CHAPTER - III
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If the affinity of the Wittgenstein Of *Tractatus* can be seen with the Russell of logical atomism, the same of the later Wittgenstein can be seen with Moore. It may however sound odd to compare Wittgenstein with Moore, because the philosophical standpoints of the two philosophers are quite apart. While Moore is labelled as a common-sense philosopher, Wittgenstein is best known as an ordinary language analyst. Wittgenstein dealt with the question how is language used ordinarily. With his innovative conceptions of 'language games' and 'forms of life' Wittgenstein brought about a revolution in philosophy of language. But Moore was more interested in constructing metaphysics of the common sense in retaliation to Bradleyan idealism. From one point of view, therefore, Moore may be called a metaphysician and Wittgenstein an anti-metaphysician. But despite these differences in their approaches both the philosophers have certain features in common also.

What Wittgenstein aimed at achieving by analysis of language is dissolution of the big philosophical problems. It is surely the same thing which Moore aimed at much earlier when he said, "I do not think that the world or the sciences would ever have suggested to me any philosophical problems. What has suggested philosophical problems to me is things which other philosophers have said about the world or the sciences."1

Here when he speaks of "other philosophers" he has in mind the idealists. This is clear from his writings to the effect of refuting idealism and
advocating common sense view. In fact Moore tries all his best to demolish the idealistic position.

Moore and Russell, both one-time disciples of the Bradleyan teachings, came out of the tradition in revolt in their own ways. While Russell with a view to rescuing mathematics (for his ardent love for the subject) from the all-engulfing clutch of Neo-Hegelian monism preferred to develop a symbolic language, Moore on the other hand tried his best to disregard idealism in favour of the common sense point of view and the ordinary meaning of language. Moore thought that all the difficulties and disagreements of philosophy were due to our failure to grasp the question that we attempted to answer. And it is for this purpose of clarifying the metaphysical theses first (before attempting to answer them) that Moore was interested in analysing ordinary language. On the whole, he believed it firmly that metaphysical problems, if put in clear terms, all have solutions in the plane of ordinary language. But Wittgenstein studied language from a completely different point of view. He believed that language has a complex functioning, and our failure to understand this gave rise to all philosophical perplexities. And as soon as one mastered over the complex uses of language, the philosophical problems would disappear. So while Moore wanted to solve the problems with reference to ordinary language, Wittgenstein wanted to dissolve them with the help of the same, or a similar, tool. But despite their differences in the end in view, it may not be difficult to find some affinity between the two.

Wittgenstein's insistence on the essentially public character of language and corresponding insistence upon the impossibility of private language, recognition of the use of language as a "form of life" also have the
metaphysical import of "refutation of idealism" of the Cartesian type. Moreover it is not impossible to imagine a link between the Moorean advocacy of common sense and Wittgensteinian preference for ordinary use of language. Hence a look into Moore's rejection of idealism in favour of common sense may not be out of point.

Moore employs two special techniques for attacking Bradley's time honoured idealism. One is his acceptance of common sense, and the other is his emphasis on ordinary meaning of words. The most important formula of idealism "all relations are internal" is severely criticized by both Moore and Russell. Moore holds that this must be false because it flies in the face of common sense.

Moore practises his analysis of language to make a concept more clear and comprehensive. His analysis of language is ordinary language analysis. Moore asserts that his concept of analysis is based on common sense view so that each and every person can comprehend the concept without complexity. He tries to escape from metaphysical sense rooted in the concept through analysis. Analysis of concepts, to Moore, reflects the true picture of language. So, Moore holds that truth or falsity of a concept cannot be evaluated unless the proposition is explained through conceptual analysis. He puts emphasis on ordinary meaning of words while performing analysis of concepts. The objective of analysis, to Moore, is to clarify the concepts which cannot be accomplished through logistic analysis of language. Moore as a pioneer of the ordinary linguistic analysis opines that the meaning of concepts can be defined through analysis so that it comes to light without any interruption. He adduces a model in his philosophy as, Brother=Male sibling. Although the meaning of
the two sides seems to be same, still the difference between the two sides is that the concept (analysandum) has been re-affirmed in the analysans and the latter gives the clarity of the concept. ‘The right hand part is named as analysans, and the left hand side is analysandum’. The analysans shows clearly the un-manifested structure folded in the analysandum. But the former does not focus the explicit structure within. So, Moore puts emphasis on the technique of ordinary language analysis. Anders Wedberg in this context points out that the analysis must have a linguistic structure which is more refined than the logistic structure of the analysans. But Moore anticipates that the analysis of the concept of brother might in the end turn out to be ‘pickwickian’, i.e., the truth of the analysans might be found to say something totally different from what they prima facie seem to say. 2

