

Circularity without Ignorance: a Moorean account of the limitations of Moore’s Argument

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ABSTRACT: I argue that *Moore’s Argument* is limited in that it is viciously circular relative to four different aims. The argument is not useful for achieving those aims. But Mooreanism is true. That is, I argue that Moore’s Argument can give us knowledge of its conclusion. These elements of the view account for the common intuition that the argument is problematically circular. They account for the fact that there is a plausibly sound argument for Mooreanism. And they position me to explain the common intuition that Mooreanism makes it implausibly easy to know that we are not deceived in all of our external world beliefs: we commonly conflate the claim of Mooreanism with stronger claims implying that Moore’s Argument is more useful than it actually is. Appreciating the considerable modesty of the Moorean’s view is crucial for understanding why the view is true. Then I defend the anti-sceptical importance of the truth of Mooreanism, compatibly with the considerable modesty of the Moorean’s claim. Finally I argue that this account – of the power and limitations of Moore’s Argument – is superior to three other *prima facie* good competitors.

KEY WORDS: Conservatism, easy knowledge, epistemic circularity, neo-Mooreanism, scepticism, vicious circularity, Wittgenstein.

1. Introduction

One sceptical hypothesis is that *I am presently being deceived by an evil demon*. That is, all of my current perceptual experiences are false appearances presented to me by an evil demon.¹ Another closely related one – in a circumstance in which I have an experience as of a hand being here in front of me – is that *there is no hand here and I am presently being deceived by an evil*

¹ This is almost verbatim Pryor’s (2000: 521–2) formulation of a sceptical hypothesis.

demon. This second one is the sceptical hypothesis that I focus on.² For short I will sometimes use ‘I am being deceived’ in place of ‘there is no hand here and I am being deceived’, but only when it should be clear that I am doing that.

Now consider *Moore’s Argument* defined as follows.

Moore’s Argument

Here is a hand.

So, it is not the case that (there is no hand here and I am presently being deceived by an evil demon).^{3,4}

I will say that a *sound* argument gives you knowledge of its conclusion if and only if (i) you believe the conclusion, (ii) you have justification to believe the premise which is also inferential justification to believe the conclusion, and (iii) that justification doxastically justifies your belief in the conclusion and is not defeated in any way that ‘Gettiers’ the belief.⁵

By *Mooreanism* I will mean just the following.

Mooreanism

Moore’s Argument can give us knowledge of its conclusion.

Conservatives would say that Moore’s Argument is viciously circular and that it cannot give anyone knowledge of – or even warrant to believe – its conclusion.⁶ I argue that Moore’s Argument is limited by at least four circularities, that each

² In section 7 I will consider a possible objection that this second one is not an appropriately formulated evil demon hypothesis.

³ By stipulation, also, anyone who reasons by Moore’s Argument bases their belief in the premise either on the perceptual experience as of here being a hand, or on the belief that they are having such an experience.

⁴ Two other things are appropriate to note here. First, this *Moore’s Argument* is *not* any proof or argument in Moore (1939). Second, this *Moore’s Argument* is logically valid, but what if the conclusion should instead be simply *that I am not being deceived?* Well, the following argument is logically valid: (MA) “If here is a hand, then I am not being deceived. Here is a hand. So, I am not being deceived.” My opinions about the powers and limitations of MA are not substantially different from my opinions about the powers and limitations of Moore’s Argument. In my view there are no differences between MA and Moore’s Argument that are significantly important for my arguments in this paper. I do not fully defend that view in this paper, but see section 7.

⁵ I accept that one good account of (a kind of) knowledge is the best version of a defeasibility account. *Knowledge* in this sense is roughly true belief that is based on justification that is not defeated. Defeasibility accounts have been characterised by quite a few theorists; e.g. Klein (1971 & 2004b).

⁶ This is *conservatism about perceptual justification*. The label ‘conservatism’ is due to Pryor (2004), who rejects the view. The view was advocated most influentially by Wright (1985 and 2004); but Wright has more recently (2014) given up this particular conservatism in favour of a higher-level version.

of these is a vice in its own way, but that the argument can give us knowledge of its conclusion.⁷ The account yields a plausible Moorean explanation of the common intuition that Moore's Argument is problematically circular.

It also positions me to explain the common intuition that Mooreanism makes it implausibly easy⁸ to know that we are not deceived. For reasons of circularity, there are intuitively valuable goals that Moore's Argument cannot help us to achieve. And the claim that the argument can give us knowledge is commonly conflated with claims that we actually can achieve those goals in that way. But those goals are significantly more difficult to achieve than 'mere' knowledge that we are not being deceived.

Additionally, I make that response especially plausible by giving a separate argument that it is in fact easy to know the conclusion of Moore's Argument. I support and defend the view that we can know it easily by – for example – the following argument.

-w- Here is a hand.

-x- *So*: Here is a hand *or* I am not being deceived by an evil demon.

-y- *So*: It is not the case that (there is no hand here *and* I am being deceived by an evil demon).⁹

(That argument is not Moore's Argument. But the two arguments share a conclusion, and my view is that there are many easy ways to know that conclusion.)

Reflecting on the w-x-y argument helps us to appreciate, as I will argue, that the claim of Mooreanism is very modest. For it helps us to appreciate that the Moorean view is hardly more immodest than the claim that the argument from (w) to (x) can give us knowledge of the inoffensive disjunctive claim (x). Moreover, appreciating that the Moorean view is very modest is necessary for understanding why the view is true. But I will also argue that to know (y) is to know that a certain possibility in which I am being deceived does not obtain, and that (y) is an appropriately formulated evil demon anti-sceptical hypothesis.¹⁰

⁷ Others who have contributed substantially to debates to do with benign circularity include: Bergmann (2004), Otero (2013), Barnett (2014), Sosa (2017), and Boghossian (2000).

⁸ Problems of 'easy knowledge'—including 'too easy' objections to Mooreanism—have been discussed by many. Some examples are Cohen (2002 & 2005), Davies (2004), Markie (2005), and Wright (2007).

⁹ Many others have discussed relevantly similar arguments. One example is Klein (2004a). In section 7 below I will consider Klein's position in connection with Cohen's (2002) Red Table argument.

¹⁰ The view of this paper is very much indebted to Pryor (2000 & 2004 & 2012), most of whose arguments I find convincing. However I do not speculate about the extent to which Pryor would agree with the account presented here.

1.1. Structure of the paper

In section 2 I characterise the notion of an argument's being viciously circular relative to a given aim. In section 3 I explain three extant accounts of the limitations of Moore's Argument. I endorse only one of those accounts – that the argument is dialectically ineffective – and argue that this is due to a relative vicious circularity in the argument.

