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Review

Thomas Baldwin and Consuelo Preti, editors. *G.E. Moore: Early Philosophical Writings*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011. ISBN 978-0-415-39627-1

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Review: G.E. Moore: Early Philosophical Writings, edited by Thomas Baldwin and Consuelo Preti

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G.E. Moore: Early Philosophical Writings publishes for the first time two versions of Moore's fellowship dissertation *The Metaphysical Basis of Ethics* (1897, 1898) together with the comments by the examiners Henry Sidgwick, Edward Caird and Bernard Bosanquet. In addition, the editors Thomas Baldwin and Consuelo Preti have written an illuminating introduction where they elaborate the philosophical background of Moore's dissertations. Moore's support for idealism is most apparent in his first dissertation of 1897 but already the 1898 dissertation shows his transition from idealism to realism. While Bertrand Russell's (1872–1970) idealist apprenticeship has been examined before by Griffin [1991] and Hylton [1990], there is no detailed research of Moore's early philosophy from the years 1894–1904 although it was Moore who took the lead in Russell's and his revolt against idealism [Hylton, 1990, 117]. Thus this publication offers an important source for those who are interested in the early phases of Moore's philosophy and also in its significance for the more general development of early analytic philosophy.

These dissertations represent an important stage in the development of Moore's early thought which culminates in the publication of *Principia Ethica* in 1903. In 1892, Moore arrived at Trinity College Cambridge to study classics. The Cambridge Conversazione Society, the Apostles, was a determining intellectual experience of

Moore's undergraduate life. Undoubtedly, the Society played a key role in Moore's philosophical development because it offered him a ground to have philosophical discussions and debates with Russell, J.M.E. McTaggart (1866–1925) and others. Moore wanted to become a Prize Fellow and follow the footsteps of his friends McTaggart and Russell. In 1898, which was his second shot, Moore succeeded and was elected to a Prize Fellowship at Trinity College Cambridge. For those who pursued academic career Prize Fellowships offered by Cambridge and Oxford colleges provided the main way to achieve the qualification for an academic career.

Moore submitted typescripts as dissertations but he also preserved manuscripts which Baldwin and Preti used to prepare this edition. The manuscripts have many corrections and the 1898 dissertation is incomplete [Baldwin and Preti, 2011, lxxii]. In spite of that the editors have been able to prepare a reliable edition: they have reconstructed the missing pages of the 1898 dissertation. The manuscript of the 1898 dissertation lacks parts of chapters I and II. A natural explanation for these gaps is that Moore extracted these pages in order to compose his paper "The Nature of Judgment" which was published in *Mind* in April 1899 [Baldwin and Preti, 2011, lxxv]. At the start and at the end of most of the gaps in the manuscript there are passages which overlap with parts of "The Nature of Judgment." That is why the editors have used "The Nature of Judgment" to reconstruct the chapters of the 1898 dissertation on which it is based. The general shape of their reconstruction is supported by Moore's letter to Russell and also by Bosanquet's examination report on the dissertation [Baldwin and Preti, 2011, lxxvi].

Ward advised Moore to write his Fellowship dissertation on Kant's ethics. Moore had familiarized himself with Kant's philosophy as an undergraduate by attending to Stout's and Sigwart's lectures. He was able to read Kant's writings in German. The neo-Kantian movement was dominant in German philosophy and also in Britain Kant's philosophy was receiving increasing attention. T.H.

Green used Kantian themes in his *Prolegomena to Ethics* (1883) but perhaps the most notable British neo-Kantian was Moore's 1897 examiner Edward Caird. Moore mentions Caird's work *The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant* (1889) in his 1897 preface and alludes to it in both dissertations [Baldwin and Preti, 2011, xlv–xlvii]. Following Ward's advice Moore gave his 1897 dissertation the title "The Metaphysical Basis of Ethics" although he primarily examined in it the place of freedom in Kant's metaphysics of ethics. Moore's second version of the 1898 dissertation has the same title though his interests changed during 1898. His focus of attention shifted to a critique of Kant's Pure Reason and to his own new theory about concepts and propositions. Even though Moore's interests changed, he debates with Kant in both of his dissertations.

