

A REPLY TO MR. MOORE.

IN the April number of *MIND*, Mr. G. E. Moore has made "a short statement about chapter ii." of my *Essay on the Nature of Truth*. Although I am reluctant to write on this subject at present, I will try, out of respect for Mr. Moore, to answer his paper.

"Mr. Joachim," he remarks on page 230, "does not profess to be quite sure whether the main views he attacks are really held by Mr. Russell and me, or not; he says he *may* have misunderstood our words." The reasons for my hesitation are stated in § 12 of my book. It never occurred to me that Messrs. Moore and Russell had "used misleading language"; but I felt it a difficulty that (with regard to some points) they have used no language at all. When this difficulty is removed—and I gather from Mr. Moore's words¹ that he hopes before long to publish a systematic exposition of his views—Mr. Moore will find me ready, and even anxious, to be convinced. For most certainly I have formed no opinion that he is "dogmatic and unconvincing," although I freely confess that he has not yet convinced me.

Mr. Moore proceeds to formulate three propositions, which it will be safest to quote *verbatim*. They are:—

"I. That *some* facts are facts, and *some* truths true, which never have been, are not now, and never will be experienced *at all*, and which are not timelessly experienced either.

"II. That some of the facts and truths, which we do *sometimes* experience, are facts and are true, *not only* at the times at which they are experienced, but also *either* at times at which they are not experienced at all, *or else* timelessly; and that these facts and truths are not timelessly experienced either.

"III. That *precisely and numerically the same* fact or truth may at one time be experienced by me, when I am seeing the sea and am not seeing a house, and at another time be experienced by me, when I am not seeing the sea and am seeing a house; and that *precisely and numerically the same* fact or truth may be experienced by me, when I am seeing the sea and am not seeing a house, and may be experienced by another person, *e.g.*, by Mr. Joachim, when he is not seeing the sea and is seeing a house."

Mr. Moore maintains that, although I have not refuted any one

¹ *MIND*, p. 234, "although I hope some day to prove it".

of these propositions, my language is misleading unless I mean to deny all three. And he hopes to persuade me that the third proposition is true, or (as he modestly says) that "there is actually something to be said" in its favour (*cf.* MIND, p. 235).

Now I may say at once (1) that *with certain reservations* I do deny all three propositions; (2) that I thought—and still think—that I have refuted the substance expressed in them; and (3) that I do not think there is anything "to be said in favour of the third," if it be interpreted strictly and in the sense in which I deny it.

(1) I deny all three propositions; but I make certain reservations. These seem to me important, but it is impossible to state them adequately within the limits of this paper. I can only ask Mr. Moore to accept the following rough and imperfect sketch:—

(a) In the first place, then, my denial is made subject to a protest against one implication of Mr. Moore's method. For it is implied (is it not?) that I must *either* accept these propositions as absolutely true, or deny them as absolutely false. Mr. Moore is saying in effect "Give me a plain answer, Yes or No". But I contend, and have tried to establish in my book, that the subject-matter of Metaphysics does not admit this kind of treatment. The demand for a plain answer is sometimes effective in a court of law; but even there it is often inadequate to the complexity of the subject-matter. Even the rough and ready "truth of fact," which the cross-examination intends to elicit, may refuse to appear in the plain Yes and No of the witness's answer. And I suggest to Mr. Moore that a method, which is often too crude and too coarse to elicit what is roughly called "fact," is perhaps not suited to establish the truth in philosophy.

(b) In the second place, Mr. Moore assumes—or at least attributes to me—a severance between temporal and timeless experience, against which I have already protested, and must here protest again. Thus he says (MIND, p. 232) "With regard to the second proposition, on the other hand, Mr. Joachim seems to me to admit no more than that some of the facts and truths, which are known at a particular time by a particular individual, are facts and are true *not only* at that particular time. Here, therefore, I shall accuse him of holding that any such fact or truth, which is ever known at all, is *also* known *either* timelessly *or else* at every time at which it is a fact or is true." I have endeavoured in my book (*cf.*, e.g., §§ 27-29) to guard myself against a misunderstanding of this kind: and I can only repeat that, on my view, there can be no facts and no truths which are not *eo ipso* timelessly experienced.

(c) Lastly, Mr. Moore's way of formulating his propositions suggests that there are *two* things or factors, *viz.* "truth" (or "fact") and "experience": and that whereas *he* holds that these two factors may be, but are not always, connected, *I* hold that they always are connected. But I tried in my book to maintain that *there are not two things together with a relation, but one indis-*

soluble whole, and that to be 'fact,' or to be 'truth,' is to be an indissoluble whole of this kind.

