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ON THE SENSE-DATUM THEORY.

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1973
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TALKING ABOUT SEEING: AN EXAMINATION OF SOME ASPECTS
OF THE AYER-AUSTIN DEBATE ON THE
SENSE-DATUM THEORY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
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The Ohio State University
1973

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We find certain things about seeing puzzling, because we do not find the whole business of seeing puzzling enough.

L. Wittgenstein
Philosophical Investigations
VITA

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INTRODUCTION

The sense-datum theory has been steadily declining in popularity and influence for the past decade. It has come under attack from British and American linguistic philosophers, as well as from philosophers of science. The attacks from the linguistic philosophers are motivated, it seems to me, by an increasing impatience with the sceptical tendencies inherent in sense-datum theories. Those who attack the theory from this standpoint argue that justification and analysis of knowledge-claims based on perception can be seen to be a different sort of procedure than the sense-datum theorist envisions. The sense-datum theory—if construed as a theory about what we can be certain of—mistakes the criteria of certainty. The attacks from philosophers of science are also motivated, in part, by the desire to explain how perception is a source of information about the world of physical objects. Their arguments often take the form of attempts to show that the sense-datum theory is not accurate as regards the physiological and psychological findings in studies of perception.

I approach the sense-datum theory almost entirely from the point of view of the linguistic philosophers,
and my main objections to the theory are epistemological. I have chosen to discuss Ayer's formulation of the sense-datum theory since his is one of the most recent versions, and it has the further advantage of being the first in a series of debates on the theory. Ayer's *Foundations of Empirical Knowledge*¹ was attacked by John L. Austin in a series of lectures delivered at Oxford between 1947 and 1959. These lectures were published posthumously as they were reconstructed from notes taken by G. J. Warnock and J. O. Urmson.² This means that the text is less than ideal for a student of Austin's views, and I, for one, suspect that Austin's views were still undergoing development at the time the lectures were last given. It is clear, at least, that *Sense and Sensibilia* is the most programmatic of Austin's published works. Partly for this reason I have quoted less extensively from the text than might be expected, given that I have been strongly influenced by Austin and argue in many places as I take it he would have done. I have, in many cases, simply adopted an Austinian attitude. When I have disagreed with Austin I have said so, and suggested revisions which I think he could have accepted.

Austin's attack elicited a reply from Ayer in an article published a few years after Austin's death.³ In his reply Ayer states his views in a clearer, more concise way than he had previously. He isolates the central
points of disagreement between Austin and himself and, in some cases, grants that Austin is correct. The crucial points of conflict still remain, however, though they are in somewhat sharper focus. Despite the fact that L. W. Ferguson took up a defense of Austin in a reply to Ayer's reply a few years ago, I think that many of these points remain unresolved. Many who attack the sense-datum theory do so in a polemical fashion, and occasionally the theory is treated as though it were something no reasonable man would believe. I have chosen to enter the debate because it seems to me worth pursuing. The views expressed by Ayer are not peculiar to him; they emerge in a recent book by Timothy Spriggs and it seems to me they are involved in the current literature on the issue of "non-epistemic seeing."

I will begin by presenting Ayer's early views, expressed in *The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge*, on the linguistic interpretation of the sense-datum theory. In Chapter II, I will focus on Ayer's basic claim about the ambiguity of 'see' and Austin's objections to it. I argue that Austin's points are basically correct, although unfortunately problematic in detail. I propose modifications in Austin's view that are designed to handle these problems. In Chapter III, I turn to an examination of Ayer's reply to Austin, and I locate the main assumptions underlying Ayer's defense of the sense-datum theory.
Chapter IV is taken up with a discussion of the argument from illusion. This argument is treated at length by both Ayer and Austin, and is ubiquitous in the literature. I divide the argument into two parts. The first part involves an assumption for which I offer several explanations. My claim is that this assumption, in some version, is necessary for the argument from illusion to successfully prove the existence of sense-data, but that the assumption is neither inevitable nor desirable. I conclude by stating what I take to be the rationale for the argument from illusion and argue that, so construed, it does not constitute a powerful argument for the sense-datum theory.

In Chapter V, I turn to the phenomenon of hallucination, which is sometimes thought to be the paradigm example of a situation that calls for sense-data. I propose a distinction between delusions and hallucinations, and argue that these experiences are most plausibly taken to involve cognitive distortion, rather than perceptual error.

I do not take myself to have written an exhaustive critique of the sense-datum theory. The implications of this or any other traditional collection of views in philosophy are too varied and complex for that. I do think that I have exposed some of the basic structure of the theory, and the connections between its weaknesses and other philosophical problems.
Footnotes for Introduction


6 Especially as raised by Fred I. Dretske, in *Seeing and Knowing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969).
CHAPTER I
THE LINGUISTIC INTERPRETATION OF
THE SENSE-DATUM THEORY

Introduction.

Certainly one of the most noteworthy contributions to the philosophical literature concerning the sense-datum theory is A. J. Ayer's attempt to construe that theory as a recommendation that we adopt a new terminology in talking about perception. He sometimes calls this terminology the "sense-datum language" and argues that it is a desirable alternative to the language we ordinarily speak in doing philosophy. The sense-datum terminology would offer us as philosophers the means for referring directly to the contents of our experiences, thus allowing us to describe those experiences without having to refer to material things.

For since in philosophizing about perception our main object is to analyze the relationship of our sense-experiences to the propositions we put forward concerning material things, it is useful for us to have a terminology that enables us to refer to the contents of our experiences independently of the material things that they are taken to present.

The introduction of the sense-datum terminology as an alternative language, or quasi-language, is preceded in
The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge by the "two-language doctrine." The two-language doctrine is the view that the cases on which the argument from illusion (and the sense-datum theory) is based can be accounted for without introducing sense-data as the objects of perception if the term 'material thing' is redefined in such a way as to constitute a revision of our present framework of assumptions about material things. To accept the redefinition of 'material thing' and use it in its new sense would be to speak a language other than the one we now speak. Hence this move is called the two-language doctrine.

Ayer rejects the two-language doctrine on the grounds that he is concerned with explaining how we can say that we see material things in the ordinary sense of 'material thing.' This leads him to propose that there is a distinction between two senses of 'see' in ordinary language, and that this distinction reflects some of the assumptions that were in question in the two-language doctrine. He introduces the sense-datum theory by way of these two senses of 'see,' and characterizes the sense-datum theorist as, in effect, collapsing the two senses of 'see' into a third sense. This third sense of 'see' is the core of the sense-datum terminology.

In this chapter I will discuss these steps in Ayer's view, beginning with the two-language doctrine. Even though Ayer later comes to hold that it doesn't matter whether we
say that there are two senses of 'see' in ordinary language or not. He does, as I will show, retain the basic views that led to the distinction in the first place. Ayer continues to hold that the basic goal of those who treat perception philosophically is, or should be, explaining how we arrive at judgments concerning the existence or properties of material things, given the content of the sense-experiences we have. His own explanation is that judgments about material things are the results of inductive inferences, the grounds or premises for which are the statements we might make describing the sense-data we directly experience. He admits that such statements as are required for the premises of these inferences are not easily formulable, but maintains that it must be feasible to do so. The statements must not mention or presuppose the existence of material things, for material things are not given in the content of our sense-experience. Hence, even if we are not going to use the word 'see' or its cognates in making these statements, the sense-datum theorist's third sense of 'see' will provide an idea of what will be needed in a terminology for reporting content of sense-experience. Once the distinction between the content of sense-experience and the judgments we base on it is seen to be necessary there remains only the problem of describing the content of sense-experience in a language which seems structured toward expressing judgments about physical objects and
and their properties. Ayer is convinced that it would be useful to be able to formulate descriptions of the contents of our sense-experience without referring to physical objects and their properties. More than that, he seems committed to its being possible to do this. For if he is to defend his claim that our judgments concerning material things are the results of inductive inferences he should be able to produce examples of the premises of such inferences.

Section 1: The two-language doctrine.