This positions me to argue, in section 4, for a second circle. There I argue that Moore's Argument is viciously circular relative to *satisfying ourselves that we know* its conclusion. This higher-level notion is a Wittgensteinian and arguably Cartesian notion. In section 5 I argue that Moore's Argument can still give us knowledge of its conclusion. But the argument is indeed limited by at least four vicious circularities, including the *dialectical* circularity already mentioned, and the one relative to epistemological *satisfaction*.

In section 6 I respond to the *too easy* objection. In section 7 I defend my position against an argument that my Moorean conclusion, (y), is not about our perceptual circumstances at all, and relatedly that (y) is not an appropriately formulated anti-sceptical hypothesis. Lastly I argue, in section 8, that this Moorean account of the power and limitations of Moore's Argument is superior to three other *prima facie* good competitors. These are the conservative account that has been advocated by Crispin Wright (1985, 2004), a simple Moorean dialectical diagnosis, and Annalisa Coliva's (2008) account that Moorean proof just misses the point.

Before section 2, I do some setting up through presenting an interpretation of Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*. (Wittgenstein 1969). This will partially motivate the view that we may easily conflate the claim of Mooreanism with stronger claims.

1.2. On saying how you know

The claim of Mooreanism is just a claim about our epistemic state: it is just a claim about how we have a given item of knowledge.¹¹ And my position is that it is a true claim, but Moore's Argument is notably limited in other ways.

An approach along these lines seems to be suggested by some of the philosophy in Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*. On this reading, Wittgenstein thinks that some of Moore's epistemological claims – about what we know, and about what gives us our knowledge – are perfectly in order if taken simply

¹¹ Relatedly, White has argued quite compellingly that “‘How can you tell that P’ or ‘What makes you think that P’ should usually be taken not simply as enquiries into your epistemic state, but as invitations to engage in rational persuasion.” (White 2006: 529)

as descriptions of our epistemic state. For example, Moore does know that hands exist. And that trees exist, and that English pillar boxes are red, to use some of Wittgenstein's examples (Wittgenstein 1969: §526). But Moore's saying that he knows these things is still objectionable.

(I do not have space for a comprehensive defence of this reading of *On Certainty*, but I will provide a sample of supporting remarks.)

But now, isn't it correct to describe my present state as follows: I know what this colour [red] is called in English? And if that is correct, why then should I not describe my state with the corresponding words "I know etc.?" [I.E. "I know that this box is red."] (Wittgenstein 1969: §531)

So when Moore sat in front of a tree and said "I know that that's a tree", he was simply stating the truth about his state at the time. ... (1969: §532)

Do I know that I am now sitting in a chair? – Don't I know it?! In the present circumstances no one is going to say that I know this [...] But now, even if one doesn't say it, does that make it untrue?? (1969: §552)

If someone says, "I know that that's a tree" I may answer: "Yes, that is a sentence. An English sentence. And what is it supposed to be doing?" Suppose he replies: "I just wanted to remind myself that I know things like that?" (1969: §352)

But why might it be objectionable to say that I know that I have hands, for example, if I do know that? Well, in context I might be supposing that I am achieving something over and above asserting a truth. Wittgenstein writes of 'satisfying yourself of knowledge', in a number of places (e.g. Wittgenstein 1969: §94 & §137 & §438 & §497). And he also writes of 'showing that you know', and of 'proving that you know', seemingly interchangeably with 'satisfying yourself that you know'. He thinks, plausibly, that saying that you know does not 'prove' that you know, and writes that we cannot *in any way* 'satisfy ourselves' that we know that we have hands:

What is the proof that I know something? Most certainly not my saying I know it. (Wittgenstein 1969: §487)

[I]f I say "I know that I have two hands", and that is not supposed to express just my subjective certainty, I must be able to satisfy myself that I am right.¹² But I can't do that, for my having two hands is not less certain before I have looked at them than afterwards... (1969: §245)

I think that philosophers are often interested in 'satisfying ourselves of our knowledge', in a sense to be explained. When philosophers say, for example, that we know that we have hands, in context we are often trying to 'satisfy

¹² Is Wittgenstein's claim that I must be able to satisfy myself *that I have two hands*, or *that I know that I have two hands*? There is good reason to think the latter but I do not have space to try to settle the question here.

ourselves' that we have that knowledge. But while it is true that we have the knowledge, there is no way for us to *satisfy ourselves* that we have it. *A fortiori*, simply asserting this truth cannot do the trick.

Similarly, we do know that we are not being deceived. And Moore's Argument can give us that knowledge. But if and when we say that Moore's Argument gives us knowledge, the context is often one in which we are trying to *satisfy ourselves* of the knowledge. And for reasons of circularity Moore's Argument cannot be used to achieve that. This is one of the four vicious circularities for which I argue.

It is no aim of this paper to satisfy myself, or anybody else, that we have any knowledge at all. In fact I will argue that we cannot achieve that aim. However, keeping in mind that 'satisfying ourselves of knowledge' will have a special sense – and it is not simply *proving* or *showing* that we know in any straightforward sense – I maintain that this is compatible with our having knowledge, and with our knowing that we have knowledge.

2. Relative vicious circularity

There is of course more than one kind¹³ of argumentative circularity. But what is it for an argument to be 'viciously' circular? (I do not aim to characterise circularity, the question is about the meaning of 'vicious' in 'vicious circularity'.)

One option would be to say that an argument is 'viciously' circular, just in case it cannot give anyone knowledge of its conclusion, where this is due to the argument's being circular in some way. That would be fine. But we use arguments for many things, not only to know their conclusions. So I relativize the notion of *viciousness* to aims:

Relative 'vicious' circularity

An argument is 'viciously' circular relative to a given aim, *e*, just in case, due to the argument's being circular in some way, it cannot be used to achieve *e*.¹⁴

On this definition, in principle an argument could be viciously circular relative to many different aims, but still perfectly fine for giving us knowledge of its conclusion. And my position is that Moore's Argument is a case in point.

¹³ Premise-circularity, source-circularity, and rule-circularity, to give some examples.

¹⁴ Some other philosophers have at least implicitly employed this relative notion. For example Otero (2013). And, as I'll soon discuss, Coliva (2008).

3. Three purported vicious circularities: conservative, dialectical, and higher-level conservative diagnoses

Whatever exactly we say about Moore's Argument, *ceteris paribus* we should uphold commitment to the following two intuitive truths. First, in some sense the premise 'presupposes' its conclusion. Second, relatedly, the argument is problematically circular. Each of the following three diagnoses does uphold those commitments.

3.1. Conservatism

Conservatives say that the argument's premise presupposes its conclusion in that any warrant we could have for the premise, would have to rest on antecedent warrant to accept the conclusion. It follows, says the conservative, that Moore's Argument is indeed problematically circular, since any warrant for the argument's premise must itself rest on warrant for the conclusion of the same argument. And no argument that is circular in this way can yield knowledge. So the conservative says that Mooreanism is false. I will argue – but not right away – that the premise presupposes its conclusion only in non-conservative ways.