My denial of Mr. Moore's propositions would therefore be most simply expressed in the thesis "To be a 'truth' (or a 'fact') is to be an-object-for-a-mind or a-subject-apprehending-an-object".¹

(2) It is not for me to decide whether I have refuted the substance of Mr. Moore's propositions or not. Neither Mr. Moore nor I are competent judges, for we are not unprejudiced critics. That Mr. Moore himself does not appear to be convinced, I sorrowfully admit: that he *ought* to be convinced, I do not venture to affirm. If a verdict is to be given, I am content myself to leave it to those who are not already committed, provided that they will read my book to the end and interpret it as a whole.

(3) I come now to the third proposition.² And first I must make a few remarks about "external relations".

Messrs. Moore and Russell maintain, as I understand, that the ultimate constituents of the Real are certain absolutely independent Simples and certain Relations. I have urged that a plurality of absolutely independent Simples cannot, even with the help of Relations, in any sense constitute a genuine unity. If two or more Simples come (or are) together, there is no genuine union, if they retain their simplicity and their independence. There is at most a coincidence. And I have argued that this difficulty is not overcome by the postulate of Relations which "relate" whilst leaving the *relata* absolutely independent. An "external relation" is, I can quite understand, a name for what the theory requires: but what the theory requires seems to me as contradictory as an "evil virtue" or a "round square". For if the relation really unites, and constitutes *one* in place of *two*, the *relata* thus united are *eo ipso* not absolutely independent Simples, but interdependent features of a whole. If, on the other hand, the relation is really "external," with the *two* there is now conjoined a *third*: but the *two* are no more genuinely *one* in virtue of the added *third*, than are the contents of a wastepaper-basket or of Mr. Moore's pocket.

To prevent misunderstanding, I hasten to add that on certain points here I am completely in the dark as to Mr. Moore's views. I do not know, *e.g.*, how he would deal with the *αἰσθητόν*—the par-

¹ I do not mean that the above thesis fully expresses the positive basis on which my denial is grounded. But it guards against one misinterpretation of my denial—a misinterpretation which Mr. Moore's formulation might suggest.

² In this connexion, I may be allowed to correct one of Dr. Schiller's mistakes. Twice in his *Studies in Humanism* (pp. 106-106 and 167-168) he quotes at some length from pp. 167-168 of my *Essay on the Nature of Truth*. The passage, which he quotes, sets forth a view which I am there attacking: but Dr. Schiller quotes it, with an air of triumph, as evidence that I myself hold the view in question. I am sorry that Dr. Schiller has been led astray; but I naturally assumed, in writing the passage, that it would be read in its context.

ticular which, in perception or in feeling, is "one" (or at least appears as "one") without either being, or appearing to be, "simple". There are, I should have thought, particulars *perceived* or *felt* as "ones" and as "wholes" (and yet not as "simple"), but most certainly not *perceived* or *felt* as a plurality of elements together with relations. Even the wastepaper-basket along with its contents is *perceived* as "one": but it is at least doubtful whether it is *first perceived* as many elements combined into a unity by relations of any kind, "external" or otherwise. And if Mr. Moore were to say "No, but in the end, or in reality, or for clear knowledge, every such *αλοθῆρὼν* is Many and Relations," he would neither have explained, nor have explained away, the sensible appearance of a non-relational unity.

Again, I do not know whether Mr. Moore holds that the "external relations" are absolutely independent of all the Simples, or not. If the terms are absolutely independent of the Relation, I presume that the Relation is absolutely independent of the terms. But—whatever we may think of terms related, yet absolutely independent of the relation—the conception of a *Relation which is absolutely independent of all terms* is so unpromising, that I will not attribute it to Mr. Moore without his express authorisation.

And lastly, I do not yet know whether Mr. Moore admits that his theory reduces the Universe to a collection of coincident Simples; nor whether, if he does admit this, he accepts it without dismay. I do not know whether he acquiesces in the abolition of all unity, except the unity of the Simples and the unity of conjoined coincidents; or whether he would maintain that some things, although not "simple," can neither be resolved into Simples and Relations, nor be put together out of Simples and Relations. And if he does maintain this, I do not know how he would reconcile it with his general position. Does he, in short, hold that *all* Relations are "external," and that *all* things can be reduced to Simples and such Relations? Or does he maintain merely that *some* Relations are "external," and that *some* things can be so reduced?

