that Moore’s doubt cannot be set at rest. But Bouwsma’s reasons for saying so are very different from ours. His thesis is based on Moore’s notion of ‘picking out’ from the given data.

Though we agree with Bouwsma that this passage of Moore is important in understanding him; we do not find that his argument proves much. He makes two points: (1) that Moore’s directions for ‘picking out’ something are not clear, (2) that Moore’s doubt cannot be resolved. We find however, that Bouwsma does not touch upon the main problem faced by Moore. He does not ask two important questions which we are going to ask. First, he does not ask why Moore’s directions are not clear. Second, he does not ask why Moore’s doubt is not resolvable. For that will require of us to go deeper into the issue. We find that in this passage Moore’s ‘picking out’ leads to an “open question” whether or not the specified visual sense-data are identical with the part of the surface of the hand. The problem here is not that Moore is only seeing sense-data where Bouwsma is seeing finger-tips, nails, veins, etc. When Moore reports of seeing part of the surface, he has an implicit assumption of the distinction between the part of the surface of his hand and his having of certain sense-data. Moore is indecisive here between the two options of what seems to him a common sense view of direct perception of the part of the surface of his hand, and on the other hand his empiricist assumption that the immediate objects of perception can only be ideas or sense-data. He is trying here to reconcile
the two positions to reach an uncomfortable conclusion that visual sense-
data are identical with the part of the surface of his hand. But is such
reconciliation possible? We find that it is not.

To make our point clear we will attempt to visualise Moore’s
argument. We are inclined to believe that Moore’s reasoning goes thus:
starting with a common sense premise, Moore begins with the statement
that our perception is partial, i.e. we do not see the whole of a thing in our
perception. Thus in his example, we are not seeing the whole hand but only
a part of its surface. And this is ‘a natural view to take’. But then he goes
on to reflect on the issue, and the problem becomes philosophical. That is,
the next stage of his argument is based on a certain philosophical
presupposition. It is that mind can directly apprehend only its own ideas—
sense-data in Moore’s case. And if so, how can these ideas be identical
with the part of the surface of the hand. Thus common sense gives the
‘direction’ of looking at ‘one’s own right hand’, while Lockean empiricism
allows one to ‘pick out’ only his own sense-data.

Thus, while we agree with Bouwsma that Moore’s direction for picking out
sense-data are not clear; we differ from him in not considering it to be a
trivial issue of simply giving certain directions clearly, but an important
issue having deep epistemological roots in Lockean empiricism. What
appears to be a simple issue of clarity of language is actually a complicated
issue of viewing sense-experience in terms of sense-data. And this is the
reason why Moore’s doubt does not seem to be resolvable. For as we have seen, it is anchored to two incompatible points. One, the common sense view of perception as a direct apprehension of material things and, two, the Lockean acceptance of mind-body dualism with the supposition that mind can know only its own ideas. And Moore’s answer to Bouwsma’s criticism partly vindicates our claim when he accepts that his doubt is a philosophical doubt and no empirical observation can solve it.

At this point, we would like to make some observations. In this paper, we find that Moore makes it an open question whether sense-datum of a material thing is or is not that part of its surface which one really sees. However, he adds: “...the analysis of the proposition ‘This is a human hand’ is, roughly at least, of the form ‘There is a thing, and only one thing, of which it is true both that it is a human hand and that this surface is a part of its surface’.... I hold it to be quite certain that I do not directly perceive my hand; and that when I am said (as I may be correctly said) to ‘perceive’ it, that I ‘perceive’ it means that I perceive (in a different and more fundamental sense) something which is (in a suitable sense) representative of it, namely, a certain part of its surface.”

In case of Moore, therefore, one thing is quite clear—one thing which he holds throughout his writings—that material things can only be

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known and analysed in terms of sense-data. That material things can only
be indirectly apprehended. In the above passage, hence he advocates some
kind of representative character of sense-data unlike his previous
interpretation of sense-data as parts of the surfaces of material things.

In fact, as we have indicated earlier Moore says that he is quite
indecisive regarding the correct analysis of the relation between sense-data
and material things and we tried to analyse the reason behind this
indecisiveness. He wavers between the three possible alternatives that may
be considered in their analysis.

Moore defines material thing "...as something that (1) does occupy
space; (2) is not a sense-datum of any kind whatever and (3) is not a mind,
nor an act of consciousness."82 We find that Moore faces the same
problem that pricks all philosophers who begin their search for knowledge
from a kind of experience which consists merely of subjective ideas.
Therefore though Moore claims to accept the reality of material things he is
unable to go beyond the circle of his own ideas or what he terms sense-
data. Like Locke, Moore accepts that the knowledge of material objects can
only be through indirect perception. It is never direct.