3.2. Dialectical ineffectiveness

Next, it is already widely accepted in the literature¹⁵ that the argument cannot be used to rationally persuade someone who doubts its conclusion. Here I will follow Coliva who says that *doubting* the conclusion, in this connection, is believing that it is (more probably) false (Coliva 2008: 236).

If someone thinks that an omnipotent demon is ensuring that all of his perceptual experiences are false, then he cannot rationally believe, on the basis of his perceptual experiences, that there is a hand in front of him. So rationally he cannot even get to the premise of the argument.

It is noteworthy that we can show, as follows, that he cannot rationally get to the premise, *on pain of vicious circularity specifically*.

The doubter starts out thinking that there is probably an evil demon bent on deceiving him in all things. Thus, if rational, he believes neither the premise nor the conclusion of Moore's Argument. Now, reasoning by that argument would require him to *first* come to believe the premise, and *then* the conclusion. But we have seen that the doubter cannot rationally believe the premise unless he *first* overcomes his doubt that he is not being deceived.

¹⁵ Examples are Pryor (2004) and Coliva (2008).

Moving on to the third alleged vicious circularity of the argument, Coliva (2008) would¹⁶ maintain that it cannot be used to successfully ‘claim’ our warrant for its conclusion.

3.3. Coliva’s higher-level conservatism

What is it to *claim* or try to *claim* warrant? This is a higher-level enterprise – according to Coliva, and plausibly enough. But beyond that it will be sufficient for our purposes to see how Coliva employs the notion to characterise an internalism about warrant.

According to the internalist, she writes, warrant is ‘inevitably salient to a sufficiently attentive thinker and ... immediately employable to redeem the justifiability of one’s beliefs.’ (Coliva 2008: 239). But the externalist denies that warrant has to be like that.

Now, according to Coliva, lower-level conservatism (the view discussed in section 3.1 above) may or may not be true. But she argues that Moore’s proof is still viciously circular ‘when ... taken as a response to’ (Coliva 2008: 241) a sceptic who challenges us to claim warrant for its conclusion:

[I]t seems evident that in order to *claim* to have perceptual warrant for the premise [of Moore’s proof], we must take it that the conclusion that there is an external world holds – more specifically, that the experience we are now having, as of a hand in front of us, is indeed produced by normal sensory interaction with a world populated by physical objects. One could not rationally lay claim to warrant for the first premise that here is a hand, yet profess open-mindedness on the latter score. But if this is right, then Moore’s proof fails as [an attempt to claim warrant for its conclusion] because in laying claim to warrant for its premise, one would presuppose that one was already in position to lay claim to warrant for its conclusion. (Coliva 2008: 241).

At the higher level, Coliva concludes, Moore’s proof is ‘epistemically circular for pretty much the reasons which Wright urged: to lay claim to its first premise that here is a hand, one must presuppose the warrantedness of its conclusion that there is an external world.’ (Coliva 2008: 241).

I am not sure that Moore’s proof – the proof discussed by Coliva¹⁷ – is epistemically circular in this way. I think that Coliva’s argument in the passage above is unsound.¹⁸ And I am not sure that Moore’s *Argument* is circular

¹⁶ Coliva discusses ‘Moore’s proof’, with the conclusion *that there is an external world* (Coliva 2008: 235). But this difference will not matter for my arguments.

¹⁷ As noted above, this is an argument with the conclusion *that there is an external world*.

¹⁸ I believe that the following is false: ‘[I]n order to claim to have perceptual warrant for the premise, we must take it that the conclusion that there is an external world holds.’ (Coliva as quoted.)

in that way. But Coliva's discussion raises the following possibility. Perhaps Moore's Argument is fine for giving people knowledge, but cannot be used to achieve certain intuitively worthwhile higher-level goals.¹⁹ I will argue that this is indeed the case. But I do not think that the intuitively important higher-level limitation of Moore's Argument is its alleged inadequacy for 'claiming' warrant or knowledge. In the next section I characterise the Wittgensteinian notion of *satisfying ourselves of knowledge*, and argue that we cannot use Moore's Argument to *satisfy ourselves that we know* its conclusion, on pain of vicious circularity. And in section 5 I argue that there are two other higher-level goals with respect to which Moore's Argument is viciously circular.

4. A second actual vicious circularity

As I have mentioned, Wittgenstein writes repeatedly of 'satisfying yourself of knowledge'. Sometimes he also writes of 'showing that you know', and of 'proving that you know', seemingly interchangeably with 'satisfying yourself that you know'. Here are some examples:

From its seeming to me – or to everyone – to be so [that Moore knows that *here is a hand*], it doesn't follow that it is so. ... (Wittgenstein 1969: §2)

That he does know remains to be shown. (Wittgenstein 1969: §14)

What is the proof that I know something? Most certainly not my saying I know it. (Wittgenstein 1969: §487)

For what reply does one make to someone who says "I believe it merely strikes you as if you knew it"? (Wittgenstein 1969: §489)

As a first pass, and in light of these remarks, trying to 'satisfy yourself' that you know *p* is one possible reaction²⁰ to a sceptic who says: "Sometimes you are mistaken about what you know. With what right do you take it that *p* is not a case in point? I know that it *seems* to you that you know *p*, but perhaps it merely strikes you as if you know it."

As I characterise the notion, whenever you try to satisfy yourself that you know a given proposition, *p*, you do so partly because you have appreciated that – even when you are maximally convinced – you are sometimes mistaken about what you know. You do think that you know *p*. And presently you

¹⁹ Coliva herself makes this salient as a theoretical possibility: 'Pryor might be right that [conservatism is false] when no higher-level Humean scepticism is at issue ...' (Coliva 2008: 241–2). And Wright (2014) does too.

²⁰ I am not implying that this is the reaction that one *should* have; I think that it is not, but I do not need to argue that in this paper.

might have no doubt about that. But even in situations like that, sometimes you do not know what you think you know. And an attempt to ‘satisfy yourself’ that you know p is an attempt to show – in light of the fact that you are fallible in *that* sense – that p is not a case in point.²¹

According to Wittgenstein, *satisfying yourself* that you know p is paradigmatically attempted by giving an account of *how* you have the alleged knowledge; by reference to an *investigation*²² that purportedly shows you – and gives you the knowledge – that p is the case.²³

Now, it is plausible that you can never *satisfy yourself* that you know anything at all. More precisely, there is no proposition such that you can *satisfy yourself* that you know it. You have two basic options: inferential and non-inferential. On the first horn, imagine you say that you know p inferentially. And imagine you say that you know it by the argument “ p_1 , so p .” Then the sceptic should say, “I know that it *seems* to you that you know the premise, p_1 . But sometimes you are mistaken about what you know, even when you are most sure. And that is the very point. So with what right do you take it that your premise is not itself a case in point?” You should judge, then, that you have not satisfied yourself that you do know p , since you haven’t (even attempted to) satisfy yourself that you know p_1 .