The two-language doctrine is a series of moves that Ayer uses against the argument from illusion. The moves have the following form: Ayer locates a set of conflicting philosophical claims about what is perceived on some occasion, and then asks whether the dispute could be resolved by appealing to empirically observable facts. He claims that most, if not all, of the disputes for which the argument from illusion is invoked as evidence could not be resolved by appeal to the facts. If none of the opposing claims express either factual or logical truths he concludes that the dispute actually concerns, or can be analyzed in terms of, how the terms used in formulating it are to be understood. Once he has demonstrated the linguistic character of the disagreement he argues that the choice between the opposing sides in the dispute is really
a choice between two different languages. These languages contain the same terms but the rules governing the use of those terms is systematically different between the two languages.

The two-language doctrine is an attempt to take account of the facts cited in the premises of the argument from illusion in such a way that the conclusion of the argument becomes a recommendation that we talk in a certain way about those facts. The argument from illusion seeks to prove that we never directly perceive material objects, but always sense-data. If the cases on which the argument is based do raise genuine problems one may either accept the conclusion or argue that the problems can be solved without introducing sense-data as the sole objects of perception.

Ayer proposes, in the two-language doctrine, a way to save the claim that we always perceive material things. This proposal is interesting because it shows his method of turning what seem to be non-linguistic issues into linguistic ones. The proposal is this: if we reflect on the argument from illusion it will be evident that the argument tries to show that we always perceive sense-data on the grounds that some of our perceptions are delusional. Not all of our perceptions can be held to be veridical, since if it is maintained that all of them are veridical "we shall involve ourselves in contradictions, since we
shall have to attribute to material things such mutually incompatible properties as being at the same time both green and yellow, or both elliptical and round.\textsuperscript{5} Ayer maintains that the alleged contradictions that arise if one holds that all our perceptions are veridical do not arise solely from an examination of the perceptions themselves.

If from one standpoint I see what appears to be a round coin and then, subsequently, from another standpoint, see it as elliptical, there is no contradiction involved in my supposing that in each case I am seeing the coin as it really is.\textsuperscript{6}

The contradiction is not in the experiences. The supposition that in both cases I am seeing the coin as it really is "becomes self-contradictory only when it is combined with the assumption that the real shape of the coin has remained the same."\textsuperscript{7}

Ayer thinks that the assumption that the real shape of the coin has remained the same through successive viewings is an assumption about material things, their characteristic behavior and endurance. The standard assumption we make about material things is that they remain the same shape, that their shape does not undergo "some cyclical process of change."\textsuperscript{8} Ayer contends that since such standard assumptions about material things are not logically
necessary they can be consistently denied. Nor are they empirical truths. The "evidence" on which they rest is in every instance a matter of our being able to establish a certain order among our experiences. 9

For example, in the case of the penny viewed from two angles:

We say that a penny which appears to have a different shape when it is seen from a different angle has not really changed its shape, because when we return to our original point of view, we find that it looks the same shape as it did before. 10

Assuming, as we normally do, that the coin has remained the same shape during the three successive viewings adequately accounts for the coin looking the same on two occasions from the same point of view. However, this fact can also be explained according to Ayer by saying that the shape it had originally changed and then changed back again. Ayer remarks that

I have no doubt that by postulating a greater number of material things and regarding them as being more variable and evanescent than we normally do, it would be possible to deal with all other cases in a similar way. 11

So he suggests that instead of introducing sense-data to be the objects of perception on the basis of the cases on which the alleged contradictions arise, we "choose rather to deny the supplementary assumptions which are required for the contradictions to result." 12
Ayer says that it cannot be argued that such a suspension of our normal assumptions about material things would violate the evidence of our senses since both the assumptions and their contraries are consistent with sense-experience. They are merely alternative ways of ordering and accounting for that experience. Our normal assumptions are not factual but linguistic in character, so the effect of making them is to give to the expression "material thing" a different meaning from that which is ordinarily given to it.13

Ayer does not intend to defend the move to use 'material thing' in this non-standard way. Yet the structure of the suggestion is very similar to one he makes and accepts in connection with the sense-datum theory. So even though he rejects this particular argument he accepts the basic procedure. He rejects this instance of it only because he is primarily interested in the ordinary meaning of 'material thing,' and in explaining how we can be said to perceive material things in that sense of 'material thing.' One would need to find out just what the difference is between the linguistic and non-linguistic formulations of his suggestion in order to understand the character of what Ayer calls "linguistic" issues as opposed to factual issues. I will discuss this distinction in Section 5 of this chapter. Here I will simply comment that it is not clear what difference there is between a recommendation that we use the term 'material thing'
differently, and a recommendation that we think of material things as being different than we do now.

Ayer's suggestion seems to me to amount to this: that we agree to use the term 'material thing' to mean objects which have the temporal endurance usually associated with material things, but which also continually change shape or change shape when and as they are viewed from various relative positions. One might also formulate his suggestion in non-linguistic terms, as a proposal that we agree that material things undergo changes in real shape corresponding to changes in their apparent shape. His suggestion exploits the fact that the introduction of sense-data succeeds in blocking the "contradictions" that arise out of our normal assumptions about material things just because sense-data are far more numerous than material things (there are at least as many sense-data as there are occasions on which material things appear to perceivers). Sense-data do not exist unsensed, and their qualities are just as we perceive them to be.\(^{14}\) Since there are as many sense-data as there are episodes of perceivers perceiving, it should come as no surprise that we can avoid sense-data altogether by regarding material things as objects whose qualitative changes parallel any alteration in appearance.

As Ayer himself admits, there is no obvious advantage to be gained from adopting the non-standard use of 'material
thing.' It gains us nothing in the way of consistency with sense-experience, for, by hypothesis, sense-experience can give us no reason to use it in one sense rather than another. And there is at least one obvious disadvantage—as things stand now, to use 'material thing' in the new way would require the user to explain what he means. Ayer may be assuming that a "decision" to use 'material thing' in the new way would be made by all speakers, as the result of some important conceptual shift, for example. These details are left unspecified, however, and much of the initial plausibility of the suggestion rests on this vagueness.

Ayer proposes the new use of 'material thing' to block the argument from illusion. As I have indicated, this new use of 'material thing' allows us to say that material things have all the qualities they appear to have. In this they are now similar to sense-data. So someone sympathetic to the argument from illusion could reply that Ayer has not succeeded in blocking the conclusion of the argument. The conclusion of the argument says that we never directly perceive material things, and that we do directly perceive sense-data. This could be argued to be in effect equivalent to Ayer's suggestion that if we use 'material thing' to mean essentially what 'sense-datum' means, then we can say that we directly perceive material things. Ayer has not damaged the argument; he
may even have strengthened it some by showing what drastic adjustments we would have to make in our present notion of a material thing to make the claim that we directly perceive them consistent with the argument's premises.

Ayer believes that his proposal does weaken the argument somewhat: it shows that

the argument from illusion does not prove that it is necessary, in describing our perceptual experience, to use any word in precisely the same way as philosophers have proposed to use the word "sense-datum."15

The key word here is 'precisely.' Ayer's proposed new meaning of 'material thing' will not be exactly the same as the traditional use of 'sense-datum'; it will differ from the latter in that material things will be said to persist through their many qualitative changes, and presumably they will exist even when not perceived. It is not clear that this constitutes an improvement over sense-data, however. Sense-data do have the good grace to cease when not sensed. In the new sense of 'material thing' material things may go on changing even when not perceived. Thus a serious defense of this new sort of "material thing" would require some non-mental causal explanation of their unobserved changes— an explanation not required on a traditional sense-datum theory.

There are numerous questions that could be raised about (new) material things. For example, it may not be possible to say what qualities they have, but only what
kinds of qualitative changes they can be expected to undergo. Does this mean we can no longer say what something is without specifying the conditions in which it appears to be like that? Imagine the ramifications. "I asked you for a straight stick and you've given me this crooked one." "It will be straight when you take it out of the glass of water." Or, "How tall are you?" "From where you're standing I should guess about three feet."