In case of A.J.Ayer too the similar problem remains. However,
unlike Moore, he denies material substance and claims that the problem of

82 G.E. Moore, "Material Things", Some Main Problems of Philosophy, London:
perception is basically a linguistic question. We will examine this claim of Ayer's in our next chapter. As we have pointed out earlier, Moore is talking in terms of what Carnap called the material mode of speech, unlike Ayer who confines himself to formal mode of speech. Thus, Moore distinguishes between sense-data and material things. For, a material thing occupies space and is distinct from mind, consciousness and sense-data. But how does he know that there is material thing different from sense-data when our perception consists merely of sense-data and when experience is the only source of knowledge. Moore says that we know material thing whenever we 'see' some sense-data and 'believe' that there is something more than the sense-data that we perceive. But how do we know that there is 'something more' than sense-data when all we see is only sense-data? Obviously, it is not through sense-experience so far as Moore's argument goes. Is this then, an intuitive belief? Moore is hesitant to take a decision.

As we stated earlier, we distinguish between what a philosopher claims to be doing and what he is actually doing. We have pointed out earlier in this chapter that Moore does this in two ways: First, he arbitrarily defines certain things to be of a particular nature and then on the basis of the same definition he draws his conclusion. We find that while, on the one hand, this procedure shows Moore's concern for clarity. On the other hand, as we will try to show, it leads to some kind of circular argument, that is, he takes for granted what he undertakes to prove. Another point is that
since the way in which Moore defines some concepts, like for instance, common sense, perception, etc., the conclusions reached by him are flawed on account of the faulty premises.

Second, he has given those criteria of common sense which he himself does not follow. This he does, we will try to show, by making significant ‘addition’, in violation of his own parameters, to the beliefs of common sense. We will attempt to highlight this issue in our next section.

At present, we will see how Moore uses these two procedures while giving the proof for an external world. In “Proof of an External World” (1939) Moore claims to prove the existence of a physical object thus: “Consider any kind of thing, such that anything of that kind, if there is anything of it, must be ‘to be met with in space’: e.g. consider the kind ‘soap-bubble’. If I say of anything which I am perceiving, ‘That is a soap-bubble’, I am, it seems to me, certainly implying that there would be no contradiction in asserting that it existed before I perceived it and that it will continue to exist, even if I cease to perceive it. This seems to me to be part of what is meant by saying that it is a real soap-bubble, as distinguished, for instance, from an hallucination of a soap-bubble.”

Here Moore first makes a distinction between ‘presented in space’ and ‘to be met with in space’; pointing out that the latter is the criterion for

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marking out a physical reality. Thus things like after-images, bodily pains are ones ‘presented in space’. They are not ‘met with in space’. This means that they do not have objectivity i.e. they cannot be perceived by everyone, e.g., as Moore suggests, there is “an absurdity in supposing that anyone of the after-images which I saw could also have been seen by anyone else: in supposing that two different people can ever see the very same after-image.” Moore says that when he is trying to prove the existence of material things; what he is trying to prove is with regards to the things ‘which are to be met with in space.’ Thus he asserts: My body, the bodies of other men, the bodies of animals, plants of all sorts, stones, mountains, the sun, the moon, stars and planets, houses and other buildings, manufactured articles of all sorts—chairs, tables, pieces of paper, etc., are all of them ‘things which are to be met with in space.’ In short, all things of the sort that philosophers have been used to call ‘physical objects’, ‘material things’, or ‘bodies’ obviously come under this head.

However, we find, that Moore uses the phrase ‘to be met with in space’ in a wider sense to include shadows also. About the above mentioned things Moore says that he is “so using ‘things to be met with in

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85 Ibid., p.132.
86 Ibid., p.130.
space' that, in the case of each of these kinds of 'things', from the proposition that there are 'things' of that kind it follows that there are things to be met with in space: for example, from the proposition that there are plants or that plants exist it follows that there are things to be met with in space....”

Now Moore argues that any such thing that must be 'met with in space' can be said to have existed before anyone perceived and which will continue to exist even if no one perceives it. Thus a thing which is to be 'met with in space' is *logically independent* of anyone's perception, for example soap-bubble. It is physical object and is independent of anybody's perception. "That is to say, from the proposition with regard to anything which I am perceiving that it is a soap-bubble, there follows the proposition that it is external to *my* mind." Moore argues further that from the implication that it is external to my mind another implication follows, i.e. it is external to all other minds. Thus he concludes that "from any proposition of the form 'There's a soap-bubble!' there does really follow the proposition 'There is an external object!' ". Similarly, "if I can prove that there exist now both a sheet of paper and a human hand, I shall have

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88 Ibid., p. 145.
89 Ibid.
proved that there are now ‘things outside of us’…”

We find that Moore’s reasoning runs thus. From the proposition that there is any particular instance of material things, say, soap-bubble, it follows that there are things to be met with in space. Now, things to be met with in space have to be logically independent of anyone’s perception. Thus they are external to minds. If any particular instances of such things can be given; it will be proved that there are things outside of us, that is, things to be met with in space. And in this way Moore claims that he has proved the existence of material things.

Here too, we find that Moore assumes what he has to prove. First he identifies material things with things to be met with in space. Then he makes it the part of the meaning of ‘things to met with in space’ that they are independent of our perception and that they are external to us. And then on the basis of this meaning of such things he concludes that the material things exist.

Moore finally goes on give a rigorous proof for the existence of material things, using his technique of considering particular instances: “I can prove now, for instance that two human hands exist. How? By holding up my two hands, and saying, as I make a certain gesture with the right hand, ‘Here is one hand’, and adding, as I make a certain gesture with the

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left, ‘and here is another’."91

Moore says that he has proved the existence of two external things thus and his proof is "a perfectly rigorous one".92 It is rigorous proof since it satisfies all the three required conditions, namely, (1) premise is different from conclusion; (2) I know the premise to be true; (3) conclusion really follows from the premise.