I

“A Defense of Common Sense” by Moore represents a significant standpoint in the history of philosophy. This essay attempts to refute scepticism by arguing that some of our beliefs about the world are absolutely certain. Moore opines that these beliefs are accepted by common sense. His common sense view can be regarded as a technique or model to formulate the external world. Ammerman in this context mentions that Moore’s defense of common sense view of the world is without doubt a masterpiece of analytic philosophy. Since 1925, when it first appeared, until today philosophers have been impressed, baffled or irritated (frequently all three) at Moore’s unique attempt to establish the truth of certain of our common-sense beliefs, but rather to seek their proper analysis. 3
Moore’s common sense belief shows a number of truisms which are nothing but some conspicuous propositions like “My body has existed continuously on or near the earth, at various distances from or in contact with other existing things, including other living beings,” “I am a human being,” and “My body existed yesterday.” These propositions imply that there are material things, space, time, and other minds. Moore in this context points out that there are some philosophers who have denied the existence of material things, space, time or other minds. And as a result they have failed to apprehend the interaction between the external world and themselves. That is why they have raised doubt about the existence of other minds. In contrast to this Moore’s common sense belief manifests the fact that there are other ‘selves’. Because the existence of external world or other selves are not matter of faith. They are indeed real. Concerning the sceptical doubt in general Moore writes-

“But it seems to me a sufficient refutation of such views as these, simply to point to cases in which we do know such things. This, after all, you know, really is a finger; there is no doubt about it: I know it, and you all know it. And I think we may safely challenge any philosopher to bring forward any argument in favour either of the proposition that we do not know it, or of the proposition that it is not true, which does not at some point, rest upon some premiss which is, beyond comparison, less certain than is the proposition which it is designed to attack.” 4

The common sense view is not technical or complex. It is based on everyday experience. The common sense view like-‘we are in the surface of the Earth’ and there are animals, rivers, mountains etc. are open to all. So, the common sense is a great affront to scepticism. Moore confirms this view
as—"But to speak with contempt of those "common sense beliefs" which I have mentioned is quite certainly the height of absurdity. And there are, of course, enormous number of other features in "the common sense view of the world" which, if these are true, are quite certainly true too, e.g.,—that there have lived upon the surface of the earth not only human beings, but also different species of plants and animals, etc.".  

The principal feature of the common sense view of the world is the belief that there are in the universe enormous number of material objects. Moore does not clearly express what he means by the common sense view. Roughly it means the belief in the existence of human bodies, animals, plants, mountains, stones and grains of sand, minerals, soils, drops of water in rivers and seas, things manufactured by men, such as houses and chairs and tables and railway engines and besides all these things upon the surface of the earth; the earth itself and the Sun and the Moon and the Stars. Every material object, in the common sense view, is situated somewhere or other in space, which means according to Moore, at least that 'each of them is, at any given moment, at some definite distance from all the rest' and that they are distant in some or other of a quite definite set of directions. Every material object is also located in time, in the sense that 'each of them either exists in the past or exists now, or will exist in the future; or else,' as Moore characteristically adds, both did exist at sometime in the past, do exist now, and will exist in the future.

The most important belief in the common sense view is in the acts of consciousness. Although he has not given any explicit definition of it, still he indicates some acts, like hearing, seeing, remembering, feeling, will-
ing, thinking and dreaming. These acts naturally imply that there are acts of consciousness. And these acts are nothing but spatio-temporal phenomena. Moore in this context confirms his view in this way—

‘we all commonly assume that our acts of consciousness take place, at any moment, in the place in which our bodies are at that moment.’

Moore through this above saying asserts that the acts of consciousness are attached to our bodies and points out that the acts of consciousness resides in the body. So, the body is the locus of consciousness.

