

Why am I here? (YouTube video transcription 2013)

“Why don’t I just say what I’ve got to say and not worry, really not worry too much about how it looks.

“*This* is a hand...

“*This* is a hand...

“Once upon a time, there was a philosopher called G.E. Moore who thought he could *prove* the existence of an external world — by doing what I’ve just done now.

“It’s a question worth asking, What makes philosophers think that a certain sequence of words constitutes a *proof* of something?

“I mean, anyone who isn’t completely... an *idiot* would realize that if I was dreaming that ‘this is a hand and this is a hand’ it wouldn’t prove I wasn’t dreaming, or if I was in the Matrix it wouldn’t prove that I had hands. (OK, Neo had hands but there was no reason why he had to have hands, he could have just been a brain in a jar or something.)

“Why do philosophers when they prove things, why do they... what gives them the confidence to think that they have actually *proved* it?

“I’ve given proofs of things, so I know what it feels like when you say something and it looks as if things couldn’t be any other way than what you’ve said. It’s almost like a magic spell, you know, you’ve said the magic spell and now things have just *got to be* that way.

“But it’s also I think something to do with the fact that it isn’t really a proof at all, it’s a confession of the way you see things. And philosophy is much more about the fact that we see things a certain way... and yet we *know* that we’re wrong, so often.

“You know, you just discover that you’re wrong. You just have to see things another way to realize that the previous way you saw things was wrong (in your eyes now, of course, you could be wrong about that

too). And the point is that just because things seem a certain way doesn't make it that way. You can be wrong.

“And that's a question I ask myself. I've been doing philosophy now for 41 years, and the problems that I grapple with now are many of them the same problems I grappled with, or was introduced to, 41 years ago — the nature of truth, the problem of free will, the problem of scepticism, the mind-body problem.

“I mean, there's a whole, there's like a whole core of problems that are never going to be solved. Even though philosophers come up with all sorts of theories about them.

“And you've got to be a philosopher to understand how you can be still thinking about the same problems 41 years later. Which is what I'm doing.

“But one problem has come to the fore, and that is the problem, *Why I am here*.

“And what's funny about this, is because it is like the typical expression of teenage angst. And yet I would say it is the ultimate problem of philosophy. Because whether there's a world or no world, or supposing there *is* a world, *I* didn't have to be in that world. And whatever explanation that you might come up with of why there might be a world — God made it, it was some quantum event, it was the Big Bang, it was some super-string getting all knotted up — whatever, isn't going to explain that extra fact, why *I* am here.

“And I actually said this in my answer to Cameron on the ‘10 Big Questions’. If you look up ‘The Big Bang Theory’ on the ‘10 Big Questions’ 123infinity.com, I more or less say this, that the biggest question that no-one seems to be answering or has ever attempted to answer.

“But I did write a book about it. And the book is called *Naive Metaphysics*.

“Nobody read it. But then should they? Because it was all about me and why I am here. Why should they be interested in that?!”

“There you go!”

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