Ayer rejects the "solution" provided by redefining 'material thing,' so these quibbles need not be taken too seriously. They show something about the sort of questions that he could anticipate were such a move to be seriously proposed. Furthermore, the questions point to something that Ayer does not mention. Even though we can decide to use any word differently, such a decision will have consequences that extend beyond the situation that prompted the decision. If we decide to use 'material thing' in this new way our concept of material things will undergo a parallel change. The conceptual change will effect changes in how we think and talk about tables, persons and electrons. Our expectations and attitudes will be different. In philosophy the notions of substance and attributes, causality, identification and re-identification, referring and truth (to mention just a few) will require massive adjustment.
Ayer mentions, in his reply to Austin, that in making this suggestion he was "not operating within our ordinary conceptual scheme but considering a revision of it." Whether such a revision is viable or not could only be decided "when it had been worked out in some detail." My doubts involve what working it out in detail would include. Deciding to change the meaning of a word, especially one as central as 'material thing,' is not simply describing a possible world in which everything remains the same but the meaning of that word. According to Ayer, the conclusion that some proposed alternative language is unworkable can only be reached by trying out such a language and seeing where it breaks down. Merely to point out that we do not ordinarily speak in such a way is nothing to the purpose.

It is true that an alternative language cannot be dismissed solely on the grounds that it differs from ours. The test of alternative languages--how they could be shown to "break down"--is not clear, however. Does it break down if, for example, we cannot say "Please pass the salt"? Presumably not. Does it break down if there is nothing in the language that I could use to get someone to pass me the salt? That would be more serious. But such an omission might be forgiven. In the language Ayer is here proposing as an alternative to the one we speak, we will be able to report seeing material things, and this
will mean that we see objects whose qualitative changes correspond to changes in their appearances. The proposed language will presumably provide no means by which to say that an object looks some way or other but isn't really that way. With respect to the particular example discussed here, there will be no way to say what the "real shape" of an object is, in the sense in which its real shape remains the same when the object is seen from various angles. In Section 4 I will return to the question how much of what we now say about perception must be retained in a proposed language for it to be a real alternative to our presently accepted terminology.

One more point: the claim that there could be an alternative language (or conceptual scheme) in which we could describe our sense-experiences is subjected to criticism from Austin which Ayer reports as follows:

I was taking it for granted that we were presented with a 'sensible manifold' which it was open to us to characterize in different ways, to organize in accordance with different conceptual schemes.18

Ayer admits that he did make this assumption, "surely rightly," although he adds that there may be limits to the "forms that this organization can take."19 The point I wish to emphasize is that the "sensible manifold" that Ayer thinks can be characterized and organized in various ways is the content of sense-experience—the neutral data which serves as the basis for our inferences and judgments,
made in accordance with our preferred language and conceptual scheme. Ayer is taking it for granted that there is a "sensible manifold" and sees nothing wrong in doing so. One might object that this presupposes a distinction which has not yet been established—viz., a distinction between something which is independent of language and conceptual scheme ("the sensible manifold") and something else which is variable, subject only to the restrictions of logic and the coherence of the language spoken about the sensible manifold. This is quite an assumption to make without argument, but that Ayer is willing to do so bears out my contention that the distinction fundamentally underlies the argument from illusion and the sense-datum theory generally, as well as my claim that Ayer wholly accepts the distinction and the sense-datum theory.

Section 2: The two senses of 'see.'

As I have indicated, Ayer is not satisfied with the solution described in Section 1, for that involves changing the meaning of the term 'material thing.' What he wants to show is that it is logically possible both to admit the facts that are ordinarily expressed by saying that some perceptions are delusive, and also to maintain that, in the case of such perceptions, we directly perceive material things, in the ordinary sense. He denies that ordinary language must be altered in any way at all to do justice to the claims about delusive
perceptions as presented in the argument from illusion. So he rejects the solution offered by the two-language doctrine and turns to showing how we can be said to perceive material things in the ordinary sense of 'material thing.'

He does this, essentially, by shifting his attention away from a consideration of what 'material thing' must be assumed to mean in order to handle the delusive experiences cited in the argument from illusion. He concentrates on the "implications" carried by the word 'perceive,' and argues that

It is indeed true that, if we restrict ourselves to using words in such a way that to say of an object that it is seen or touched or otherwise perceived entails saying that it really exists and that something really has the character that the object appears to have, we shall be obliged either to deny that any perceptions are delusive or else to admit that it is a mistake to speak as if the objects that we perceived were always material things. But the fact is that in our ordinary usage we are not so restricted.21

This way of putting the matter is potentially confusing. To say, as Ayer does here that something must have the character that the object appears to have leaves it open that what has the character may not be identical with the object that exists and appears to have it. That is, the italicized phrase may be read as meaning that 'a is seen and appears to be F' entails either
i) \((\exists x)(x = a \& Fx)\)
or
ii) \((\exists x)(x = a) \& (\exists y)(Fy)\).

I think this ambiguity can be resolved, however, by noticing that Ayer goes on to say that if we say that "an object is seen" entails that it really exists and "that something really has the character that the object appears to have," then we will have to deny either

a) our perceptions are sometimes delusive

or

b) the objects we perceive are always material things.

We would have to deny (a) in case the object seen always has the character it appears to have, and always exists. If Ayer intends (ii) as a reading of the italicized phrase in the previous quote, then neither (a) nor (b) will be denied. If \(y \neq x\), then we may be deluded by thinking that what has \(F\) is the object \(a\) that is seen. And if \(a\) is what is seen, then it is possible that \(a \neq y\), so that \(y\) may not be a material thing. Thus both (a) and (b) would stand if Ayer means (ii). If he means (i), both (a) and (b) could be denied. This suggests that his argument requires that we interpret the questionable phrase as (i) rather than (ii).

A sense-datum theorist could hold either (i) or (ii) as a reading for 'a is seen.' The difference for the theory would amount to deciding whether sense-data are perceived or not. If they are, then (i) would be preferable.
If material things are seen, then (ii) would capture the non-identity between what is seen and what has the apparent qualities.

Of course, Ayer does not think that we are restricted to (i) in our ordinary speech. We have two distinct senses of 'perceive' in ordinary language, and these two senses differ in what they imply about the existence and qualitative character of what is said to be perceived. Thus, instead of changing the meaning of 'material thing' so that material things are the objects of perception, but do not exactly correspond to our present notion of material things, Ayer suggests that the different implications carried by the two senses of the verbs 'perceive' and 'see' will cover cases in which what is said to be seen does not really have the qualities it appears to have, or in which what is said to be seen does not exist at all. In one sense, the sense in which 'I see a stick that looks crooked' does not imply that there is anything crooked, 'see' does imply that the thing seen exists, but not that it has whatever qualities it appears to have. In the other sense, the sense in which in double vision I can be said to see two objects, 'see' does not imply that what is said to be seen exists, in any sense at all. If 'see' is used in the existence-implying sense, then I cannot correctly describe my experience of double vision by saying 'I see two objects.' I will have to say 'I seem to see two
objects, but I really see only one.' The question "Well, how many objects did you perceive, one or two?" can be answered by deciding which sense of 'perceive' the questioner intends.  

Ayer claims that philosophers have been misled by confusing the two senses of these verbs "as their use of the argument from illusion shows."  

In one form or another it has been used to support such conclusions as that the world of sensible phenomena is self-contradictory; that our ideas of secondary qualities are not resemblances of any real qualities of material things; . . . and that if we have any acquaintance with material things as they really are, it is not through any act of sense-perception but only through some "intuition of the mind."  

Philosophers have been led to draw such conclusions on the basis of the sorts of cases mentioned in the first stage of the argument from illusion by failing to realize that 'see' and 'perceive' are being used in two senses, that these senses carry different implications as to the veridicalness of the experience being reported, and that their uses reflect correspondingly different assumptions on the part of the perceivers. There is no inherent contradiction, Ayer insists, in holding that a penny which looks round from one angle may look elliptical from another. We normally assume that some appearances of things are treated as "privileged," and that some of our perceptions are veridical while others are not.
Ayer does not fully address himself to the question how, in a given situation, we are to tell which sense of 'see' is being used. He remarks that the fact that 'see' and 'perceive' have two senses is not ordinarily a source of confusion to us, because we are able to tell from the context what is the sense in which such words are intended to be understood. 26

Notice, however, that some uses of 'see' seem to imply both existence and possession of apparent qualities. For example, in the case of the stick that looks bent in water, if I were to report this experience by saying that I see a stick that looks crooked I am, according to Ayer, using 'see' in the sense in which what I see must exist but need not have the qualities it appears to have. I may say, however, that "I see a straight stick in a glass of water that looks crooked." And in saying this I seem to be implying both that what I see really exists and that it really has the quality of being straight. This suggests that the sense of 'see' which Ayer says implies that what is seen exists but need not have the qualities it appears to have could also be used in cases where the object does have the qualities it appears to have.