Moore’s common sense view is not connected with naive–realist view. Because naive-realists ignore the solidarity of knowledge or objectivity of knowledge of things. It lays emphasis on subjectivity of knowledge received directly from sensation. But sensation cannot always provide us true knowledge. Sensation gives us knowledge of the surface of the things. Moore calls it sense-data. So, knowing the surface of the things we cannot claim that we know the things fully and accurately. Wittgenstein also mentions that sensations are private. And none can grasp another person’s sensation. So, Wittgenstein writes—

‘Always get rid of the private object in this way, assume that it constantly changes, but that you do not notice the change because your memory constantly deceives you.’
John Locke’s distinction between primary and secondary qualities also focuses on the subjectivity and objectivity of knowledge of things. His secondary qualities are changing and variable from person to person. So, the qualities of this sort are unable to supply us true knowledge. But primary qualities are different. They are not relative or changing. They remain the same and can provide true knowledge of things. But Berkeley ignores the distinction between the two and rejects the external world. He declares that external world is nothing but a cluster of our ideas. So, Berkeley’s rejection of the external world is a great challenge towards common-sense view.

On the other hand Common sense view holds that there are objectivity of knowledge of things. This brings out the fact that there are things in the world which cannot be overlooked. Things are not just ideas as Berkeley views. Moore’s ‘Defence of Common Sense’ is a reply to those philosophers who reveals their doubt about the existence of the external world.

In order to remove the doubt in the existence of the external world, Moore takes up a new step. Moore points out two important concepts in order to prove the external world through the commonsense view. The first one is, ‘a thing to be met with in space ’ and another is ‘a thing to be presented in space.’ Things like, ‘bodily pains’, ‘double images’, ‘after images’ fall in the later concept. But Moore writes-

“from the fact that a “thing” is presented in space, it by no means follows that it is to be met with in space. But just as the first concep-
tion is, in one respect, wider than the second, so, in another, the second is wider than the first. For there are many "things" to be met with in space; of which it is not true that they are presented in space. From the fact that a "thing" is to be met with in space, it by no means follows that it is presented in space. I have taken 'to be met with in space' to imply, as I think it naturally may, that a "thing" might be perceived; but from the fact that a thing might be perceived, it does not follow that it is perceived; and if it is not actually perceived, then it will not be presented in space."12

In this context Kant makes clear the point that the conception of 'things' which are to be met with in space includes not only objects of actual experience but also objects of possible experience. Kant's view is that the conception - 'empirically external' is identical with the conception 'to be met with in space'.

Immanuel Kant mentions that we must accept the existence of the external world. If we have doubt pertaining to the external world, we can never be able to prove its existence. Doubt always leads to a doubt and never can end an issue. So, he holds a crucial issue and which is still on going in philosophy.

Wittgenstein too in his earlier philosophy replies to the sceptic's doubt regarding the existence of the external world. He writes,
“Scepticism is not irrefutable, but obviously non-sensical, when it tries to raise doubts where no questions can be asked. For doubt can exist only where a question exists, a question only where an answer exists, and an answer only where something can be said.”

Therefore, Wittgenstein critically shows that sceptic’s doubt about the possibility of the external world cannot be entertained. Doubt imparts a question in our mind and the later implies an answer.

So, he says—

“It is not matter of Moore’s knowing that there is hand here, but rather we should not understand him when he says ‘of course I may be wrong about this.’ We should not ask ‘what is it like to make such a mistakes as that?’ What is it like to discover that it was a mistake?”

Hence it is evident that it is not the case that there is a hand. Rather it is a belief of common sense. It needs no proof. So, Moore’s defence of common sense is indeed a technique or strategy to bring out the living picture of the world.

II

Moore’s ‘Refutation of Idealism’ is a specimen of philosophical dispute between idealism and realism which was published in ‘Mind’ 1903. It is a clear answer to idealists who assert that reality is spiritual. Idealists hold that the whole universe possesses different qualities, but all the different quali-
ties are guided by an intelligent Being, which is spirit-oriented. Therefore, idealists assert that nothing is unconscious in this world. So, they hold that the reality behind the whole universe is spiritual. Idealists think that there is a telos or purpose behind the evolution of the universe. That is to apprehend the spirit within. But this purpose to them is not mechanical or artificial. Every living being or non-living being possesses a spirit, and can realise the power within.

Moore views that the premise 'esse est percipi' is not an adequate formula for explaining the external world. The meaning of 'esse' is existence and the meaning of 'percipi' is perception. So, the meaning of the whole sentence 'esse est percipi' is whatever is, is experienced, or existence is perception. Moore says-

'I believe that every argument ever used to show that reality is spiritual has inferred this (validly or invalidly) from 'esse est percipi' as one of its premises; and that this again has never been pretended to be proved except by the use of the premise that esse is percipi.'