On the second horn, however, things do not fare better. Imagine you say that you know p non-inferentially. For example, you might say that you know it by sensory perception, maintaining that sensory knowledge can be non-inferential. Then the sceptic cannot target any premise on the basis of which you allegedly know p . But the sceptic might say, quite reasonably, “You believe that your sensory faculties are reliable. But if that belief is false, or unjustified, then you do not in fact have sensory knowledge of p . And I know that it *seems* to you that you know that your senses are reliable. But sometimes you are mistaken about what you know, even when you are most sure. And that is the very point. So how do you supposedly know that your senses are reliable?” Again it is plausible that you have not satisfied yourself that you know p , because you did not first satisfy yourself of your alleged knowledge that your sense are reliable.

²¹ Thanks to Bernhard Weiss and an anonymous reviewer whose comments helped me towards this more precise and more adequate characterisation of this notion.

²² Particularly relevant remarks, in which Wittgenstein writes of ‘investigations’, are Wittgenstein’s (1969: 84 & 137 & 138).

²³ Note that epistemological *satisfaction* is not just a Wittgensteinian notion. For one thing, it is arguably in play in Descartes’ *Meditations*, at least in the first meditation. There is reason counting in favour of this; on the basis of Descartes’ contextualisation of the meditator’s project e.g. as follows: ‘Sometimes people go astray even in cases where they think they have the most perfect knowledge.’ (Descartes 1984: 12) And also: ‘Whatever I have up till now accepted as most true and assured I have gotten either from the senses or through the senses. But from time to time...’ (Descartes 1984: 12)

Besides the underminer proposition *that your senses are unreliable*, there are many other underminer propositions that the sceptic might draw attention to, quite reasonably, across a variety of contexts. (For example, *you are dreaming*, and *the lighting is deceptive*, and *you are being deceived by a demon*, and many more.) And having noted this, I am in a position to give a more rigorous argument that you can never *satisfy yourself* that you know anything at all:

For all propositions *p*, and for all possible attempts to satisfy yourself that you know *p*: there will always be at least one underminer, *u*, such that you think that you know not-*u*, and such that you *first* have to satisfy yourself that you do indeed know not-*u*.

If you have tried to satisfy yourself that you know *p* *non-inferentially and perceptually*, then the proposition *that your senses are unreliable* is one such *u*. And another is the proposition *that you are presently dreaming*. If you claim instead that you know *p* *non-inferentially and non-perceptually*, then the proposition *that you are being deceived by a Cartesian demon* is a '*u*' that meets the conditions.²⁴

The only remaining possibility is that you have tried to satisfy yourself that you know *p* *inferentially*. And then a relevant underminer is *that you are quite generally a terribly poor reasoner*. And another is that *you are being deceived*. And of course you are also still faced with the task of satisfying yourself that you know the brute premises of the argument that allegedly gives you knowledge that *p*.²⁵

At this point we can appreciate why Moore's Argument is specifically *viciously circular* relative to satisfying yourself that you know its conclusion. To use the argument to satisfy yourself that you know that you are not being deceived, first you would need to satisfy yourself that you know its premise. But to satisfy yourself that you know the premise *that here is a hand* – whether inferentially or non-inferentially – first you would need to satisfy yourself that you know that you are not being deceived.

As I will argue next, though, Moore's Argument can still give us knowledge that we are not deceived.

²⁴ What if *p* is *that I am thinking*, and I say that I know *p* non-inferentially and non-perceptually? In that case, the first proposition below is a '*u*' that does *not* meet the conditions, but the second is a proposition that does meet them. (1) I am being deceived into thinking (falsely) that I am thinking. (2) Thinking happens without a subject doing the thinking, and the present thought that *I am thinking* is false in virtue of the fact that an evil demon has ensured that all beliefs (except perhaps his own) are false. (What I write in this note is of course informed by Lichtenberg's famous objection to Descartes. See Stern's (1959) book on Lichtenberg.)

²⁵ This argument is informed by arguments in Wright (2004), although Wright's arguments there (on behalf of the sceptic) are against the possibility of evidential warrant, not epistemological satisfaction.

5. Circularity without ignorance

I have argued that Moore's Argument is viciously circular with respect to the aim of rationally persuading a doubter, and relative to *satisfying ourselves* of knowing its conclusion. It also has at least two other vicious circularities. First, relative to satisfying ourselves that we know its *premise*.

If you use the argument to try to satisfy yourself that you know its premise, then in part you are trying to satisfy yourself that you know its conclusion, because you appreciate that doing the latter is a requirement for being able to do the former. However, on pain of vicious circularity – as I have argued – you cannot use Moore's Argument to satisfy yourself that you know the conclusion. Thus, the argument is also more indirectly viciously circular relative to satisfying yourself of your alleged knowledge of its premise.

Second, the argument cannot be used to *reflectively authorising* your belief in its premise. And this is again for reasons of vicious circularity.

Reflectively authorising your belief in the premise, in my terms, requires the premise belief to be doxastically justified in part by higher-level justification.²⁶ Specifically, for one thing it requires that belief to be justified by justification to believe *that you have justification for it*. But it also requires the premise belief to be justified in part by justification to believe that the relevant underminers are false. For example, the belief must be justified in part by justification to believe that you are not dreaming. And, for another example, in part by justification to believe that you are not being deceived.²⁷

Why are these things indeed necessary conditions? Because *reflectively authorising* a belief is a matter of a reflective thinker – *qua* reflective thinker – exerting warranted normative control over the belief. And such *warranted normative control* requires two things. First, the thinker needs to warrantably approve the belief, by acquiring justification to think that she has undefeated justification to hold it. If the belief is *that here is a hand*, then this requires warrant to think that she has justification to believe *that here is a hand*, and also *inter alia* justification to believe that she is not being deceived. Second, the authorised belief must be doxastically justified at least in part *by* the relevant higher level justification. In other words – for the case in question – the belief that here is a hand must be justified in part by the thinker's warrant to believe that she has justification for the belief that here is a hand, and also in part by her justification to believe that she is not being deceived.

²⁶This notion of reflective doxastic authorisation owes a debt to Steup's (2000 & 2008). It is roughly akin to Steup's *executing a decision* to believe. But I am not committed to the possibility of deciding to believe, and I have no good reason to think that Steup would agree with me that my *reflective authorisation* is a useful notion.