In the following sections, I will attempt to show part of the theoretical motivation for Ayer's claim that there are two senses of 'see.' I will suggest that Ayer promotes such a distinction in part because he fundamentally
accepts the spirit, if not the letter, of the argument from illusion.

Section 3: The sense-datum theory.

In ordinary language we have, according to Ayer, at least two distinguishable senses of 'see.' Now Ayer characterizes the sense-datum theorist as proposing a third sense of 'see' in order to avoid the ambiguities that could arise (and do, as applications of the argument from illusion show) from having two senses of 'see.' Thus the sense-datum theorist has decided

both to apply the word "see" or any other words that designate modes of perception to delusive as well as to veridical experiences, and at the same time to use these words in such a way that what is seen or otherwise sensibly experienced must really exist and must really have the properties that it appears to have.

Ayer adds that "No doubt they also use these words in other, more familiar, senses."27

The sense of 'see' introduced by the sense-datum theorist is such that what is seen must both exist and have the properties it appears to have. What is said to be seen in this new sense of 'see' cannot be a material thing, at least in cases of delusive perception, for either the requisite material thing does not exist, or else it has not got the requisite property.28

The new sense of 'see' introduced by the sense-datum theorist is designed to be used in both reports of veridical
and reports of existentially and qualitatively delusive perceptions. The sense-datum theorist says that what is seen is a sense-datum, and then since

the distinction between delusive and veridical perceptions is not a distinction of quality, it is convenient to extend this usage to all cases. 29

This is to say that since we cannot point to a qualitative distinction between delusive and veridical perceptual experiences, if we must be said to perceive sense-data in delusive cases, there is no reason to hold that we perceive some different sort of object in veridical cases. 30

So, it is concluded, we always perceive sense-data.

Ayer accepts this conclusion, although he adds a disclaimer as to what accepting this conclusion comes to:

the contention that if these perceptions are not qualitatively distinguishable the objects perceived must be of the same type, which I saw no reason for accepting when it was treated as a statement of fact, can reasonably be accepted as a rule of language.31

The "rule of language" that Ayer accepts is the rule that we may speak of seeing (in this new sense) sense-data, that all objects of perception exist and have the qualities that they appear to have. Put another way, the "rule of language" would be that what we say we see are always sense-data, and never material things.

The sense-datum theorist would not be content with saying that we sometimes see sense-data and sometimes see material things. In practice the sense-datum theorist
holds that sense-data are what we (always) directly perceive, where 'directly' has the force of 'veridically' or 'without error.' The mistakes that we make in delusive perceptions are not errors of vision, but errors of judgment. We mistakenly judge that the sense-datum we "sense" in the bent stick example is the sense-datum of a (real) bent stick. We infer that the cause of the perception is an object that has the qualities belonging to the sense-datum. Thus, sense-data are those elements of the perceptual experience about which no such error is possible. That is why they can, in the new sense of 'see,' be said to be seen exactly as they are, even in cases of qualitative delusion. Some also maintain that material things are seen indirectly, via sense-data. While it is true that in this new sense of 'see,' what is seen is always a sense-datum, it might be held that there is an indirect sense of 'see' in which what is seen is a material thing.

For convenience in the following discussion, I would like to label the three senses of 'see' so far introduced. The sense of 'see' which implies that what is seen exists but need not have the qualities it appears to have will be called 'see-1.' The sense of 'see' which implies that what is seen must have the qualities it appears to have but need not exist I will call 'see-2.' The sense-datum theorist's preferred sense of 'see' I will call 'see-3.'
I have suggested that 'see-3' captures a sense of "directly" see, where no error of judgment or inference is possible, presumably because no judgment or inference is made. Error is possible in reporting a perceptual experience using either 'see-1' or 'see-2' because 'see-1' carries the implication that what is seen exists, and 'see-2' implies that what is seen, while perhaps not an existing material thing, has the qualities it appears to have. These implications represent inferences. Because anything we report seeing-3 is a sense-datum, no such report will be false (leaving aside verbal slips and deliberate falsehoods). 'See-1' and 'see-2' might naturally be classified as terms used to report indirect, rather than direct, perceptions. This is because error is always possible in alleged cases of seeing-1 or seeing-2. For example, Ayer holds that we can never be certain that we are not being deceived with regard to any judgment that a material thing exists. For the claim that a material thing exists is the conclusion of an inference based on our sense-experiences, and no finite set of sense-experiences can yield, with deductive certainty, the conclusion that a material thing exists. In Chapter III, it will be seen that the reason for this claim is that every statement to the effect that a material thing exists is, according to Ayer, essentially predictive. He allows that it is less misleading to say that the notion of certainty does not apply to propositions
of the sort in which we express our perceptual judgments, than to say that no such proposition can ever be known to be true. Certainty, for Ayer, is a deductive notion. And the relationship of propositions describing the contents of our sense-experiences to propositions implying the existence of material things is not that of premises to conclusion in a deductive argument. Our procedure in such cases is always inductive, and it remains inductive however much sensible evidence we may accumulate.34

Strictly speaking, it is not the implications of existence and qualitative integrity carried by 'see-3' that lead to the claim that only sense-data can be seen-3. It is the role that 'see-3' is to play in reporting both veridical and delusive perceptual experiences that opens the way for sense-data. It would have been possible to introduce a sense of 'see'—call it 'see-4'—that carries the twin implications carried by 'see-3' without importing sense-data. It could have been argued that 'see-1' and 'see-2' do not exhaust the ordinary uses of 'see'; that there is another sense, 'see-4,* in which we can say that we see material things veridically. We see-4 a material thing when it really exists and has the qualities it appears to have. Sense-data are necessarily involved with 'see-3' because 'see-3' is not used solely for reporting veridical perceptions, as with 'see-4'; it is also to be used in reporting both existential and qualitative delusions. Ayer's 'see-1' and 'see-2' are to be used in reporting delusive experiences too. The distinction between
'see-1' and 'see-1' is drawn in terms of which type of delusive experience each is meant to cover. This is why the sense-datum theorist would want to replace both these senses with 'see-3.' 'See-3,' unlike either of the other two senses, can be used in reporting both types of delusive experiences, as well as those that are veridical. It is important to notice that there is no sense of 'see' among the three that Ayer distinguishes that does serve to report a veridical perception of a material thing.

Section 4: The sense-datum language.

In this section, I will turn to Ayer's claim that the sense-datum terminology be understood as an alternative to ordinary language in which 'see' is used in the two senses he has distinguished. I will argue that in fact his suggestion would, if taken seriously, have the consequence that the language in which material things are spoken of as the objects of perception is a "meaningless" language, for, as we shall see, the grounds Ayer provides for the verification of statements about perception do not serve to verify statements about material things.

The point of introducing 'see-3' is to provide a technical sense of 'see' which is to be the foundation of a new terminology. The "sense-datum terminology" is introduced, in part, because
it should enable us to deal with the problems which arise from the fact that material things can appear to have qualities that they do not really have, and can appear to exist when they do not. Thus, Ayer proposes that a sentence like "I am perceiving a brown carpet, which looks yellow to me" be translated into sense-datum terminology as "I am sensing a yellow sense-datum which belongs to a brown carpet," and "The drunkard sees animals which are not really there" becomes "The drunkard sees sense-data which he takes to belong to animals, but which do not really belong to anything."

Ayer claims that

The advantage of this procedure is that it makes it possible for us to say that something real is experienced even in cases where our perceptions are delusive.