First, while the conclusion is merely ‘two human hands exist at this moment’; the premise is something more specific like showing two hands, making certain gestures, and saying ‘Here is one hand and here’s another’. Thus the premise is different from the conclusion. Second, I know it that there was one hand at a particular place and another hand at a different place. Third the conclusion did follow from the premises. Moore proves in similar way the existence of things in the past: "Here is one proof I can say: “I held up two hands above this desk not very long ago; therefore two hands existed not very long ago; therefore at least two external objects have existed at some time in the past, Q.E.D".93

Moore concludes the paper by saying that "I can know things, which I cannot prove..."94 On the contrary we find that Moore is trying to prove

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92 Ibid., p.146.
93 Ibid., p.148.
94 Ibid., p.150.
the existence of things which he cannot know given the veil of sense-data.

Referring to Moore’s “Proof of an External World”, Alice Ambrose makes three points. We find it relevant to consider those points here. First, she asserts: "Now the sceptic requires a proof of what Moore has not tried to prove, namely, the premise, ‘Here is a hand,’ because he considers that its truth cannot, as Moore claims be known, any more than the truth of what follows from it. Moore’s proof will not answer the sceptic if the latter is as ready to question the truth of such premises as that of the conclusion, and if, as the sceptic certainly would hold, it is the truth of such premises about which he is in doubt."95 Another point that Ambrose makes is: “The kind of argument Moore gives by way of an answer indicated that he supposes the sceptic to be in fact doubting whether there is an external world. He produces empirical evidence which if conclusive should dispel that doubt."96 To this assertion, Ambrose adds another observation that the sceptic "would preclude the information given by all the senses together from constituting testimony sufficient for proof, so that there would be no such thing as sufficient evidence in comparison of which the testimony of any one sense would be incomplete evidence. This is why any attempt at ‘proof’ by appeal to the senses will be unacceptable."97

96 Ibid., p.404.
97 Ibid., p.400.
Here we would like to point out that we do not agree with Ambrose’s assessment of Moore’s problem. First, unlike Ambrose, we do not think that when Moore goes on to give a proof of the external world he is at all thinking of the sceptic’s challenge. As he himself asserts at so many places, such beliefs as these are considered to be self-evident by common sense. It is only about the correct analysis of such statements that Moore has doubts and only in this regard the sceptic’s challenge has any meaning for Moore. For we think that this can be seen as an attempt on the part of Moore at reestablishing the efficacy of senses in the acquisition of truth. And here Moore is doing the same kind of work that Locke did to establish the importance of sense-based knowledge against the background of Cartesian argument of ‘deception by the senses’.

We are inclined to believe that the sceptic’s challenge, as it stands against Moore’s philosophy, and one which Moore might have liked to answer, is not an outsider’s challenge. That is, it is not a challenge by some one who says that no knowledge is possible at all. It is rather, an insider’s challenge, a challenge within the empiricist barracks, coming in the form of sceptical Humean argument that if knowledge by senses is knowledge by ideas, any knowledge of the external world is logically impossible.

The real problem here is not just, as Ambrose says, that “both are in
possession of precisely the same information" which one is accepting and another is denying. The main problem here is that both sceptic and the gnostic hold that all knowledge is knowledge through ideas. Therefore, we can never penetrate the veil of ideas to find out the nature of reality. For an empiricist such position might have meant only a subjective idealist ontology, however for Moore, who claims to uphold common sense as well as empiricism, the problem is more severe, that of inconsistency.

Replying to O.K. Bouwsma's remark in his article in _The Philosophy of GE Moore_, Moore says that he "certainly never did refuse, nor intended to refuse, to call directly apprehended smells, tastes, and sounds 'sense-data'; and I have always held that there were sense-data". But Moore still considers it a sufficient condition for an object to be called sense-data that it is directly apprehended. However it is not a necessary condition that it should be directly apprehended. As he says: "I think I have always both used, and intended to use, 'sense-datum' in such a sense that the mere fact that an object is directly apprehended is a sufficient condition for saying that it is a sense-datum." Within this meaning thus, an after-image as well as "some physical realities (including physical sounds and physical surfaces) are directly apprehended".

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100 Ibid.

101 Ibid., p 643.
Common sense, empiricism and perception

In this section, we will try to examine Moore's view on perception in the light of his common sense position. Moore's espousal of common sense is as central to understanding his problem of perception as is his empiricist legacy. We will try to show that Moore's hesitancy about the correct analysis of perception has important roots in his claim for common sense coupled with an implicit acceptance of the empiricist notion of 'idea' and a view of substance similar to that accepted by Locke.