²⁷Those two are at least requirements on *full* authorisation of the belief; but that qualification is not important for my arguments in this paper.

Given this conception of reflective authorisation, it is clear why Moore's Argument is viciously circular relative to authorising your belief that here is a hand. If the argument could be used to authorise that belief, then it would do so by giving you justification to believe its conclusion, such that you could use that justification to justify your belief in the premise of the same argument. But that would clearly involve a vicious epistemic circularity.

I think that Moore's Argument is viciously circular in these four (and other²⁸) ways. But it can give us knowledge. And, contra conservatism, it is not circular at the lower level. Call this the *package view*.

The package view explains the two intuitions discussed in section 3 above. Moore's Argument is limited by a vicious circle (more than one). And the argument's premise does presuppose its conclusion in a number of senses. For example, if a doubter doubts the conclusion and the premise, then in order to rationally overcome his doubt about the premise, he must first rationally overcome his doubt about the conclusion. Second – for *any* thinker – in order to satisfy yourself that you know the premise, you must first satisfy yourself that you know the conclusion. Third, in order to authorise your belief in the premise, that belief must be justified in part by your justification to believe the conclusion.

But the most straightforward reasons for accepting the package view are that there are sound arguments for the four circularities above, but also very plausible argument for Mooreanism, and no sufficiently strong reason to think that Moore's Argument is conservatively circular. Here is the argument for Mooreanism that I have in mind:

Argument for Mooreanism

- a. If we can know the premise of a given argument, and know that the premise entails the conclusion, and our warrant for the premise does not need to rest on antecedent warrant for the conclusion,²⁹ then the argument can give us knowledge of its conclusion.
- b. We can know the premise of Moore's Argument.
- c. We know that the premise entails the conclusion.
- d. Our warrant for the premise does not need to rest on antecedent warrant for the conclusion.
- e. So, Moore's Argument can give us knowledge of its conclusion.

²⁸ It is also viciously circular relative to rationally increasing the subject's degree of certainty that the premise is true; and in relation to what I call *epistemically shielding* the premise belief. Due to space constraints I do not argue for these limitations in this paper.

²⁹ If all of the other conditions of the antecedent are met, then it is not plausible that there could be transmission failure unless our warrant for the premise needs to rest on antecedent warrant for the conclusion. Notably Pryor (2012) in effect gives an argument that this is the only way warrant fails to transmit under those circumstances.

It is true that the Argument for Mooreanism is *not* a good argument as long as premise (d) – effectively a denial of conservatism – is implausible. This is one possible objection. But the denial of (d) is intuitively false³⁰, especially once carefully distinguished from claims about other ways in which Moore's premise does indeed presuppose its conclusion.³¹ Moreover, the conservative account does not give the best explanation of why many philosophers have balked at Moore's Argument or Moorean proofs. In section 8 (Advantages over competitors) I will argue that the package view does better.

Another objection is the *too easy* objection. I respond to that objection next, in part by giving separate argument – independent of the Argument for Mooreanism – that it is indeed easy to know that you are not being deceived.

6. The *too easy* objection

To some it seems impossible for us to know that that we are not being deceived. To others it does not seem impossible, but still seems that Moorean knowledge would be too easy.

But the package view sets up a plausible Moorean explanation. For reasons of circularity, there are intuitively valuable goals that Moore's Argument cannot help us to achieve. For example: satisfying ourselves that we know the conclusion. And indeed it is not at all easy to achieve these other goals. Moreover, the conclusion of Moore's Argument is quite patently the denial of a sceptical hypothesis which is a potential underminer for other things that we take ourselves to know. Knowledge of this conclusion, if only it could be had in the right way, could be used to achieve one or more of the more challenging goals. Thus it is plausible that those goals are often at issue – or taken to be raised to salience – in relevant contexts. So it is plausible that we commonly conflate the claim of Mooreanism with stronger claims. It is one thing that the argument can give us knowledge of its conclusion. It would be something else – and far too easy – if the argument could satisfy us *of* our knowledge, and a third thing if we could use it to authorise our belief in its premise.

To add to the plausibility of this explanation, next I will give a separate argument that it is easy to know the conclusion of Moore's Argument. I will support and defend the view that the following argument can give us the knowledge easily.

³⁰ Pryor (Pryor 2000: 536) makes a good case for this.

³¹ Relatedly, Pryor (2000: 540–541) does work to distinguish conservatism from senses in which 'all observation is theory-laden'.

(w) Here is a hand.

(x) *So*: Here is a hand *or* I am not being deceived by an evil demon.

(Disj. addition.)

(y) *So*: It is not the case that (there is no hand here *and* I am being deceived by an evil demon).

(De Morgan's laws; double-negation elimination.)

(A quick caveat: The w-x-y argument is not Moore's Argument. I am using it just to argue that it's easy to know proposition (y), which is also the conclusion of Moore's Argument. My view is that the w-x-y argument can give us knowledge of (y), and that Moore's Argument and many other arguments can too.)

6.1. *Another argument that it is easy to know Moore's conclusion*

When there is a hand in our immediate vicinity, then it is often very easy to know that there is. In commonly-occurring circumstances, almost any adult human with a well-functioning visual system can know this. And all they need to do is look. So it is very easy to know (w).

But if it is very easy to know that here is a hand, then it is also very easy to know (x). The latter proposition follows by a single step of disjunctive addition. And this is an obvious entailment. And it is not counterintuitive or otherwise objectionable to think that we could know (x) by inference from (w). So whenever we can very easily know (w), we can very easily know that (x) is true too.

Now (x) is pretty obviously logically equivalent to (y). So it is plausible that the latter can be known easily, by inference from the former.

To emphasise: (x) can be known *very* easily. Thus, in light of the logical equivalence, it is implausible that it is significantly more difficult to know the one than the other.

Some might find it counterintuitive that this w-x-y argument could be used to know the denial of the sceptical possibility that there is no hand here and I am being deceived. But how could one account for the alleged fact that the w-x-y argument cannot give us knowledge of its final conclusion, in the face of the fact that it can (very easily) give us knowledge of its sub-conclusion, where the sub-conclusion is so obviously logically equivalent to the final conclusion? I think that a plausible explanation of that alleged fact would be very hard to come by.³² And I can explain the intuition that the w-x-y argu-

³² Perhaps an opponent will say that the premise presupposes (y) in a way that makes the full argument objectionably circular. And additionally say that the premise does *not* presuppose (x) in a way that makes the *sub*-argument objectionably circular. But how plausible

ment cannot give us knowledge of (y). Unlike (x), the final conclusion (y) is patently the denial of a sceptical hypothesis which is a potential underminer of our presumed knowledge that there is a hand. Knowledge of the final conclusion (y), if only it could be had in the right way, could be used to achieve certain goals closely associated with that presumed knowledge – which is presumed knowledge of the premise of the *same* argument. And one or more of those goals are often at issue in contexts in which that sceptical hypothesis is raised to salience. That is often *why* it is raised to salience. So it is easy to conflate the claim that the w-x-y argument can give us knowledge with stronger claims. To avoid making that mistake, we need to carefully distinguish our achieving knowledge of (y), on the one hand, from our context-relative purposes for wanting to know (y), on the other.