I take this to mean that the advantage to be gained from using the sense-datum language is that whenever something is truthfully said to be seen, there is something that exists. This will (at least sometimes, and perhaps always) be a sense-datum, so what is said to be seen, if what is said to be seen is a material thing, may not be identical with what exists. The fact that Ayer takes this to be an advantage suggests that he prefers, and rightly so, not to use 'see' in the sense we are calling 'see-2' where existential implication is completely suspended. I say "rightly so" because, as Austin points out, if what is seen-2 need not exist in any sense at all, then one wonders what it is that is supposed to "have the qualities that it
appears to have," which is the second requirement on the implications of 'see-2.'

Ayer has so far concentrated on giving examples of sentences using 'see-3' and referring to sense-data which are to be understood as translations of sentences using the other two senses of 'see' and referring to material things. From these examples he derives a general rule:

The general rule which one may derive from these examples is that the propositions we ordinarily express by saying that a person A is perceiving a material thing M, which appears to him to have the quality x, may be expressed in the sense-datum terminology by saying that A is sensing a sense-datum s, which really has the quality x, and which belongs to M.38

Ayer points out that in the statement of this rule it is assumed that the word 'perceive' is being used in such a way that to say that a material thing M is perceived implies that M exists. We might also, he says, suspend this assumption; in that case "we must say, not that s belongs to M but only that A takes it to belong to M, and so allow for the possibility that M does not exist; but in other respects the translation is the same." From this it follows, according to Ayer, that to assert that people actually do experience sense-data need be to assert no more than that such propositions as that I am now perceiving a clock or a pen or a table, in a sense of "perceiving" that does not necessarily entail that these objects exist, are sometimes true.39

The difference between what the sense-datum theorist is proposing and what we already have been given in Ayer's
distinction between the two ordinary senses of 'see' is not, so far, very great. What we have gained, in agreeing to use 'see' in the sense of 'see-3' is, simply, that we can say that we see-3 sense-data in all reports of perceptual experiences. Of course, it follows that anything that is seen-3 exists and has the qualities it appears to have. Recall that Ayer's 'see-2' was introduced in discussing the phenomenon of double vision:

if, being subject to an illusion of double vision, I say that I am perceiving two pieces of paper, I need not be implying that there really are two pieces of paper there. But surely, it may be said, if the two pieces of paper really are perceived they must both exist in some sense, even if not as material things. 40

A sense-datum theorist, confronted with this case, would be able to say that there are two real, existing things that are perceived. Although, if the assumption that Ayer mentions in connection with the general rule is sustained, then the sense-datum theorist may be taken as holding that when someone claims to sense a sense-datum s that belongs to a material thing M, it follows that M exists.

All this leads me to strongly suspect that the real "advantage" to be gained from adopting the sense-datum terminology is simply that doing so allows us to say that sense-data are "real" and "exist." Ayer's advocacy of the sense-datum terminology may--indeed must--be taken as advocacy of the sense-datum theory itself. Furthermore,
as I shall argue in Section 5, there is an implicit denial of existential implication with regard to material things involved in the adoption of the sense-datum terminology. This is the consequence of Ayer's views concerning the difference in the logic of reports made in the sense-datum terminology and those made in ordinary language.

Before I proceed to the next section to discuss the distinction Ayer draws between factual and linguistic issues I should like to call attention to the strong implication in Ayer's discussion that there are different senses of 'exist' or different senses in which something can be said to exist. Existing "as a material thing" seems to be one way of existing; perhaps "as a sense-datum" is intended to be another. It might also be suggested that 'exists' has a different sense in ordinary language than it does in the sense-datum language. It could be said that there will be different kinds of "existing things," but this will be interpreted on Ayer's view as a claim about the different referents of the subject-terms in the two languages. 41

Section 5: Factual versus linguistic issues.

Ayer, as we have seen, interprets the sense-datum theory as a recommendation that the terminology in which we speak of our perceptual experience be such as to allow that what is said to be seen is always a sense-datum. This
involves using 'see' in a special sense. Somewhat misleadingly, Ayer's exposition makes it seem as though the sense-datum theorist adopts a sense of 'see' designed to be used in reporting both existential and qualitative delusions, and sense-data just happen to fit the requirement for objects of that verb. The important step in Ayer's treatment of the sense-datum theory is to construe what seems to be a theory about the metaphysical analysis of perception as a recommendation for an alternative language. He claims that

when I say "I never see material things but only sense-data" I am saying something the truth or falsehood of which makes no difference whatsoever to the nature of my experience. Indeed it is misleading to speak of truth or falsehood at all in this case.  

The reason why it is misleading to speak of what is said being either true or false is that what is said can in no way be confirmed or disconfirmed by "empirical facts." He compares "I never see material things but only sense-data" with a similar sentence which does have some relation to facts, "I never see gold sovereigns but only Bank of England notes." The justification I might have for asserting the latter rests on "the verification of an empirical proposition" while

In the case of the sense-data it is a question of there being extraneous grounds for preferring one method of description to another, which is equally true to the facts.
He goes on to characterize an assertion that one only perceives sense-data as "a resolution about the usage of words." And such a resolution must be accepted or rejected on the basis of its convenience or usefulness.

Not only is the claim that we always perceive sense-data to be construed as a resolution about the usage of words, but the sense-datum theory seems not to be a genuine "theory" at all. A theory, as Ayer understands it, must "fit the facts." And alternative perceptual theories are not theories in that sense. He spends some time discussing H. H. Price's objections to the Theory of Multiple Location, the Theory of Appearing and the Theory of Compound Things and he takes Price's objections to be one and all linguistic in nature. Price is objecting to the way such theories are formulated; he argues that the Theory of Multiple Location cannot be right because it would entail saying that "doubleness" is a quality that a thing can have from a place, and he denies that "doubleness" is a quality at all. Ayer says that if such theories were alternative suggestions about the "nature of the empirical facts" then Price's objections to them would have no force.

But the truth is not that his objections are without force, but that he has mistaken the character of what he is attempting to refute. For what he regards as alternative theories are, in fact, what I should call alternative languages. As languages, they afford us the means of describing what we already know, but it is not to be expected that we should be able to deduce anything from them concerning the
nature of our future experience; for if that were possible they would not be languages, but theories in the ordinary sense.  

This is the clearest statement of the difference between a theory and a recommendation for a language that I can find in *Foundations of Empirical Knowledge*. A language gives us a means of describing what we already know, though it is clear that some are more "perspicuous" than others. A theory, on the other hand, provides information about the way things are such that we can deduce from it something about the nature of our future experience. Theories can be tested against each other by empirical means by deciding which of them provides the best predictions. Alternative languages must be weighed "on linguistic grounds." And Ayer himself recommends that the sense-datum terminology be selected over the "languages" recommended by the other three "theories" on the grounds that these alternatives to the sense-datum terminology . . . lack the advantage, which the other affords, of enabling us to refer to the contents of our sense-experiences, without referring to material things.

Ayer concludes that we may well wish to adopt the sense-datum theory,

But it must be understood clearly that the acceptance of this theory involves nothing more than a decision to use a technical language; . . .

There are at least two catches in all this, despite Ayer's assurances that the sense-datum theory is really quite harmless, amounting only to a resolution about the
use of certain words. One catch is that the sense-datum theory, while perhaps not a theory about the nature of the empirical facts, does carry some metaphysical or epistemological baggage which many might want to avoid. I will discuss this in Chapter III. The other catch is that Ayer calls it an "advantage" of the sense-datum theory that it allows us "to refer to the contents of our sense-experiences without referring to material things." And this is not, as one might think, a mere linguistic preference. Ayer thinks there is a logical difference between statements in which material things are referred to and statements in which sense-data are referred to.

