Moore on External Relations

G. J. Mattey

Fall, 2005 / Philosophy 156

The Dogma of Internal Relations

- Moore claims that there is a "dogma" held by philosophers such as Bradley and Joachim, that "all relations are internal."

- Joachim: "All relations qualify or modify or make a difference to the terms between which they hold" (*The Nature of Truth*, p. 12).

- Moore claims further that the dogma is difficult to understand.

- He will provide a clear proposition which it implies and which is "certainly false."

- And he will argue that given the meaning of "internal" in the proposition, there are some relations which are purely external.

A Weak Version of the Dogma

- The kind of fact that is expressed by stating that a relation obtains involves more than just the terms and the relations themselves.

    - Edward VII was the father of George V.
    - The fact consists of more than just Edward, George, and fatherhood.

- The relation must relate the terms.

- Those who claim that all relations are internal seem to be claiming something stronger than this.

A Strong Version of the Dogma

- When entering into a relation brings about a change in a thing, we say that the thing is modified by the relation.

    - By putting wax into a flame, we make it melt.

- The dogma might be that all relations modify, in the sense of bringing about a change it, the terms which stand in it.

- If so, the dogma is clearly false, since some terms stand in relations but do not change at all.

- Moore concludes that "modify" must be understood in a analogous sense.

Relational Properties

- The dogma seems to be that when a thing stands in a relation to a thing, it is the standing in the relation which "modifies" it.

- The claim, then, is not strictly that the relation itself modifies the thing.

- So Moore introduces the notion of a "relational property"

- A single relation, e.g. fatherhood, may be the source of more than one relational property, being the father of someone.

    - Edward VII has the relational property of being the father of Edward Duke of Clarence.
    - Edward VII has the relational property of being the father of George V.

- If we can understand what it is for a relational property to be external, we "can easily derive" a sense in which a relation is external.

An Analogous Sense of "Modify"

- If A's possession of a relation Φ modifies A in the sense of literally modifying (changing) A, then standing in relation Φ to A would make A different from what it was if it not have Φ.

    - "If the being held in the flame causes the sealing-wax to melt, we can truly say (in some sense) that the sealing-wax would not have been in a melted state if it had not been in the flame."

- The condition that standing in relation Φ to A would make A different from what it was if it not have Φ seems applicable as well to cases which do not involve literal modification.

- So this will be taken to be the analogical sense of "modifies" that powers the dogma.

- "It can always be truly asserted of any term x which has that property, that any term which had not had it would necessarily have been different from x."

Necessity

- The proposition in question can be clarified further by explanation of the use of "would necessarily have been."

- If any x which had Φ would necessarily have Ψ (here, being different from x), then it follows from the fact that x has Φ that it has Ψ.

- Moore gives to examples to illustrate his use of "follows from."

    - It follows from the fact that something is a right-angled triangle that it is a triangle.
    - It follows from the fact that something is red that it is colored.

Difference

- It remains to clarify the use of "different from."

- Difference may be of two types:

    - Numerical difference, non-identity,
    - Qualitative difference, difference in some respect.

- If A is qualitatively different from B, then A and B are numerically different.

    - If ball A is red in color and ball B is green in color, they are two different balls.

- The dogma seems to apply most clearly to qualitative difference.

- And so it applies to numerical difference as well.

Internal Relations in the Qualitative Sense

- Φ is an internal relation if and only if any x which has Φ is such that it follows from the fact that y lacks Φ that it is qualitatively different from x.

- Moore thinks that it is difficult to find a plausible example of an internal relation of this sort.

- One possibility is to make x itself a quality which has relations to other qualities.

    - The quality orange has the relational property of being intermediate between the qualities yellow and red.

- The quality orange which is intermediate between yellow and red is such that it follows from the fact that a quality is not intermediate between yellow and red that it is qualitatively different from orange.

- It seems that most relational properties are not internal in this sense.

- But a more compelling case against the dogma can be made if weaker version involving numerical identity is false.

Internal Relations in the Numerical Sense

- Φ is an internal relation if and only if any x which has Φ is such that it follows from the fact that y lacks Φ that it is numerically different from x.

- A case of a relation which is internal in this sense is that of a whole to its parts.

  - A visual sense-datum which is half red and half yellow would be a different sense-datum if it lacked the relation to the two colored patches that make it up.

- On the other hand, the relation of parts to a whole seems external.

  - The red patch in a visual sense-datum would be numerically the same red patch even if it did not compose a whole with the yellow patch.

- To deny this "obviously flies in the face of common sense."

- Standing in the relation is a mere matter of fact, and this "seems to me to be the most important thing that can be meant by saying that some relations are purely external."

Motivation for the Dogma

- Moore wonders how any philosopher could deny that standing in some relations is a mere matter of fact.

- His diagnosis is that a true proposition is confused with a false one.

- True: (1) If A has Φ and x lacks Φ, then it follows that A is not identical to x.