We will begin with Moore's claim that he is upholding a common sense position. It is widely believed that Moore is an upholder of common sense. Philosophers like Warnock consider him to be "a quite new kind of important philosopher" who finds common sense view of the world to be "perfectly unsurprising, undisturbing, quite certainly true." Though we agree with Warnock that Moore brought common sense, as he understood it, to the centrestage of philosophy by not only making knowledge derived through common sense a worthwhile pursuit in philosophy but also making it the yardstick for judging the truth of a philosophical theory. However, we do not think this was something new that Moore did. The question of the relation of philosophy to science and common sense has always

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attracted philosophers' attention. And the underlying debate on the question of perception is one of reconciling science and common sense; or as Ryle puts it, about the relation "between 'the desk of Physics' and the desk on which we write."\textsuperscript{103} His espousal of empiricism which can be traced from Descartes and Locke causes an inconsistency in his position and despite all his claim to the contrary his philosophy deviates much from common sense. Thus he has nothing new to say on the issue of perception that was not said or implied earlier. So part of Warnock's assertion is correct in that Moore really did not find common sense position 'surprising'. However part of what Warnock says about Moore is incorrect since the latter found it quite 'disturbing' to hold both common sense position and his views on perception together.

Another point is, common sense position, as generally understood, is something akin to naive realism but Moore's position on perception is inconsistent with naive realism. What we are implying here is that we do not consider consistency to be the sole criterion for judging a philosophical system. However, this inconsistency does imply that Moore himself is not following those rules of common sense that he delineates as early as 1910 in his paper "What is Philosophy?" (1910) and later in his "A Defence of Common Sense" (1925). Thus Moore's stand, we find, does not come up to his own yardstick. Moore, as he accepts, wavers between the

three alternative analyses of perception.

Some of the philosophers who have commented on Moore have accused Moore of never explaining what he meant by common sense. C.D.Broad, for instance, says that “Moore does not attempt to define the word ‘common sense’.”¹⁰⁴ Lynd Ferguson says that Moore “did not anywhere attempt to give a general characterization of the ‘certain fundamental features’ of the common-sense view...”¹⁰⁵ This however, is not true. In fact, much before his “A Defence of Common Sense”(1925) Moore points out the basic features of what he called a common sense view in 1910 in his article “What is Philosophy”. Here apart from explaining what he means by common sense, he delineates the different ways in which philosophers make important departure from a common sense position by either contradicting its beliefs or by adding something important to its beliefs or by doing both.

Here Moore defines common sense view thus: “There are ,it seems to me certain views about the nature of the Universe, which are held, now-a-days, by almost everybody. They are so universally held that they may, I think, fairly be called the views of Common Sense....it has , I think very definite views to the effect that certain kinds of things certainly are in the

Universe and as to some of the ways in which these kinds of things are related to one another."\textsuperscript{106}

Thus according to Moore, the common sense views are those (1) which are held universally, i.e. by almost everyone, (2) they are about the nature of the universe or we can say, about the things that exist in the universe and (3) these views also relate to the way in which things are interrelated as understood by everybody.

We find that whenever Moore talks of common sense view he always has either of these three things in mind:

First, these are some "views about the nature of the universe"\textsuperscript{107} or the views about the \textit{substantial} nature of the world, in the sense of what are the substantial kinds of things in the universe and how they are interrelated. The principal criteria here for judging their truth are their ‘universality’ and their ‘definiteness’. Moore delineates here three ways in which some philosophers have deviated from the common sense position on the issue by holding certain views about the substantial nature of the universe that either add something new to or contradict common sense. These are: first, they add something significant to the common sense view, i.e., they recommend the existence of some substantial kinds of thing or things over


\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., p.2.
and above what is held by common sense. Second, they positively contradict some views of common sense like, for instance, the view that we do not know whether there exist any material objects at all; or that there may be other minds and material things in the universe but we cannot know it. Moore calls these the sceptical views.108 Third, there are those which both add to as well as contradict common sense view. For instance, those positively denying space, material things and those positively denying many other things. Under this category Moore considers views like those which "begin by considering "the Appearances of material objects.""109 Moore, at this point, accommodates the views that analyse the universe in terms of the relation between sense data and material things, within the definition of those philosophical positions that according to him do not either add to or contradict the views of common sense. Thus he goes on to delineate two views which he considers to be quite consistent with common sense. Like for instance the view that these appearances are not in space, they exist only so long as they appear to someone. Or that some of the appearances are really 'parts of the surfaces of the objects'110: are really situated in space and continue to exist even when we are not conscious of them. Moore concludes that between these views Common

109 Ibid., p.20.
110 Ibid., p.20, n.1.
sense does not pronounce."\textsuperscript{111}

The second thing that Moore implies in taking a common sense position is holding a number of beliefs which he finds commonsensical. Here he gives concrete examples of such beliefs. These examples include among other things, (i) a belief that there are “enormous numbers of material objects”\textsuperscript{112} in the universe, like, our own bodies, bodies of other men, millions of plants and animals, manufactured objects, the earth, the sun and moon and stars. (ii) there are minds with their acts of consciousness, (iii) that there is time, past, present and future, (iv) that there is space, (v) and also, we “believe that we do really know all these things that I have mentioned. We know that there are and have been in the universe the two kinds of things—material objects and acts of consciousness”,\textsuperscript{113} (vi) there are sciences that give us knowledge about particular things, for example, astronomy, physics, chemistry, and social sciences like history, psychology, etc. Moore begins his paper “A Defence of Common Sense” (1925) by listing out propositions under two headings. These propositions, according to him, are “obvious truisms”\textsuperscript{114}. Under heading (1) he lists such propositions as: “There exists at present a living human body, which is my body. This body was born at a certain time in the past, and has existed continuously ever since ... at every moment