He holds, in fact, that a statement in which reference is made to a material thing is never conclusively verifiable. His view is that in order to verify a statement in which reference is made to a material thing it would be necessary to perform an infinite number of tests. Even though he holds that

the propositions which are ordinarily expressed by sentences which refer to material things could also be expressed by sentences which referred exclusively to sense-data; . . . 51

the translation is subject to limitations. For example, no such pair of sentences, one of which referred to material things and the other to sense-data, will be of the same logical form. We cannot simply substitute 'a pennish group of sense-data' for 'a pen' in the sentence "This was written
with a pen.' This shows that the two expressions are not of the same logical type; hence the resulting pairs of sentences will have different logical forms.\(^{52}\)

In fact, Ayer denies that a statement in ordinary language will ever be equivalent to a statement in the sense-datum language:

> When statements are equivalent to one another, they can always be represented as standing in a relationship of mutual entailment.\(^{53}\)

For example,

1. A sense-datum is veridically sensed.
and 2. A material thing is veridically perceived.

While (2) entails (1), (1) does not entail (2), for (2) is about a material thing, and while statements about material things are not conclusively verifiable.\(^{54}\)

Statements about sense-data can be: in fact, if a sense-datum is sensed at all, it is veridically sensed because it has been made impossible by definition that a sensed sense-datum does not exist, or does not really have the properties that it appears to have.\(^{55}\)

This indicates that there is a logical difference between the sense-datum language and ordinary language (the language in which we talk about material things). Some statements in the sense-datum language will be conclusively verifiable, while no statements about material things will be. This seriously undermines Ayer's claim that the sense-datum language is an alternative to ordinary
language, and that the decision to use one or the other is simply a matter of convenience in doing philosophy. By choosing to express ourselves in a sentence which mentions material things, the proposition that we will be able to express will differ from a proposition about sense-data "in that there are no observable facts that constitute both a necessary and sufficient condition of its truth." 

So in adopting the sense-datum terminology we are also opting for a vehicle of expression for which there are conditions available for verifying what we say. This is a significant advantage. There is another advantage Ayer mentions—that is the fact that the sense-datum language allows us to isolate a constituent of our sense-experience that tends to be ignored in ordinary language. This is the topic for Chapter III.
Footnotes for Chapter I


3 These include optical illusions, hallucinations and situations in which an object appears to have a property it does not really have, or appears as though lacking one it does really have.


7 One must make another assumption for these claims to conflict: namely that seeing the coin "as it really is" involves seeing its "real shape," which is the shape it would appear to have when viewed from a certain single angle. Accepting this assumption would seem to entail a blurring of the distinction between the outline of a coin when seen from some angle and its shape (when viewed from any angle).

8 Ayer, 1940, p. 18.

9 Ibid., p. 16.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., p. 17

12 Ibid., pp. 15-16.

13 Ibid., p. 19.

14 There is controversy among sense-datum theorists over whether to say that sense-data can undergo qualitative
change. Most would deny that they can. Ayer's point does not require that he take sides in this controversy.

15 Ayer, 1940, p. 20.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
21 Ibid., p. 20. Italics mine.

22 Ayer almost always speaks of the word 'see' as what, in the situation, carries the implications in question rather than the speaker or the entire utterance.

23 Ayer, 1940, p. 21.
24 Ibid., p. 24.
25 Ibid., pp. 28-29.
26 Ibid., p. 24.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.

30 See Chapter III, Sections 1--3 and Chapter IV, Section 1 for a detailed presentation of the argument from illusion. As I characterize the argument it has two parts. The first part argues that sense-data are perceived in certain special cases. The second part argues that there is a relevant similarity between these special cases and normal perception, so that if we perceive sense-data in one sort of case we must be supposed to perceive them in all cases.
I will discuss the problem of truth and falsity of statements containing 'see-3' in Section 5 of this chapter.

As I have been suggesting, however, I do not agree with Ayer's denial that this commits him to the existence of sense-data.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., p. 232.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., p. 239.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., p. 235.
56 Ibid., p. 110.
CHAPTER II

AUSTIN'S REJECTION OF THE TWO SENSES OF 'SEE'

Introduction.

In Chapter I, I presented Ayer's two-language doctrine, his reasons for abandoning it, and the subsequent distinction between two senses of 'see' that Ayer introduces to explain how in ordinary language we can correctly use 'see' in reporting cases of existentially and qualitatively delusive perceptions, and still be able to say that we see material objects. As I indicated there, Austin rejects the distinction between two senses of 'see.' He denies that there is any ordinary sense of 'see' corresponding to Ayer's 'see-2.' This is an important criticism, for as I pointed out in Chapter I, Section 3, the sense-datum theorist is said to be advocating a third sense of 'see' which is, in fact, a fusion of 'see-1' and 'see-2.' If there is no sense of 'see' corresponding to 'see-2,' and if there could be shown to be no use for such a sense of 'see,' then the justification for introducing the third sense of 'see' and the assumptions that attend it will have to be re-thought. I will argue that Austin's reasons for rejecting the distinction between
'see-1' and 'see-2' are basically sound, but that his explanation of the examples on which Ayer bases the distinction is inadequate as it stands. I will offer what I take to be an adequate explanation of those examples, and this will be one which does not require the distinction between two senses of 'see' as Ayer conceives it.

Section 1: The two senses of 'see.'

Ayer suggests that some of the examples of visual illusion and delusion on which philosophers have based the sense-datum theory can be described in such a way that they seem to involve an ambiguity in the verb 'perceive' or 'see.' Ayer thinks that by artificially restricting the use of 'see' to cases in which 'see' implies both that the thing said to be seen exists and has the qualities it appears to have, a case for sense-data can be generated from ordinary language. As it is he holds that we need not so restrict the use of 'see' because there are at least two ordinary senses of these verbs 'see' and 'perceive.'

Austin attacks this distinction between 'see-1' and 'see-2.' He dismisses 'see-2' entirely, claiming that there simply is no sense of 'see' as that in English. He questions the claim, implicit in the definition of 'see-2,' that we can properly be said to see what does not exist in any sense at all. He holds that when someone
says that he sees something he (at least) believes that what he says he sees exists in some sense. He says, for example, that if I do not think that ghosts exist in any sense at all, then

I can't afford to admit that people ever see them—I shall have to say that they think they do, that they seem to see them, or what not.3

Austin then questions the conjunction of implications that Ayer associates with 'see-2.'

It is in fact very hard to understand how Ayer could ever have thought he was characterizing a single sense of 'see' by this conjunction of conditions. For how could one possibly say, in the same breath, 'It must really have the qualities it seems to have,' and 'It may not exist'? What must have the qualities it seems to have?4

There is a sense in which this is the most telling question that could be asked of Ayer's distinction between two senses of 'see.' Ironically enough, we will see in Sections 4 and 6 that locating an object that can be said to have the properties that we ascribe to or by means of which we identify things we say we see is also a problem for Austin. In the next section, I will explore in more detail Ayer's reasons for introducing 'see-2.'
Section 2: 'See-2' and double vision.

Austin's objection raises a question about Ayer's reason for introducing 'see-2' in the first place. Why would he have thought that there is a sense of 'see' in ordinary language that allows us to say that what we see may not exist in any sense at all but must have the qualities it appears to have? If this question is pursued it will be found, I think, that Ayer's reasoning is far from clear, and remains so even through his reply to Austin.

Ayer introduces 'see-2' in the following passage:

if, being subject to an illusion of double vision, I say that I am perceiving two pieces of paper, I need not be implying that there really are two pieces of paper there. But surely, it may be said, if the two pieces of paper really are perceived they must both exist in some sense, even if not as material things. The answer to this objection is that it is based on a misunderstanding of the way in which I am using the word "perceive." I am using it here in such a way that to say of an object that it is perceived does not entail saying that it exists in any sense at all. And this is a perfectly correct and familiar usage of the word.  

The problem, as Ayer sets it up here, is that unless we recognize that there is such a sense of 'see' as 'see-2,' then we will be forced to say that in double vision what we are perceiving must be "immaterial" pieces of paper. This follows, he thinks, because there are not really two (material) pieces of paper there to be seen, and yet it does seem to us that we are seeing two pieces of paper (even if we know that we are not). Either we will be
forced to say that we do not really perceive two pieces of paper (but only think that we do), or we will be able to say that we do perceive two pieces of paper. This would be a sense of 'perceive' in which what we perceive does not exist. Ayer thinks that to restrict the use of 'perceive' and 'see' to cases where there is existential implication makes the truthful reporting of "delusive" perceptions difficult.