  - If George V's father is Edward VII, and some person's father is not Edward VII, it follows that the person is not George V.

- False: (2) If A has Φ, then from the fact that x lacks Φ, it follows that A is not identical to x.

  - If George V's father is Edward VII, then from the fact that some person's father is not Edward VII, it follows that the person is not identical to George V.

- The difference may be so clear that nothing more needs to be said, but it conflicts with a common view in logic.

Some Logical Notation

- Moore tries to formulate his objection to the move from (1) to (2) in the language of Russell's *Principia Mathematica*.

- So we will need to introduce a bit of notation in order to follow his moves.

- Universal quantifiers, (x), (x, y), (x, y, z), etc. express (in the terminology of "On Denoting") "for all values of x," "for all values of x and y, etc.

- Negation, $\sim$, expresses that it is not the case that.

- "Material implication," $\supset$, expresses that it is not the case that what is on the left side is true and what is on the right side is false.

- We will dispense with Russell's dot grouping punctuation in favor of parentheses.

Entailment

- If q follows from p (as in the examples given above), we can say that p entails q.

- Russell had no special notation for entailment, so Moore supplies the expression "ent."

- He gives as an example the conjunction of premises in a syllogism of the form *Barbara* entailing its conclusion.

    - "All whales are mammals and all mammals are warm-blooded" entails "All whales are warm-blooded": p ent q.

- He also gives an example of a non-entailment a connection which is not logical.

    - "Socrates was a man" does not entail "Socrates was mortal": not p ent q.

Formal Representation of the Two Propositions

- True proposition (1): $(x, y)(\Phi x \text{ ent } (\sim \Phi x \supset y \neq x))$.

- False proposition (2): $(x, y)(\Phi x \supset (\sim \Phi x \text{ ent } y \neq x))$.

- It can be easily seen that the move from (1) to (2) involves exchanging places between '$\supset$' and 'ent.'

- In terms of propositional logic, the move is as follows:

    - From p ent $(q \supset r)$,
    - To $p \supset (q \text{ ent } r)$.

- This is the move that Moore finds to be invalid.

5

A Counter-Example

- True: "All men are mortal" entails "it is not the case that Socrates is a man and Socrates is not mortal."

- False: It is not the case that all men are mortal and "Socrates is a man" does not entail "Socrates is mortal."

- In fact, it *is* the case that all men are mortal and that "Socrates is a man" does not entail "Socrates is mortal."

The Source of the Confusion

- The reason one might be tempted to hold (2) is due to Bertrand Russell's interpretation of the "⊃" connective.

- He thought (at least at one time) that it expresses a form of *implication*, "material" implication.

- Then implication is thought of as expressing entailment, and there is no distinction between:

  - $p \supset q$ implies
  - p ent q, or

  - $(x)(\Phi x \supset \Psi x)$ implies
  - $(x)(\Phi x$ ent $\Psi x)$.

- In either case (2) would follow from (1).

A Counter-Example

- True: It is not the case that both I am in this room and I am not more than five years old.

- False: "I am in this room" entails "I am more than five years old."

- "Being a person in this room" does not bear the relation to "being more than five years old" that "being a right angle" bears to "being an angle."

- Other interpretations of "ent" involving "⊃" also fail to sanction the move from (1) to (2).

Some Relational Properties are Not External

- Having dispensed with the only argument he could find in favor of the thesis that all relational properties are internal, Moore turns to the question of whether some are not internal (in his sense).

- All Moore can say is that "it seems evident in many cases that a term which *has* a certain relational property *might* quite well not have had it."

    - That this is this does not entail that "this has to other things all the relations which it in fact has."
    - That Edward VII was father of George V does not entail that Edward VII would not be Edward VII were he not father of George V.

The Identity of Indiscernibles

- In a very strong sense, relations are internal when anything not having a relation Φ that x has is necessarily qualitatively distinct from x

    - Two ping-pong balls in different locations (hence differing in a relational property) necessarily differ in some quality.

- The identity of indiscernibles follows from the strong sense of internal relations.

    - Two ping-pong balls that are different necessarily differ in some quality.

- Moore accepts the claim that if two (say) ping-pong balls are different, then they necessarily differ in some relational property.

- He also claims that the identity of indiscernibles is "obviously false," which would make the proposition that relations are internal (in the strong sense) false as well.

Grounding

- Russell understands the dogma as asserting that "Every relation is grounded in the natures of its related terms."

- But he is puzzled about what the "natures" are.

- If the natures are the terms (things) themselves, then it follows from the weak, numerical, version of the dogma that every relational property follows from the thing's just being the thing it is.

- If the natures are non-relational qualities, then it follows from the strong, qualitative, version of the dogma that every relational property follows from a thing's having all its qualities, since things differing in relational properties are qualitatively different.

- There is a sense in which a relation is grounded in the nature of its related terms: the thing has some non-relational property without which it could not have the relational property.