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., p.2.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., p.12.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p.32.
since it was born, there have also existed many other things, having shape and size in three dimensions...many of these bodies have already died and ceased to exist. But the earth had existed also for many years before my body was born....I am a human being, and I have, at different times since my body was born, had many different experiences, of each of many different kinds...." As is clear from this definition, Moore is not freed from the Cartesian assumption of the separation of Mind and Body. Therefore, he talks in terms of his body being born as something separate. Here we find that though Moore is talking of common sense beliefs, he ignores the point that in our ordinary common sense belief we do not separate mind and body in this way. As we have pointed out earlier, because of his Cartesian legacy and his acceptance of empiricism, Moore could not conceive of a common sense position which could transcend his epistemological and ontological presuppositions. Under heading (2) Moore includes similar propositions having reference to ‘each of us’. Moore asserts that “...each of us (meaning by ‘us’, very many human beings of the class defined) has frequently known, with regard to himself or his body, and the time at which he knew it, everything which, in writing down my list of propositions in (1), I was claiming to know about myself or my body....” Moore claims that all the propositions listed above are “wholly true”.

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116 Ibid., p.34.
117 Ibid., p.36.
Thus Moore maintains that he believes in the truth of such propositions that assert the existence of material things. But he is "very sceptical as to what, in certain respects, the correct analysis of such propositions is." As we examined in the previous section, Moore believes that any correct analysis of such propositions about material things must be in terms of sense-data which are the objects of direct apprehension. That is, Moore being an empiricist believes that the experience is the most basic source of knowledge and all other sources of knowledge are dependent on it. Because of this belief the sense-data wield a very important position in Moore's epistemology. And Moore, like Locke, is facing the same problem but in a different way. What in the case of Locke became an ontological question of the nature of material substance and the accompanying question of our knowledge of material objects given the 'circle of ideas' that one cannot transcend; in the case of Moore, the same problem, within an analytical framework, becomes one of giving a correct analysis of the propositions about material objects. And this is why, even when Moore is definite about the fact that material objects can be only indirectly apprehended, he remains basically indecisive about the correct nature of our apprehension of material objects. And this question which has a definite epistemological and ontological root, becomes a question about 'the correct analysis' of propositions regarding material things. At this point, Paul Marhenke intervenes. He queries: "What are we to understand

by 'the correct analysis' of propositions such as 'This is a cigarette'? Moore leaves this question, a rather crucial one, unanswered, or at least he never answers it explicitly. Now an analysis can obviously not get under way until we have specified the conditions to which the analysis must conform. And unless these conditions are specified it is impossible to determine whether the proposed analysis is correct or incorrect." 119 As we have stated earlier, the problem in the case of Moore is not simply one of giving the rules for a correct analysis. It has deeper roots in his ontological and epistemological presuppositions which are implicit in his philosophy. Though in his Reply to Marhenke and others Moore specifies what he means by analysis and asserts that it is the analysis of concepts and propositions; but the very fact that a proposition about a material thing like, e.g., 'this is human hand' perplexes him, is a sufficient evidence that what seems to be an analytical problem here has deeper roots. The problem remains intractable even when Moore considers as a possible alternative a view that he calls 'naive realism', i.e. visual sense-data are identical with the parts of the surface of material things. We do not think that this position is naive realistic because here also the surface of the martial objects acts as a veil between sense-data and material objects.

The third important point about Moore's common sense position is that he uses common sense as a method or yardstick for judging a

philosophical proposition. In this sense, it is, for Moore the most natural view to take while dealing with any problem, i.e. ‘the most obviously logical view’, that can claim a universal appeal in the sense that it looks the natural view to everybody who thinks hard on the issue. Here, what Warnock termed as the Lockean influence of groping in one’s mind for an answer is evident. Here we may point to Malcolm’s criticism of Moore. Malcolm describes how we generally use the word common sense: (a) As “the obvious conclusion”120 and in this sense it has nothing to do with the views about universe or with the belief that there are enormous number of material things. (b) That a common sense judgment is a sensible judgment. (C) “...to say that it is ‘a common sense view’ that there are an enormous number of material objects in the universe is to violate the ordinary use of the expression ‘common sense’.”121 (d) On Moore’s common sense beliefs he says: “…all of them are queer sentences.”122 He also asks “When would you seriously say it to someone?”123 He adds that “Moore’s list of ‘common sense views’ is an odd assortment.”124 At this point Findlay remarks:“...What Moore puts into this common-sense view is not anything and everything...but matters concerning instances of what may be called

121 Ibid., p.40.
122 Ibid., p.41.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., 43.
the main categories of existent things and their essential properties and relationships, matters whose acknowledgement is so wrought into, so presupposed by, organized discourse that such discourse is largely disrupted by their denial."\textsuperscript{125} He also adds that "Malcolm has of course admitted that his whole interpretation was a ‘theory’, based, it seems clear, on a conflation of Moore with Wittgenstein."\textsuperscript{126}