'See-2' is introduced in the case of double vision because 'see-2' is designed to be used in cases of reporting "existentially delusive" experiences. 'See-1' is inadequate for such cases:

In the sense of "perceiving" in which it is impossible to perceive what does not exist, the word is not applicable to experiences that are existentially delusive. In this sense I did not perceive two pieces of paper; I only thought that I perceived them.

In double vision, of course, if there is assumed to be one existing piece of paper which is seen as doubled, then the experience of seeing double is not totally hallucinatory:

What I really perceived was one piece of paper, if only one piece existed; or if it be assumed that my experience was totally hallucinatory, I did not really perceive anything at all.

As I understand the phenomenon of double vision it is the experience of seeing two of something one is looking at where ordinarily only one would be seen. We can produce
an experience of double vision by pushing slightly on one eyeball while looking at an object; the object appears to diverge from itself, so that two of them are seen. This is not a true hallucination, since there is something "real" there to be seen, and it is seen in a peculiar way. If I push on my eyeball so that one piece of paper looks doubled I must suppose that the piece of paper I am looking at exists. At most one of the "images" or "appearances" is hallucinatory. So what is seen-2 in double vision is only one of the two pieces of paper; presumably we must assume that the real one, the one that is being seen doubled, is seen-1.

The conditions governing 'see-2' are that what is seen-2 must have the qualities that it appears to have, but need not exist. In double vision, what is it that must have the qualities that it appears to have? Is it that what is seen appears or seems to have the quality of being doubled? This would seem to be true of the one piece of paper, but not of the two pieces of paper.

In his reply to Austin, Ayer seems willing again to allow that if, in double vision, we are going to say that we see two of whatever, then we will be committed to sense-data.

For instance if I suffered from double vision and seemed to see two specks, I should be undergoing an illusion. It is, however, quite natural for me to say, in a case of this kind, not that I seem to see but simply
that I see two specks; and then we are admitting sense-data, if it is allowed that what I say is true.8

We are admitting sense-data here because there are not two specks to be seen. If it is true that I see two, then I am talking about sense-data, not "real" specks.

Ayer keeps returning to the case of double vision because he thinks that it is a clear case where there is a discrepancy between what is visually apparent to a perceiver and what is actually there to be seen. He takes the numerical difference between things and images as evidence that what we see can be "non-existent." R. J. Hirst9 points out that the case of double vision need not be used this way:

But even if we insist on saying that there appear to the victim to be two objects instead of one, that does not mean that there are two, or that he sees two existents with the same reliability as that with which normal observers see one. 'What does a man with double vision see two of?' is a trick question committing the Fallacy of Many Questions. It assumes that he sees two of something when he does not—he sees one thing looking double.10

It seems to me that the central question about double vision is whether we are going to treat it as a case of illusion, or of hallucination. To treat it as illusion would be to say that in double vision we see one thing looking double, as Hirst says. There are not "two things" there, any more than there is something bent when we see a stick in water that looks bent. But Ayer seems to want to push the case toward an hallucinatory interpretation,
where there are two things seen and neither of them exists in any sense at all. The difference in treating double vision as an illusion is that illusions are not always cases where we see something wrongly. The "right"—i.e., normal, predictable, expected—way to see the Muller-Lyer lines is as appearing to be unequal in length. Likewise, if one is suffering from certain sorts of physical pressures on parts of the eye or brain it is expected that one will see double. The fact that the phenomenon can be duplicated and instructions given for its production seems to me very strong reason for treating it as an illusion, rather than as hallucination.

Section 3: The star-speck example.

The distinction between the two senses of 'see' can, Ayer thinks, be used to solve the puzzles that arise when there is equivocation between the two senses. One example of a potential equivocation is shown in the following case:

For example, a man will say that he sees a distant star which has an extension greater than that of the earth; but if he asked to describe what it is that he is actually seeing, he may say that it is a silvery speck no bigger than a sixpence.

We might be tempted to think that one of his assertions must be false, since having an extension greater than that of the earth and being no bigger than a sixpence are incompatible sizes for one and the same object to have. Ayer
explains how the two senses of 'see' resolve the problem as follows:

If, in our example, it is assumed that the man is using the word "see" consistently, then it does follow that at least one of his statements is empirically false. But it is also open to us to accept both his statements if we assume, as indeed we ordinarily should, that he has slipped from one to the other usage of the word "see." 12

Thus if the man says that he sees a star he must be interpreted as using 'see' in the sense of 'see-1.' But when he says he sees a silvery speck, he is to be taken as using 'see' in the sense I have been calling 'see-2.'

The result of treating 'see' as univocal in this case is that the two reports -- 'I see a star' and 'I see a silvery speck no bigger than a sixpence' -- are incompatible. Ayer says that if we regard 'see' as having the same implications in both reports then "it does follow that at least one of his statements is empirically false." Austin does not think that this follows at all. He says that we do not normally regard either of the man's statements as false, nor do we conclude that the word 'see' is being used in two different senses.

In the star-speck case the perceiver is said to report seeing a star and seeing a silvery speck and for Ayer this raises the question how one and the same (existing) object can be both a star and a silvery speck. Austin provides the following analysis of what has gone wrong with Ayer's reasoning:
I think that part of what has gone wrong is this: observing, perfectly correctly, that the question 'What does X perceive?' can be given—normally at least—many different answers, and that these different answers may all be correct and therefore compatible, Ayer has jumped to the conclusion—that 'perceive' must have different 'senses'—for if not, how could different answers to the question all be correct?\(^1\)

He continues:

But the proper explanation of the linguistic facts is not this at all; it is simply that what we 'perceive' can be described, identified, classified, characterized, named\(^1\) in many different ways.\(^1\)

First, I should like to take issue with the implication in Austin's remarks that Ayer is simply puzzled over the fact that the same question may allow of different correct answers. Ayer is particularly concerned with those cases where the different correct answers seem to imply that the thing being talked about has incompatible properties.

This leads to the second point I want to raise in connection with Austin's remarks. That is that the "linguistic facts" Austin mentions in the second part of this quote are not the only facts involved in Ayer's bewilderment. For behind the question how different answers to the same question can all be correct lies a different question: viz., how it is that we can correctly say we see an X when what we see is generally acknowledged not to be an X? And that seems to be interpreted by Ayer and others, not as a question about questions and answers, but as a question about perception. Because it does seem,
rather overwhelmingly, in fact, that we all know what someone means when they say that they see a silvery speck no bigger than a sixpence when we and they both know that what they are looking at is a very large star. So what is it about the experience of seeing a star that allows us successfully to characterize it as seeing a speck (and allows us to be understood when doing so)?

This passage suggests, misleadingly, that Austin would "solve" the star-speck case by simply holding that, in the circumstances, the star is being described as, or classified as, a silvery speck, and that to do so is legitimate, since stars can be described or classified as silvery specks. How Austin actually spells out his view that different reports of what is seen need not conflict will be the topic for Sections 3 and 4 of this chapter.

In those sections, I will suggest that Austin does intend there to be more than a stylistic difference between the two reports, and I will argue that his account of the difference between them fails to answer a crucial question (perhaps the crucial question). That question, briefly, is this: how can we say that 'see' is used in only one sense when what is said to be seen is characterized in incompatible ways—as being both larger than the earth and the size of a sixpence? Ayer suggests that the former is the real quality of the star, and the latter is a quality of how the star appears (it is an "apparent quality" of the
star. Thus, when it is said that 'I see a speck no bigger than a sixpence' the speck in question is a "phenomenal object." Since we tend to say that we "see" both real and apparent qualities we bring in phenomenal objects to be the "bearers" of the apparent qualities. Austin agrees, at least, that we say we see the speck as well as the star, and he surely wants to hold that it is correct to do so.