What about the fact that it is *not* counter-intuitive that the sub-argument w-x can give us knowledge of (x)? That fact is somewhat puzzling, given the logical equivalence between (x) and (y); and the solution is rooted in the fact that (x) does not strike one as a potential underminer proposition of one's perceptual justification. (Even if (x) *is* such an underminer; that is not striking or even remotely obvious.) The intuition that the argument is objectionable kicks in only when we arrive at (y). At that point we take it that we are trying to achieve or reconstruct our knowledge of (y), *but to some distinct end intimately related to our knowledge of the premise (w)*.

7. “But *how* modest is the claim of Mooreanism?”

A *prima facie* strong objection to my position is based on Klein's (2004) position in connection with the following little argument about a red table. This ‘Red Table’ argument was originally made quite famous by Cohen (2002). Notably it bears a close resemblance to the argument that I have called *Moore's Argument*.

is that—given, again, the obvious logical equivalence of (x) and (y)? If any thinker must have independent justification to believe (y), in order to have justification to believe the premise, then the same must be true with respect to (x). After all, imagine that a given thinker does have perception-independent justification to believe (y). Then they necessarily also have perception-independent justification to believe (x), since the justification to believe (y) would be obvious inferential justification to believe (x) too. At this point my opponent might say that justification for the premise needs to *rest* epistemically on antecedent justification to believe (y), but it does not need to *rest* on any antecedent justification to believe (x). But this is implausible, first because the more plausible conservative view is just that the the premise has to rest on justification for *I am not being deceived by an evil demon*. And, second—and in any case—because any justification to believe (y) *is also* justification to believe (x), because of the obvious logical equivalence again.

RT argument

This table is red.³³

So, it's not the case that this table is white but illuminated by red lights.³⁴

Cohen and Klein debate whether one could come to know the conclusion of RT, by inferring it from the premise. Cohen thinks that that is not possible.³⁵ One of his arguments is as follows.

Suppose my son wants to buy a red table for his room. We go in the store and I say, "That table is red. I'll buy it for you." Having inherited his father's obsessive personality, he worries, 'Daddy, what if it's white with red lights shining on it?' I reply, 'Don't worry – you see, it looks red, so it is red, so it's not white but illuminated by red lights.' Surely he should not be satisfied with this response. (Cohen 2002: 314).

Klein agrees that Cohen's son should not be satisfied. (Klein 2004a: 178). He maintains, though, that the RT argument could have given the father knowledge of its conclusion, 'before the doubts were raised' by his son.³⁶ (Klein 2004a: 182). I agree with Klein on that point. But Klein also argues that '[f]rom ... *the table is red*, I cannot infer anything about the lighting conditions in which I am seeing the table.' (Klein 2004a: 178). And he argues that RT's conclusion is 'not a claim about the lighting conditions.' (Klein 2004a: 178).

Now, the objection that I wish to respond to may be presented as follows.³⁷

Klein's argument shows that the conclusion of RT is not about the lighting conditions in which one is seeing the table. Similar argument would show that the conclusion of Moore's Argument, (y), is not about our perceptual circumstances. So (y) is not about our perceptual circumstances. And two related things follow from this. First, knowing the conclusion of Moore's Argument, (y), is not to know anything about our

³³ By stipulation, anyone who reasons by the RT argument bases their belief in the premise on the perceptual experience as of the table's being red, or alternatively on the belief that they are having such an experience.

³⁴ This conclusion is precisely the formulation of Cohen (2002: 313).

³⁵ Cohen rejects the view that 'I can know the table is red on the basis of its looking red, and once I know the table is red, I can infer and come to know that it is not white but illuminated by red lights.' (Cohen 2002: 313).

³⁶ Part of Klein's view is that the reasoning has to be undefeated; and that in the good case the father's belief in the conclusion 'owes its epistemic status as knowledge to its being based upon an undefeated justification.' (Klein 2004a: 182). But these qualifications do not affect my arguments.

³⁷ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer who urged me to respond to this objection. The formulation of the objection in this paper is mine and not that of the reviewer.

perceptual circumstances. Second, that conclusion is not an appropriately formulated evil demon anti-sceptical hypothesis, unlike the simpler claim that I am not being deceived.

I think that Klein does not give compelling argument that the conclusion of the RT argument is not about the lighting conditions in the store. That is, he does not give compelling argument for the claim that serves as the first premise of the objection. And I will argue that RT's conclusion *is* about the lighting conditions.

Let's start by seeing Klein's argument:

[W]e should be very clear about what knowledge would have been gained through employing closure [through the RT reasoning]. From, (*t*) *the table is red*, I cannot infer anything about the lighting conditions in which I am seeing the table. In particular I cannot deduce that the table I am seeing is not white *and* being illuminated by a red light where the 'and' is not within the scope of the 'not.' In other words, I could not infer from *t* that $(\neg w \& r)$, where 'w' stands for *the table is white* and 'r' stands for *the table is being illuminated by a red light*. What I can infer is that $\neg(w \& r)$. But that, of course, is not a claim about the lighting conditions. I could just as easily have inferred that the table is not white while **not** being illuminated by a red light. That is, I could just as easily have inferred $\neg(w \& \neg r)$. The English sentence 'the table is not white but illuminated by red lights' might seem to indicate that I had gained some knowledge of the perceptual circumstances by employing closure on *the table is red*. But the scope of the negation has to include the conjunction if this is to be a case of the application of closure. (Klein 2004a: 178).

In my opinion Klein's argument is very important. But the RT argument is not as powerless as Klein says it is. Klein has not put his finger on a correct characterisation of its modesty.

7.1. *Against Klein (2004)*

Recall that the conclusion of RT is this:

$\neg(w \& r)$ = it's not the case that (this table is white but illuminated by red lights).

Imagine that my son and I are on our way to a furniture store. I have realised that my son strongly desires that his new table should be red. He wants this very badly indeed. He has repeatedly asked, "Dad, what if we unwittingly buy a table that is actually not red?"