We agree with the observation made by Malcolm that Moore’s explicit assertion on direct perception of material things versus his implicit denial of such direct perception go together, for example in “A Defence of Common Sense” he says, “I have often perceived both my own body and other things which form part of its environment, including other human bodies; I have not only perceived things of this kind, but have also observed facts about them, such as, for instance, the fact which I am now observing, that that mantle-piece is at present nearer to my body than that book case.”\textsuperscript{127} Or, “I, personally, have in fact often seen pennies and often seen the moon, and so have many other people.”\textsuperscript{128} This acceptance goes together with his belief that we never directly apprehend material things.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
Malcolm further remarks: "I believe that Moore's misnamed 'defence of common sense' was a philosophical step of first importance. Its effect is to alter one's conception of the nature of philosophy and thereby to change one's philosophical practice."\(^{129}\) Malcolm rather extols: "...the soundness of More's defence of ordinary language."\(^{130}\)

Our main concern here will be only this—whether Moore himself follows the rules set by him. We will examine to what extent we can accept Moore's claim that he is upholding a common sense position. This claim of Moore has been generally supported by indicating that he accepts the existence of certain things whose existence common sense finds indubitable. It is also claimed that Moore has put forward some propositions whose truth common sense cannot deny. We will attempt to examine this claim too. In fact even before Moore there have been philosophers who claimed to uphold common sense position. Even Berkeley claims to have taken a common sense position and wonders what inclined "the men of speculation to embrace an opinion so remote from common sense"\(^{131}\) while criticizing the notion of abstract ideas. And he then gone on to refute material substance insisting that by *body* every

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\(^{130}\) Ibid., p.52.

plain ordinary person means "that which is immediately seen and felt, which is only a combination of sensible qualities or ideas..."\textsuperscript{132}

This brief exposition brings to light at least two things. First, that Moore is not unaware of the discrepancies which an introduction of sense-data might have occasioned. Second, by giving these criteria Moore is, perhaps, trying to preempt any future objection occasioned by the introduction of sense data as the immediate objects of perception. As we indicated earlier, here too Moore uses the technique of first defining a concept in a particular way and then using the same definition as a benchmark to support his theory. Our study finds support for the view of Alice Ambrose in this regard that "some of the views which go beyond Common Sense Moore is not concerned to attack, and in fact certain of his own accounts of what there is in the Universe certainly are of this kind."\textsuperscript{133} However we have some reservations regarding her view that Moore really defends common sense.

The question arises then, does Moore himself apply the criterion of common sense when he addressees the question of perception. In fact, in talking about theories which either add to or contradict common sense view or do both, Moore points out to those theories which both add to and


contradict common sense view and which, in this way, "depart much further from Common Sense"\textsuperscript{134}; and while describing these views, we find that he seeks justification for his view on sense-data by stressing that the theories which deny the existence of material things and space, certainly deviate from common sense; but if they begin by talking of appearance of material things and hold either that these appearances are "parts of the surfaces of the objects"\textsuperscript{135} or that they exist only "so long as they appear to someone"\textsuperscript{136}, they are not at all deviating from common sense as he asserts that between these views common sense does not have any choice.

Thus before embarking on issues related to sense data in a detailed manner in his \textit{Some Main Problems of Philosophy}, Moore justifies his stand on the issue by indicating that philosophers talking in terms of sense data are not talking nonsense; rather what they hold is quite consistent with common sense once they grant, even if verbally, that there exist material things in space.

In the second part of his exposition of what is meant by common sense view, Moore gives concrete examples of common sense examples which he considers to be having 'certain fundamental features' of common

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., p.20,n 1.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.,p.20.
sense. Here, too, he defines these fundamental features in such a way which he can use to support the claim of his so called common sense proposition. He says: "...if we know that they are features in the 'Common Sense View of the World', it follows that they are true: it is self contradictory to maintain that we know them to be features in the Common Sense view, and that yet they are not true: since to say that we know this, is to say that are true. And many of them also have the further peculiar property that if they are features in the Common Sense view of the world (whether 'we' know this or not), it follows that they are true.\textsuperscript{137}

III

Interpreting Moore

Moore’s philosophy has been interpreted by his commentators in various ways. He has been, first of all, and most generally, interpreted as a defender of common sense. For instance, Morris Lazerowitz says that Moore brought philosophers "down to the earth of Common Sense."\textsuperscript{138} Leonard Wolf says that Moore answered our queries with "the more divine voice of plain common-sense."\textsuperscript{139} Malcolm, though giving a very different


interpretation of Moore's common sense, admitted that the thing "... that stands out most prominently for me is his so-called 'Defence of Common Sense'. I suspect that if Moore is remembered in the history of philosophy it will be because of this theme embedded in his philosophical thought. It was not there nearly as an implicit assumption. He made it an explicit principle of his philosophy." 140 Alice Ambrose says that Moore's "refutation of other views about the Universe are intended to leave the field to Common Sense." 141