I have now endeavoured to explain the nature and extent of my hostility to "external relations," and I will return to Mr. Moore's third proposition. When in my book I rejected the conception of "external relations," I never for one moment denied that all elements, which co-exist, may be said in loose and popular language to be "externally related": nor did I dream of maintaining that all elements, which in any sense admit of being viewed together, must precisely in that sense be intelligibly coherent. Thus, my judgment that "A is B" co-exists with my seeing the sea and with my not seeing a house: and it also co-exists with a feeling of pleasure, with a mole on my cheek, and with a smoking chimney. And *if* my judgment does, to any degree and in any sense, fuse with my seeing the sea and with the mole on my cheek, then I agree that these three elements are

so far genuinely related. And *then* I maintain that, precisely *quâ* thus related, my judgment will differ from Mr. Moore's judgment that "A is B," made (let us suppose) under the inspiration of a toothache and the vision of a house. But if the judgment that "A is B" can be, and is, abstracted from some or all of these concomitants—if, in other words, they really are irrelevant to it—then just so far (I should maintain) we are in danger of confusion if we speak of the judgment as "related" to them, or of their coincidences with it as "*its* different relations". And the confusion is concealed, but not removed, by adding the term "external".

In the end, I admit—or rather, I maintain—that every difference in the Universe is vital to every other and to the unity of the whole. The Universe is a genuine whole, and for complete knowledge there is no element utterly unrelated or merely coincident. That which, to the limited view of Mr. Moore or myself, appears at first sight as merely coincident or as "externally related," is for ideally-complete experience intelligibly coherent, *i.e.*, fulfils *in the end* its determinate function within the one "significant whole".¹

But Mr. Moore, in his third proposition, invites me to consider pluralities, which, *taken as they stand*, certainly are not genuine wholes, nor *thus* intelligibly-coherent.

His instances are the following (MIND, pp. 231, 235). Mr. Moore, body and mind, with all his thoughts, at Edinburgh: Mr. Joachim, body and mind, with all his thoughts, at Oxford. Mr. Moore, seeing the sea and not seeing a house, and condemning Mr. Joachim's opinions: Mr. Joachim, seeing a house and not seeing the sea, and condemning Mr. Moore's condemnation. Each of these is a coincidence of coexistent elements, which Mr. Moore selects out of the entirety of things, and groups together. If Mr. Moore desires it, let us by all means call each of these bundles of coincidents "one," and speak of its elements as "externally related". But each bundle is "one" or a "whole" by courtesy, or, at the most, in so far as its elements are associated in Mr. Moore's thought. It is hard to believe that Mr. Moore supposes the bundles to be, severally, *one* in any genuine sense. Yet, unless he does so, his third proposition seems to be irrelevant.

Finally, whilst expressing my sincere admiration for the lucidity of Mr. Moore's argument (p. 235) on *precise and numerical identity*, I must nevertheless own that I think he is mistaken. Let me try to explain. The note A, whether struck on this piano or on that, or now or yesterday, is *the same* note. But it is not "precisely and numerically the same," if that means—as I presume it does—*the same to the exclusion of all difference*. Similarly, Mr. Moore affirms

¹ I am obliged here to be brief, and I am aware that my words may easily be misunderstood. The reader, if he wishes to understand, will kindly interpret the above paragraph in the light of chapters iii. and iv. of my book.

the same thesis, which I deny. But, once more, the "sameness" does not exclude all difference and is therefore not a "precise and numerical identity". And the sameness expressed in these differents is not, as Mr. Moore's ingenious argument assumes, an element of identity persisting within each concrete different beside elements of difference. For I must emphatically repudiate the inference which he draws from my denial of his third proposition. To his dilemma (p. 235), *either* "precisely and numerically the same" or "not identical at all, but only exactly alike,"¹ the answer is (I submit) clear, and even obvious. The dilemma rests upon a disjunction which is not exhaustive. It assumes—and the assumption underlies the whole position of Messrs. Moore and Russell—that there is no identity except the abstract identity excluding difference, and that there is no Universal which is not itself merely another Particular.

It would be absurd (I venture to think) if, comparing the Mr. Moore of to-day with the Mr. Moore of ten years ago, I were to say, "*Either* there is within the two Mr. Moores an element precisely and numerically identical, *or* the two Mr. Moores are not the same, in any sense, but at most 'exactly alike'". Yet this, as it seems to me, is the kind of dilemma which Mr. Moore's argument puts before me.²

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¹ Mr. Moore does not explain what he means by "exact likeness". But his argument (if I have not misunderstood him) loses all point, unless that which is *exactly like* is also in no sense identical.

² It will be noticed that I have made no attempt to develop or to defend the conception of a concrete identity. The subject of identity is so vast and so difficult, that an adequate treatment in the present paper would in any case be impossible. Moreover (if I am to speak frankly) I am by no means confident that such a treatment—a treatment, which I should myself regard as adequate—lies within my powers. But I am not on that account prepared to embrace the abstract identity, which appears to satisfy Mr. Moore. Bread may be beyond my grasp, but I shall not *therefore* swallow a stone.