I say, "Don't worry, Colin, we will be supremely careful to buy specifically a red table. If we see a table that looks red, then we will conduct a number of checks before buying it. For starters we will check up on things about the lighting conditions in the store. We will check thoroughly *that*

there is no tricky lighting in the store. And we will also check *that the table is not white with red lights shining on it.* In fact, let us check also that *there are no red lights at all in the store.* If we find any red lights, then we will go to another store, just to be safe. And if we discover that there are *no* red lights, then we will also know the second thing that I said we would check; namely *that the table is not white with red lights shining on it.*"

I am not suggesting to my son Colin, of course, that we should conduct the second check by reasoning from (*t*) *the table is red* to the conclusion $\sim (w \dot{\&} r)$. But I have proposed to check up on three distinct things *about the lighting conditions in the store.* And the point is that I would have been right to imply that those are three distinct things, each about the lighting conditions. And in particular I would have been right that $\sim (w \dot{\&} r)$ is a claim about those conditions. So Klein is mistaken on this point. Contra Klein, to claim that $\sim (w \& r)$ is to claim that the possible situation ($w \& r$) – which is *one* possible situation in which there are red lights shining on the table – does not obtain.

It is important to note that Klein and I are in agreement on the following two points. First, from *the table is red* one can deduce neither that *it is not lit by red lights* nor that *it is lit by red lights.* Second, as Klein notes, not only can the RT argument give one knowledge of its conclusion $\sim (w \& r)$, but in a similar way one can get knowledge that $\sim (w \dot{\&} \sim r)$. And indeed these two points are closely related to one another. After all, in the relevant situations one can know $\sim (w \& r)$ *just because one knows $\sim w$* ; and one can know $\sim (w \& \sim r)$ for just the same reason; and in neither case does one need to know whether or not the table is lit by red lights.

Notwithstanding these points, if the RT argument gives one knowledge of its conclusion, then *that* knowledge is knowledge of a claim about the lighting conditions. (The alternative conclusion that $\sim (w \dot{\&} \sim r)$ is also about those conditions.) Nothing that I have agreed to implies otherwise. Similarly imagine the following two scenarios.

Apple and Peach

You have only an apple and a peach available for lunch. But you worry, "What if the apple has a worm and the peach is under-ripe?" That is *one* possible circumstance in which the peach is under-ripe. It has been described explicitly as such; *the apple has a worm and the peach is under-ripe ($a \dot{\&} p$).* And the denial of that conjunction is the claim that that possibility does not obtain. So the denial is itself a claim about the peach.

Now let's say that you recall that you have bought very many apples from the given store in the past, and that none of them had a worm. You go on to reason that *this apple does not have a worm*, so *it's not the case that (this apple has a worm and this peach is under-ripe).*

Here you do not know – we may presume – whether the peach is under-ripe. But you do know *something* about the peach. And if you also infer that *it's not the case that (this apple has a worm and this peach is **not** under-ripe)*, then it is simply the case that you have come to know something else about the peach.

Windy weather conditions

Nick and his daughter Caro want to go sailing in Nick's 20 ft. yacht right now. As Caro knows, Nick is very experienced and skilled sailing his yacht. But it seems quite windy to Caro, and she worries aloud, "What if the wind-speed is more than 40 knots and it is not safe to sail in your yacht right now?" Nick responds, "Don't worry, *it **is** safe to sail in my yacht right now*, so *it's not the case that (the wind-speed is more than 40 knots and it is not safe to sail)*." Caro justifiably takes it on testimony and thereby knows that it is safe to sail the yacht, and draws the conclusion that her father has invited her to draw.

Here Caro was worrying about *one* possible circumstance in which the weather conditions would be a certain way (i.e. the wind-speed is greater than 40 knots in that circumstance). Relatedly, any claim that *the wind-speed is above 40 knots and it is not safe to sail* is a claim about the weather conditions. And the denial of that conjunction is the claim that that specific possibility does not obtain, so it is also a claim about the weather conditions.

Now, it is true that Caro does not know whether the wind-speed is greater than 40 knots. But she does know the conclusion that her father invited her to draw. That is, she knows the denial of the conjunction that she was worried about. Thus she does know something about the weather conditions. And if she also comes to know the following – that *it's not the case that (the wind-speed is **not** more than 40 knots and it is not safe to sail)* – then she knows something else about the weather conditions too.

What exactly is Klein's argument that, from RT's premise, 'I cannot infer anything about the lighting conditions in which I am seeing the table?' (Klein 2004a: as quoted above). He points out that I cannot infer $(\neg w \ \& \ r)$, which is indeed about those conditions. But that does not show that $\neg(w \ \& \ r)$ is not also about the lighting conditions. Other than that, Klein says that I can indeed infer $\neg(w \ \& \ r)$, but can just as easily infer $\neg(w \ \& \neg r)$. But it is compatible with this that each of those is about the lighting conditions, as I have argued.

In sum, the objection fails because its first premise is false, and that premise is false because the conclusion of RT is in fact about the lighting conditions in which one is seeing the table.

Moreover, there is every reason to think that the conclusion of Moore's Argument, (y), is a claim about my perceptual circumstances. After all, consider the possible circumstance that *there is no hand here **and** I am being de-*

ceived. That is *one* possible circumstance in which I am perceptually deceived. And the conclusion of Moore's Argument is the claim that *that* possibility does not obtain, so it is a claim about my perceptual circumstances.

Thus I conclude that to know (y) is to know that a certain possibility in which I am perceptually deceived does not obtain, and we have not been given any good reason to think that (y) is not *one* appropriate formulation of an evil demon anti-sceptical hypothesis.

8. Advantages over competitors

Having given a Moorean diagnosis of the multiple limitations of Moore's Argument, next I will argue that this account has significant advantages over three other diagnoses. I start by arguing that the conservative account does not give a better explanation of our reaction to Moore's Argument.

8.1. Over the conservative account

The conservative faces a number of significant challenges and objections. First, he should agree that we do have warrant for ordinary external world propositions,³⁸ and that we do therefore have antecedent warrant against the hypothesis that *there is no hand here and I am being deceived into believing that there is*. That leaves him with the challenge of saying *how* we have that antecedent warrant. And this is particularly challenging for the conservative, since he is seemingly forced to say that the warrant is *a priori*.

Second, it is plausible that the warrant must be strong enough, and of the right kind, to give us *knowledge* that we are not being deceived. By the conservative's own lights, after all, our warrant for ordinary external world propositions, some of which we *know*, must plausibly rest on antecedent *knowledge* that we are not being deceived. (More on this shortly.)

On the face of it the package view has more going for it in connection with these two challenges. It upholds the more plausible view that we have *empirical* warrant against the given sceptical hypothesis. And, second, the Moorean can plausibly maintain that Moorean justification is suited to giving us *knowledge* that we are not deceived. After all, it is plausible that we can know Moore's premise, indeed with a high degree of certainty. And, given that the Moorean denies conservatism, it is reasonable for him to maintain

³⁸ It is true that he could say that we do not have such warrant; he could elect to be a sceptic in that sense. But given the high degree of implausibility of that scepticism, the *more* reasonable option for the conservative is to try to explain a priori warrant for the denial of the sceptical hypothesis.

that knowledge is preserved by the deductively valid inference of Moore's Argument.