Another interpretation of Moore makes him defend the ordinary language. For instance, Mundie says: "It is not difficult to see how his philosophical practice, as distinct from his conception of philosophy, encouraged others to conclude that the subject-matter of philosophy is ordinary language." 142 Lazerowitz states that Moore brought "philosophical talk into connection with ordinary language". 143 Malcolm refers to "...the soundness of Moore's defence of ordinary language." 144 Alice Ambrose says that the defence of common-sense had as a by-product "a defence of

The linguistic interpretation of Moore even goes to the extent of tracing the origins of linguistic philosophy from Moore. Lazerowitz for example, points out: “Indeed, it is not too much to say that after Moore the only direction in which philosophy could go was towards linguistic analysis.” Lazerowitz even points out that Moore himself accepted in front of him the linguistic interpretation of Malcolm. As he recounts: “There has been disagreement in recent years over whether the linguistic interpretation of Moore’s defence of common sense is correct. I might say in the course of a philosophical discussion in Cambridge Moore told me that he accepted the interpretation Norman Malcolm placed on his defence in ‘Moore and Ordinary Language’....(Moore) thought that the account which made him out to be correcting philosophers’ mistaken ideas about usage was correct.” He concludes: “After Moore it was a natural step to proceed from the notion that a false philosophical theory is one which misdescribes actual usage to the notion that a true philosophical theory is one which correctly describes usage. The whole of philosophy becomes linguistic in character. Thus Wittgenstein in the Yellow Book speaks of the

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147 Ibid., p.109.
'confusion which considers a philosophical problem as though such a problem concerned a fact of the world instead of a matter of expression.'

Another interpretation tracing Moore's idealistic lineage from Bradley and McTaggart, takes into account his earlier writings. For instance, Ryle points out that till 1903 Moore was espousing a position that was typically Bradleian. In his article "Freedom" (1898), Ryle points out, Moore remains "an outspoken Bradleian on the unreality of time..." Thomas Baldwin too points to such association when he states: "In fact, as Moore also acknowledges, McTaggart soon exerted a powerful influence on Moore, so much so that Moore's first published paper is a defence of the unreality of time." Paul Levy, referring to a paper entitled "What is Matter?" read by Moore on June 1, 1895, says: "This paper was a landmark in Moore's philosophical development for in it he abandoned the 'Lucretian' materialism to which he felt drawn in his years as a classical scholar for 'such poor idealistic system as I can construct in its place.'

Mundie also points out: "Moore's early work (1897-1902), which is

commonly ignored by others as it was later by himself, belongs to the Idealist tradition of dogmatic metaphysics. In his first paper, ‘In What Sense, if Any, Do Past and Future Time Exist?’ (Mind, 1897), Moore defended Bradley’s view that time is unreal. In ‘The Nature of Judgement’ (Mind, 1899), Moore claimed that everything that exists is fully composed of what he called ‘adjectival concepts’, entities which (he assumed) have an objective existence and, like Plato’s Forms, are eternal and unchangeable.”

We would like to point out that we take a different approach in understanding Moore’s philosophy in trying to study his view of perception within the framework of his epistemology and ontology, both implicit as well as explicit. As we have discussed earlier Moore is an empiricist who follows Locke in accepting the independent existence of external material world. His philosophy contains the elements of both Descartes’ and Locke’s philosophy, and the problem of perception in the form in which he tries to solve it has important roots in the philosophies of these two above-mentioned philosophers.

Let us be clear about one thing before proceeding further. The explicit elements and aims of his philosophy may not be very similar to those of Descartes and Locke. The reason is: both Descartes and Locke

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aimed at certainty of knowledge in philosophy and were talking in terms of knowledge, reality and truth. Whereas Moore is talking in terms of clarity of concepts and is more concerned with what do concepts and propositions mean. However, this concern of Moore has deeper roots in Cartesian-Lockean philosophy. He accepts Descartes’ division of substances into mental and material on the one hand and Locke’s empiricism on the other. What he calls sense-data are nothing but Locke’s simple ideas and Locke’s assumption that “in bare naked perception, the mind is, for the most part, only passive; and what it perceives, it cannot avoid perceiving.” The most crucial is his acceptance of Locke’s application of Cartesian dualism in the acquisition of knowledge by perception; a fact whose tacit acceptance made the correct analysis of perception all the more problematic for Moore. We may recall here the Lockean assertion: “These are two very different things, and carefully to be distinguished: it being one thing to perceive and know the idea of white or black, and quite another to examine what kind of particles they may be and how ranged in the superficies, to make any object appear white or black.” Here, as is evident, Locke is referring to the divide between the scientific view and the common sense view on perception. The supposition that these are ‘two’

154 Ibid., p.102.
different views, the scientific view as it is, standing in contrast, is what makes the question of perception problematic. It underlies the idea that common sense view or, in any case, generally accepted view (in the way empiricists held perception to be in terms of ideas) is challenged by the scientific view in terms of real properties of things. A supposition that ignores the dynamic interrelation of appearance and reality in the formation of our conception of material things and their properties.

It is generally believed that Locke upholds common sense. In any case, his acceptance of the reality of external material things and their qualities does amount to the acceptance of common sense against philosophical scepticism as it was posed by Descartes in the form of deception by the senses. Moore's common sense, in a similar way emerges as a reply against the Bradleyian and McTaggartian idealism that questions the reality of time, space and matter; a view close to Moore's heart in his early brush with philosophy. However, as we have stated earlier, we are confining ourselves to his realist phase starting from his "The Refutation of Idealism" (1903) and lasting till his last paper "Visual Sense-data".

