Too much has been made of the influence of the philosopher G. E. Moore on E. M. Forster, according to Forster’s authorised biographer, Mr P. N. Furbank. Forster never read Moore, a cardinal tenet of whose ethics Furbank says was ‘that the only things in the world possessing intrinsic value were good states of mind...’ And though he was a member of the Apostles during the period that Moore dominated the Society,

he was not, however, a Moore-ite. In fact he always believed himself incapable of abstract thought; and so far as the actual discussions were concerned, he usually found them extremely tedious. Indeed he often didn’t listen very closely – which helps to explain, what might appear puzzling, how it is that the problem which Ansell and his friends are discussing in that opening scene [of *The Longest Journey*]—about the cow in the field, and whether it is there when no one is looking—seems to belong more to the age of Berkeley than to that of Russell and Moore.¹

It may be that too much has been made of the influence of Moore’s *Principia Ethica* but Furbank’s comments on the matter suggest that more needs to be known about Moore and that influence before we can properly evaluate it. It is a mistake, first of all, to say that a cardinal tenet of Moore’s ethics was that only good states of mind possess intrinsic value; Moore, Forster, and Bloomsbury all maintained that works of art were of intrinsic value, and to equate them with states of mind is to make that fundamental error in philosophy that Moore attacked in his criticism of Idealism.² Forster has been
quoted by several interviewers as saying he never read Moore (he also said he never read Freud or Jung) but what Forster wrote on the subject indicates that he did not need to:

I did not receive Moore’s influence direct – I was not up to that and have never read *Principia Ethica*. It came to me at a remove, through those who knew the Master. The seed fell on fertile, if inferior soil, and I began to think for myself. . . . 3x

Hugh Meredith and A. R. Ainsworth were the friends who taught him most about Moore, Forster said in an interview,4x and Furbank's biography shows how influential Meredith was on Forster. As for Forster’s not being a ‘Moore-ite’, Leonard Woolf, who knew Forster and Moore and the Apostles well, has stated that, ‘. . . under the surface all six of us, Desmond, Lytton, Saxon, Morgan, Maynard and I, had been permanently inoculated with Moore and Moorism. . . .’5

Finally, the puzzle that Furbank finds in the opening discussion of *The Longest Journey* reveals that Forster knew his Moore better than his biographer believes. The opening discussion about whether the cow is there or not when no one perceives it is a fairly direct allusion to one of the most famous early papers Moore wrote. Entitled ‘The Refutation of Idealism’, it appeared in *Mind*—the same philosophical journal Ansell’s sister waves about, complaining of its criticism of her brother—in October 1903, which was around the time, Furbank shows, that Forster was beginning to formulate his ideas about Cambridge for his novel. The essay came out at the same time as *Principia Ethica*, which makes use of its arguments. In ‘The Refutation of Idealism’ Moore attempts to refute Berkeley’s assertion that *esse* is *percepi*, for this he says is the basic premiss of modern Idealism. It was not Forster, then, who was looking back to the age of Berkeley but Moore and Russell, who found Berkeley’s idea being used to support Idealism at the turn of the century in Cambridge. Their refutation of this Idealism is part of the revolution they worked in philosophy, and Forster’s novel is an imaginative interpretation and extension of that refutation. Indeed, Bertrand Russell’s account of how liberating Moore’s refutation was could have come from *The Longest Journey*:

With a sense of escaping from prison, we allowed ourselves to think that grass is green, that the sun and stars would exist if no