Moore is not satisfied about the literal meaning of the premise 'esse is percipi' because sometimes we admit the existence of things that we cannot perceive. Perceptual knowledge gives us only the surface knowledge of external objects, which are not always the real things. As for instance, we cannot perceive germs of a disease, but it is possible to see them if we perceive through a microscope. So, realists put utmost importance on independent
existence of things. Moore claims that if the premise-‘esse est percipi’ cannot do the service properly, the whole idealistic formula will be an empty supposition. Hence he goes for an analysis of this fundamental thesis of idealism. Moore opines that the terms involved in the premise ‘esse est percipi’ are ambiguous. First the term ‘percipi’ can be used in different senses: in the sense of sensation which is a form of consciousness. But, Moore says, the term ‘percipi’ also can be used in the sense of thought. Both thought and sensation are the forms of consciousness. But Moore is not happy with these different uses of the term ‘percipi’. The term percipi cannot be used in this ambiguous way. But idealists are not clear about the use of the term ‘percipi’.

Again, Moore points out that the statement ‘esse est percipi’ may have three different meanings depending upon the different interpretations of the copula ‘est’.

The first meaning may be ‘esse’ is identical with ‘percipi’ as in the case of two plus two is four. Although their literal meaning is different, the precise meaning of the two words is identical. Moore says, if the two words are identical, the basic idealist tenet needs no proof. Again he expresses that idealists have not clearly seen the difference between being yellow (esse) and being a sensation of yellow (percipi). And as a result they hold that they are identical. Moore in this context points out that idealists have ignored the real difference between being yellow and being a sensation of yellow and hold that they are connected in an organic unity. Being a hard-core realist Moore denigrates the idealist formula which fails to bring out a concrete picture of the world.
The second meaning may be read, as 'esse' is partially identical with 'percipi'. If 'percipi' mentions the partial meaning of 'esse', the import of 'whatever is, is experienced' (esse est percipi) will be ambiguous. It will mean that to experience a thing is not the same as to know the thing. A thing or object or reality possesses more qualities than what is experienced. Percipi does not include the whole meaning of esse. Moore points out that the meanings of the terms 'esse' and 'percipi' are distinct, because the later part of the proposition expresses only the partial meaning of the former. So, knowing the meaning of the later part we cannot claim that we know the reality (esse) in which the significance of the proposition is embedded.

From the second meaning of the proposition, Moore derives three different points which he mentions as such—First of all, it gives a definition of the word 'reality' asserting that the word stands for a complex whole, of which what is meant by percipi forms a part. And secondly it asserts that being experienced forms a part of a certain whole. The third possible meaning of 'esse est percipi' indicates that there is necessary connection between the constituents of 'esse' and 'percipi'. Because percipi can be inferred from the constituents of reality (esse). Percipi is a part of qualities of a thing. So, the quality possessed by percipi can be inferred from esse. There is a difference between blue (red rose) and sensing of blue (experience of a red rose). Although the later refers to the former, still the later cannot be equal to the former.

Moore opines that though percipi can be inferred from esse, still the relation between the two cannot be synthetic. He holds that both the terms are distinct in their very nature. So, the question is, how can the relation be-
between the two be synthetic? Moore asserts that there can be necessary relation
between the two, but it does not entail that the relation between the two is
synthetic one. Moore in this context writes—

“I believe that idealists all hold this important falsehood. They do not perceive
that esse is percipi must, if true, be merely a self evident synthetic truth, they either identify with it or give as a reason for it another proposition which must be false because it is self contradic-
tory.”

Idealists hold that whatever is, is experienced, is necessarily true. But the question is whether necessary truth is analytic or synthetic? Analytic truth is presupposed by self-contradiction. Moore refutes both the views. It is held that the necessary relation between the two (esse & percipi) is analytic; it implies that percipi merely indicates qualities of the esse. But the denial of this view hints that esse possesses further qualities, which is not implicit in percipi. Again, if it is supposed that the connection between the two is synthetic, it would mean that the relation between the two would be absolutely identical. But the negative mark is that the two terms have distinct meanings.

To establish the objectivity of propositions, Moore argues that a proposition, qua conscious act of perceiving, is not distinguishable from a perception but can be distinguished from it only in terms of a difference in the objective content of these perceptions.

Moore advocates that blue and the sensation of blue cannot be identical. His view is that both are distinct terms. But idealists try to interpret
esse in terms of percipi. Moore wants to show that the sensation of green and the sensation of yellow are same in the sense that the act of consciousness present in both the cases is same. But as a realist he advocates the independent reality of things and makes distinction between subject and object. In contrast to this view, idealists put much emphasis on consciousness or subject than object.