Then comes his acceptance of Cartesian dualism of mind and matter. This he does not present as an ontological doctrine; however he tacitly accepts it in his writings and even makes it a major plank of our common sense beliefs.

Moore accepts that there are material objects and "also that there are
in the Universe certain phenomena very different from material objects.”

That “we mean, besides having bodies, we also have minds.”

Moore though accepts Cartesian Substances, he gives them a concrete, empiricist structure and talks of particular material things, and minds. In fact, the way he describes what he means by having minds, has the typical empiricist backdrop as well as acceptance of Cartesian cogito as ‘pure consciousness’. As he assets, “...one of the chief things which we mean, by saying we have minds, is, I think, this: namely, that we perform certain mental acts or acts of consciousness. That is to say, we see and hear and feel and remember and imagine and think and believe and desire and like and dislike...”

Moore’s acceptance of Cartesian dualism is linked to his empiricist stand, and his claim for common sense. Thus while explaining how material things are related to acts of consciousness he says: “We believe, I think, that our acts of consciousness—all those which we perform, so long as we are alive—are attached to our bodies, in the sense that they occur in the same places in which our bodies are.”

As is clear Moore’s view is pluralistic and he accepts an external relation between mind and body. Thus Cartesian dualism is put within a pluralistic, empiricist framework, as

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156 Ibid., 1969,
157 Ibid.
158 Ibid., p.6.
Moore says: “And when, just now, I travelled up to Waterloo by train, I believe that my mind and my acts of consciousness travelled with me. When the train and my body were at Putney, I was thinking and seeing at Putney. When the train and my body reached Clapham Junction, I was thinking and seeing at Clapham Junction.”¹⁵⁹ A similar argument, we find, has been advanced by Locke in Essay: “Everybody finds in himself that his soul can think, will, and operate on his body in the place where that is, but cannot operate on a body, or in a place, an hundred miles distant from it. Nobody can imagine that his soul can think or move a body at Oxford whilst he is at London, and cannot but know that, being united to his body, it constantly changes place all the whole journey between Oxford and London, as the coach or horse does that carries him...”¹⁶⁰

An analysis of knowledge reveals three elements—the subject of knowledge, the object of knowledge and the source of knowledge. While the source of knowledge for Moore is sense experience, what is the nature of subject of knowledge or perception in Moore? The knowing subject in Moore is not a concrete socio-historical being. It is only a conscious subject reminding one of Descartes’ cogito. As he says: “We have then in every sensation two distinct terms, (1) ‘Consciousness’, in respect of which all sensations are alike; and (2) something else, in respect of which one

¹⁶⁰ John Locke, Essay, II xxiii.20, p.255.
sensation differs from another.”\textsuperscript{161} He further says, “...the other element which I have called ‘consciousness’ ...is extremely difficult to fix....we may be convinced that there is something but what it is no philosopher, I think, has yet clearly recognized.”\textsuperscript{162}

What then is the object of knowledge or perception for Moore? Moore asserts that the object and subject of perception are “distinct, that they are \textit{two}, at all.”\textsuperscript{163} He says that the idealists “fail to distinguish between a sensation or idea and what I will call its object.”\textsuperscript{164} The objects of perception for Moore, are sense-data which in turn mean “the colour and size and shape.”\textsuperscript{165}

Thus we find that though Moore claims to take up common sense stand, he is not able to release himself from some of the assumptions of Cartesian dualism that were taken unquestioned by Locke in his empiricism. This leads to inconsistencies in his views and he is not able to give a definite analysis of the nature of perception. However, the acceptance of the view that material things exist independently of the mind makes his position realistic, in spite of his definition of sense-data that is unable to conceal their private nature. Thus the patch of colour, the sense-datum, has to be different

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., p.20.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., p.13.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., p.14.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., p.30.
for the individual viewers depending on "...differences in the strength of your eyes and in your distance from the envelope."\(^{166}\)

In conclusion we might say that Moore’s problem of perception is rooted in the explicit acceptance of a common sense view which demands a naive realistic interpretation of perception, and a tacit belief in the empiricist ‘idea’ as the only immediate objects of perception. As we have tried to show the concept of idea as held by Locke with his acceptance of mind-body dualism, led towards a problem of substance. If all that we know is through ideas the nature of substance cannot come within the compass of knowledge. Thus in Locke, matter was defined as the unknown and unknowable substratum of primary qualities. In Moore’s case the same difficulty leads to a hesitancy about the correct analysis of propositions that referred to material things. And therefore, in our examination of Moore’s perception we have taken into account both his empiricist legacy as well as his claim for common sense. Moore’s position, we have also tried to show, is rooted in the rejection of his own earlier idealistic position and non-acceptance of philosophical scepticism. But the problem is both Moore and the supposed sceptic have only ‘ideas’ as the source of knowledge and this is the reason why it is not possible to reach any definite conclusions about the nature of perception. Thus, Moore with his ammunition of common sense, is warring against his own presumptions.