The 1897 dissertation consists of one long chapter "Freedom," a short preface, an introduction and an appendix on Professor Sidgwick's hedonism. Moore had intended to add two chapters, one on "Kant's attitude towards Hedonism and Practical Ethics" and one on his own "positive theory about practical applications." Because of lack of time, Moore was not able to fulfil his intentions. In the 1898 dissertation Moore made no great effort to address these issues except for the brief discussion of "practical ethics" in chapter V. Moore's 1898 dissertation includes a preface, an introduction and four chapters of which the first two ones are new (I "On the meaning of 'Reason' in Kant" and II "Reason"). Chapters III ("The meaning of 'Freedom' in Kant") and IV ("Freedom") are largely derived from the single chapter of the first dissertation although its contents are reorganized. Also chapter V "Ethical Conclusions" is a new one, an exploration into practical ethics. This chapter is followed by two appendices, a new one on the chronology of Kant's ethical writings and the previous one on Sidgwick's hedonism [Baldwin and Preti, 2011, lxxx]. Thus, the structures of the dissertations are very different.

In accordance to his title "The Metaphysical Basis of Ethics,"

Moore recognised the need to show that there is a metaphysical subject matter for his study in his 1897 dissertation. What was this for him? Moore's argument was that there is a "fallacy involved in all empirical definitions of the good" [Moore, 2011, 10], [Baldwin and Preti, 2011, xlviii]. The thought behind Moore's argument seems to be that the existence of persisting deep ethical disagreements which cannot be resolved by identifying differences in the definitions of ethical terms shows us that ethical terms do not admit of definition in empirical terms [Moore, 2011, 10–11]. For Kant the fundamental moral concept is pure practical freedom. However, Moore disagreed with Kant on this and saw the good as the foundation of ethics [Baldwin and Preti, 2011, xlix]. In the 1897 dissertation most of Moore's discussion concerned Kant's account of freedom. Kant introduces the idea of freedom in the Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the context of a discussion about causality stating that the practical concept of the freedom of a rational agent was grounded on a "transcendental idea of freedom" which is the idea of a kind of causality which was "the faculty of beginning a state from itself" [Kant, 1998, A533/B561], [Baldwin and Preti, 2011, lii]. On this fundamental "Transcendental Freedom," as Moore called it [Moore, 2011, 35], he concentrated in his 1897 dissertation.

In 1897 the target of his critique was Kant's ethics but a year later Moore rejected the whole Kantian project of transcendental philosophy. In the 1898 dissertation Moore discussed critically Kant's transcendental idealism and its core completely rejecting Kant's "Copernican Revolution." Moore held that Kant uses three different lines of thought in the *Critique of Pure Reason* to substantiate his idealist thesis. The first one concerns the status of space and time, the second has to do with the categories of the understanding. The final one arises from the antinomies which are implicit in the cosmological ideas of totality. Moore argued that in each case Kant succeeds in revealing important themes: still, in no case an idealist conclusion is warranted [Baldwin and Preti, 2011, lviii–lix]. Moore

replaced Kantian rationalism with an intuitionist account of *a priori* knowledge which does not need to engage with the implications of the contribution to knowledge made by the mind's conceptualizing activities [Baldwin and Preti, 2011, lxiii]. However, as Baldwin points out, Moore's critique is not of great interest since it rests on a subjectivist interpretation of Kant [Baldwin, 1990, 9]. Nevertheless, Moore defined his own position partly through his criticisms of Kant.

G.E. Moore: Early Philosophical Writings is a valuable publication because in it Moore's dissertations are published for the first time. Because the research of his early philosophy has been neglected Baldwin's and Preti's work is very significant. It opens a new perspective on the influences which Moore absorbed to his philosophy. Perhaps the most interesting one of these is scientific psychology. In addition, the book gives one a chance to see the rise of analytic philosophy from a new viewpoint. Usually, Moore is known for his ethics, metaphysics and philosophy of common sense. Under this lies his critical engagement with Kant's idealist philosophy which is now published for the first time. This publication shows that Moore initiated his influential break with idealism in his 1898 fellowship dissertation.

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