III

The point in which we find striking similarity between the two great philosophers Moore and Wittgenstein is their advocacy of ordinary language. As in the case of later Wittgenstein we see that he disregards Russell's and his own earlier position of logico-mathematical linguists in favour of ordinary language, so also we find Moore to be an ardent supporter of commonsense and ordinary language. Moore's celebrated essay "A Defence of common sense" may seem to be dealing with redundant statements. But what we find here is that Moore stands by the ordinary and common sense view of the world. When, for example, Moore goes to assert that there are material things as against the idealistic or philosophical claim that there are no material things, one may feel like ridiculing Moore that he fails to understand the meaning of the philosophical assertion that there are no material things. Because in an ordinary discourse everybody, including the idealist philosopher, do accept the existence of material things. But the philosopher goes to deny its existence from a different point of view. And Moore may therefore be ridiculed as too rustic to understand the import of that philosophical point of view. But here stands Moore with ordinary meaning of words in defence of common-sense.
The debate on whether there are material things or not between Moore and the idealist philosopher exhibits two different stand-points. Norman Malcolm discusses this issue very beautifully in his article "Moore and Ordinary Language." In Malcolm's view, it is a question of accepting a particular language to be correct—the language of the philosopher or that of Moore.

The philosopher who maintains that "we do not know for certain the truth of any statement about material things"—speaks in a language quite different from the ordinary language. Malcolm points out that we shall not definitely teach a child to say that "there are probably four chairs in this room", when there are actually four chairs in the room. That there are actually four chairs in this room is the common sense view and a statement in the ordinary language.

Not only the idealist, but also realists like Russell and positivists like Ayer also were dubious about the credibility of ordinary language. Russell for example maintained that when we see something, a rose, for example, we see only a part of our brain. Again Ayer also does not find himself comfortable with propositions which imply the existence of material things as they do not admit of complete verification. But in ordinary discourse it would be too absurd to say, "I see a part of my brain" or "Probably there is a rose" when I actually see a rose. "But when the philosopher asserts that we never know for certain any material-thing statements, he is not asserting this empirical fact."17 The philosopher whether an idealist or a realist or a positivist, is not using the ordinary language. So the dispute between Moore and the philosopher is one that is fought from two different grounds.
The question may arise here which language is correct—the ordinary one or the philosophical one? It may be pointed out that the ordinary man, who is by definition philosophically ignorant, uses the ordinary language and hence is therefore inferior to the language of the philosopher. But the interesting point is that the philosopher also uses the ordinary language to refute ordinary language itself. Malcolm writes—

“But the philosopher who says that the ordinary person is mistaken when he says that he sees the cat in a tree, does not mean that he sees a squirrel rather than a cat; does not mean that it is a mirage; does not mean that it is an hallucination. He will agree that the facts of the situation are what we should ordinarily describe by the expression “seeing a cat in a tree.” Nevertheless, he says that the man does not really see a cat; he sees only some sense-data of a cat. Now if it gives the philosopher pleasure always to substitute the expression “I see some sense-data of my wife,” for the expression “I see my wife,” etc., then he is at liberty thus to express himself, providing he warns people beforehand so that they will understand him. But when he says that the man does not really see a cat, he commits a great absurdity; for he implies that a person can use an expression to describe a certain state of affairs, which is the expression ordinarily used to describe just such a state of affairs, and yet be using incorrect language.”

Hence, it may be said that it was correctly pointed out by Wittgenstein that all problems of philosophy are created by confusions in using language. When the philosopher says that when I see a cat I only see some sense data, there is a gross mess-up of two different languages. I see only a cat when I see a cat; but if the word ‘cat’ is to be replaced by ‘sense data’ in the
language of the philosopher, then it is necessary that the two other components of the proposition viz ‘I’ and ‘see’ are also to be adequately translated into philosophical terms or otherwise, if ‘cat’ (or any other physical thing) means ‘sense data’, then ‘I’ or ‘see’ cannot mean the same thing as ordinarily understood.

Moore and Wittgenstein therefore can be labelled as two rebels against the traditional way of philosophizing. Moore’s defence of commonsense and ordinary language gets reinforced by the Wittgensteinian model of dissolution of philosophical puzzles with the tool of linguistic analysis.

References:


7. Ibid. p.3.

8. Ibid. p.5.

10. Ibid. p.7.