Wright's (2004) view is probably the best developed and most plausible conservative theory in the literature. So let us see how that account fares in relation to the two challenges.

Wright (2004) holds that our warrant against the evil demon hypothesis is indeed *a priori*: in Wright's terms it is an *a priori* 'entitlement'.³⁹ (Wright 2004: 175). And I will not take issue with his account of the *a prioricity* of this. But Wright also holds that this warrant is non-evidential; that is, it is not a warrant that counts in favour of the *truth* of the proposition that we are not being deceived. (Wright 2004: 175–8). But if we have only non-evidential warrant to accept⁴⁰ that proposition, then – as Wright says – we do not know it. We can know ordinary external world propositions, such as that *here is a hand*, but we cannot actually know the denial of the proposition that *there is no hand here and I am being deceived into believing that there is*.

Any theorist who endorses this account is forced to deny a pretty plausible closure principle. Namely, if you can know *p*, and know that *p* entails *q* (and can know each with a high degree of certainty⁴¹), then you can know *q*. This principle does not say or imply that you can know *q*, in such circumstances, on the basis of your knowledge of *p* and *p* entails *q*. It leaves open the possibility of your being able to know *q* in any way at all, and in principle the possibility of there being no 'way' in which you know *q*. The principle is weak in that sense. And it is quite plausible, as I have said (although of course it is not completely unchallengeable).

Finally, though, any such conservative is also faced with what Wright calls the 'leaching' problem. (Wright 2004: 207). It seems implausible that we could have perceptual *knowledge* of external world propositions, where our justification for those propositions rests in some way on an entitled acceptance, but not on any *knowledge*, that we are not deceived.

Next I will consider Coliva's (2008) diagnosis.

8.2. Over Coliva's account

Coliva (2008) neither affirms nor denies (lower-level) conservatism. She discusses a number of alleged limitations of Moore's proof – including that of section 3.3 above – but holds that the key explanatory diagnosis is that the

³⁹ I noted above a relevant change of view in Wright (2014).

⁴⁰ Wright's understanding of the distinction between belief and acceptance is given in his (2004: 175–78).

⁴¹ The parenthetical qualification makes the principle that much more plausible, because of the "just barely" objection to some closure principles, as discussed by McGrath (2013: 544).

proof cannot be used to rationally claim warrant for its *premise*. She argues that this by itself accounts for our reacting to the proof with ‘irritation and dismay’. (Coliva 2008: 243). Coliva points out that the proof ‘simply assumes that our normal perceptual grounds do indeed provide a warrant of ... Moore’s belief that ‘Here is a hand’,’ therefore, she argues, it ‘simply does not address the question. The issue is exactly whether we can somehow reflectively provide a rational reassurance that such grounds do indeed warrant’ such beliefs. (Coliva 2008: 239).⁴²

It is plausible that these considerations have an important role to play in explaining our reaction to Moore’s proof, and similarly for Moore’s Argument. But they have nothing to do with argumentative circularity. Coliva’s own view, at least, is explicitly that Moore’s proof just misses the point. (Coliva 2008: 239). And to know the full explanation we do need to know of the various non-conservative circularities that limit Moore’s Argument. Coliva argues that conservatism is not part of the explanation that we are looking for. (Coliva 2008: 236). And she also argues that her alleged *higher-level* circularity – with respect to claiming warrant for the *conclusion* – is not part of that explanation. (Coliva 2008: 243). But this leaves untouched each of the four vicious circularities of this paper.

Lastly I will argue that my account is superior to a simple Moorean ‘dialectical’ account.

8.3. *Over the simple Moorean diagnosis*

According to this ‘dialectical ineffectiveness’ diagnosis, the key limitation of Moore’s Argument is that it cannot rationally persuade someone who doubts its conclusion. But Coliva argues that this account ‘has difficulty in explaining the near universality of the reaction [to Moorean proof]. For [it] seems to predict that the proof should seem perfectly all right to the general reader, and that only an already committed sceptic, one who already doubts the conclusion [i.e. thinks that the conclusion is probably false], should find it deficient.’ (Coliva 2008: 237).

These objections call for a response⁴³ from any Moorean who endorses the dialectical diagnosis as *the* diagnosis of what’s wrong with Moore’s Argument. But on my account the argument has multiple limitations. One of the key explanatory limitations is that the argument cannot be used to *satisfy ourselves* that we know its conclusion. And this account does not ‘predict ... that

⁴² Part of Klein’s view about the Red Table argument is very similar; see Klein (2004: 178–9).

⁴³ Coliva (2008: 237–8) considers one possible response.

only an already committed sceptic ... should find [Moore's Argument] deficient.' Rather, any thinker who takes the argument to be an attempt to satisfy ourselves of that knowledge should find the argument deficient. And by 'any thinker' I do include those who believe and have little or no doubt that they are not being deceived.

9. Conclusion

I argued that we should relativize the notion of *vicious* circularity to goals, and that Moore's Argument is viciously circular relative to:

- rationally persuading someone who doubts its conclusion;
- *satisfying yourself* that you know its conclusion;
- *satisfying yourself* that you know its premise; and
- *reflectively authorising* your belief in its premise.

On the other hand, I supported and defended Mooreanism itself, including the implication that it is easy to know that you are not being deceived. I argued for a novel Moorean response to the *too easy* objection as it applies to the Moorean view. The response works largely by showing that the claim of Mooreanism is very modest. But I also argued that the truth of Mooreanism is anti-sceptically important. I did so by defending the contention that the conclusion of Moore's Argument is indeed a claim that a possible circumstance of perceptual deception does not obtain.

The account of this paper is not an anti-sceptical theory. For I have neither formulated nor shown how to refute any particular sceptical argument. And, relatedly, I have not responded to any possible *internalist* objections to my position. For example, I have not responded to the possible allegation that an inability to satisfy ourselves of purported knowledge is incompatible with our *knowing* that we have the knowledge. That allegation is false, in my opinion, but I have not argued that it is false.

My view is indeed anti-sceptical at least in the sense that it says that we can know that we are not being deceived. It is also sceptical in that, for example, we cannot satisfy ourselves that we have that knowledge. But I have not explored the full significance of this scepticism here.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Acknowledgements: I am grateful to Bernhard Weiss, Greg Fried, George Hull, Jack Ritchie and an anonymous reviewer for very helpful objections and comments on an earlier version of this paper. Special thanks to Bernhard Weiss. I would also like to thank James Pryor and Crispin Wright for giving me a lot of useful advice relating to the basic view of this paper.

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