However, Ayer thinks that it follows from one of Austin's remarks that Austin thinks that "one and the same object" is both a large star and a silvery speck. According to Ayer,

In this instance, Austin denies even that there are different objects. One and the same object, he says, both is a large star and a small speck, just as one and the same object which I saw this morning both is a man shaved in Oxford and a man born in Jerusalem.17

Ayer thinks that it is a mistake to hold that one and the same object is both a large star and a small speck, especially "if one is using 'see' in the sense which implies that what is seen exists."18 Austin is, apparently, using 'see' in that sense; or so one might conclude from his criticisms of 'see-2.' And if he is using 'see' in the sense of 'see-1' it is impossible that one should see an object which is both larger than the earth and no larger than a sixpence, because no such object can exist.19

Ayer's point here is that since Austin is using 'see' univocally, he must interpret the two reports in such a way...
that they attribute incompatible size-characteristics to the same object. Ayer maintains that for this reason 'see' cannot be treated as though it has the same sense in both reports, for when one talks in this context of seeing a small speck, the word 'see' does not carry the implication that some small object exists, whereas when one talks of seeing a large star, the word does carry the implication that some large object exists.20

Now it seems to me that this is at least partly right. I remarked earlier that it seems clear that we do know what someone means when they say that they see a silvery speck no bigger than a sixpence when we and they both know that what they are looking at is a star. We do not take them to be claiming to see a real existing speck, as we would if, in the same situation, they said they saw a star. However, I have some reservations about concluding, as Ayer does, that when someone claims to see a silvery speck in such a case they are using 'see' in such a way that what is said to be seen "need not exist in any sense at all." For it also seems clear that talking about the speck here is just talking about the star--it is a way of calling our attention to the fact that the star looks about as big as a speck from here.

Furthermore, Ayer wants to introduce a new sort of object--phenomenal objects--in just such cases. These are required, he feels, to bear the apparent qualities we
sometimes attribute to the objects we say we see. In this
case the phenomenal object would be a speck, although
'being speck-sized' is an apparent quality of the star.
So, in a sense, Ayer himself violates his own claim that
when one talks in this context of seeing a
small speck, the word 'see' does not carry
the implication that some small object exists . . .
This shows that the word 'see' has two uses; and Ayer
remarks that

Whether it is proper to characterize this fact
by speaking of there being different 'senses'
of the word 'see' is immaterial.22

We can at least conclude from this remark that Ayer
is no longer interested in defending the two senses of 'see'
as such. But he is still interested in claiming that
saying one sees a star and saying one sees a speck have
"different implications." It is not quite clear from what
Ayer says whether the implications have to do with the
existence of what is said to be seen, or the qualities of
what is seen. That is, one might still ask whether in the
context when one says one sees a small speck the word 'see'
does carry the implication that something exists (but may
not be small), or whether what is seen is small, but does
not exist. He seems to have collapsed the two conditions
governing 'see-1' and 'see-2' in this passage.

There are many reasons why one might want to claim
that a word such as 'see' has more than one use. The
problem is complicated when one begins to ask what
distinguishes one use of a word from another, or how different two occurrences of a word must be for them to be called different uses of that word. A "use" of a word does not simply mean an occurrence of its use, or every use—i.e., utterance—of a word would qualify as a different use of that word. One well-known example of a philosopher distinguishing two uses of the word 'see' is Wittgenstein's remark:

Two uses of the word "see."
The one: "What do you see there?"—"I see this" (and then a description, a drawing, a copy). The other: "I see a likeness between these two faces"—let the man I tell this to be seeing the faces as clearly as I do myself.

The importance of this is the difference of category between the two objects of sight.23

Wittgenstein goes on to discuss the experience of "seeing a likeness" between the two faces:

I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I see that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience "noticing an aspect."24

Are we to say, then, that seeing a likeness between two faces is a different use of 'see' than seeing a face? Austin suggests that things may be seen in different ways, or seen differently:

Thus, different ways of saying what is seen . . . may be due to the fact that what is seen is seen differently, seen in a different way, seen as this rather than that. And there will sometimes be no one right way of saying what is seen, for the additional reason that there may be no one right way of seeing it.25
Before going on to take a closer look at Austin's rejection of the two senses of 'see' I should like to comment on the last passage I quoted from Ayer. He seems inclined to fix the existential or qualitative implications of the two utterances in question on the word 'see' in each case. He seems to conclude, from the fact that the utterances mean, or imply, different things that the difference is due to the "implications" carried by the word 'see.' Yet there is reason to suppose that in his reply to Austin he is more inclined to think that the difference between the words 'star' and 'speck' accounts for the different implications carried by the two reports. He says that when we talk about an object we see we are inclined to attribute to it both the properties which we believe that it really has, even though we do not see it as having them, and to represent ourselves as seeing whatever properties are phenomenally apparent to us.

I take it that Ayer is not saying that we attribute the "phenomenally apparent qualities" to the thing, but asking how it is that we can say we see ("represent ourselves as seeing") the phenomenally apparent qualities without attributing them to something? Ayer answers as follows:

If these apparent properties are incompatible with those we think the object really has, we bring in 'phenomenal' objects, like specks and dots and figures, to carry them.
Ayer is speaking here of what we say (of ourselves) that we see. He claims that we say we see "whatever properties are phenomenally apparent to us," as well as the properties we believe an object "really has." When there is an apparent conflict between the properties we think it really has and those that are phenomenally apparent to us we "bring in" objects of a different sort—phenomenal objects—to bear the predication of phenomenally apparent properties. Why we should do this he does not say.

One can make sense of this move by suggesting that bringing in phenomenal objects is merely a verbal convenience, designed to avoid misleading an audience. When we are reporting ourselves as seeing qualities we do not believe the object really has we would not want to mislead our audience by referring to the object as "what we see" and then attributing to it the properties that we take to be merely phenomenally apparent ones. Still, we need a way to refer to what we see in order to be able to report seeing the phenomenal properties. Hence we refer to what we see as a "speck," "dot," or "figure," and doing so is effective because such words carry connotations of relative size and dimension which allow an audience to pick out of the available visual arena what is being talked about.
However, I suspect that Ayer's reason for making this move is closely connected to his earlier introduction of 'see-2.' The question to ask here is whether, if he feels that he must bring in phenomenal objects to carry the predications of the apparent qualities, we suspend the existential implications of 'see' when we do this. It is as though Ayer recognizes that there cannot (as Austin points out) be properties without bearers, and yet does not want to commit himself to there being a (real) bearer of apparent qualities. I would suggest that Ayer imports phenomenal objects as the bearers of apparent qualities to escape Austin's criticisms of 'see-2.' What it means ultimately is that we need bearers for apparent qualities, and these turn out to be sense-data. And yet Ayer never squarely faces the question of whether sense-data exist or not.

In the next section, I will discuss four examples that Austin provides of cases where someone might report seeing something in more than one way, or as having properties that the object seen does not have. The purpose of examining what Austin says in these cases is to arrive at an interpretation of them that will also be applicable to the cases that Ayer uses—especially the star-speck case. Austin himself does not explicitly state a worked-out justification for his own treatment of the star-speck case, and I think that his treatment of it is problematic. He
describes his attitude toward the case and leaves it to the reader to provide any general principles that might be applied to similar cases. So I will in part be doing detective work and speculation on reconstructing something that could be called "Austin's view." It is my hope that I have merely expanded on what Austin actually said, rather than invented a position he would never have accepted.

Section 4: Austin's view.

Austin wants to hold, with Ayer, that both 'I see a star' and 'I see a speck' are correct descriptions of what is seen while rejecting Ayer's conclusion that 'see' must occur in two different senses in these reports. There seem to be two main considerations in Austin's claims about such cases. First, he says that there can be more than one correct description of what one sees because there can be more than one thing true of what is seen; rather, he says

it is simply that what we 'perceive' can be described, identified, classified, characterized, named in many different ways.28

Thus we need not say that different answers to the question 'What did you see?' involve different senses of 'see.' In answer to your question "What did you see this morning?" I could say either "I saw a man shaved in Oxford," or "I saw a man born in Jerusalem," and both of these replies may be equally correct.
Does it follow that I must be using 'see' in different senses? Of course not. The plain fact is that two things are true of the man that I saw—(a) that he was being shaved in Oxford, and (b) that he had been born some years earlier in Jerusalem. And certainly I can allude to either of these facts about him in saying—in no way ambiguously—that I saw him. 29

Austin's point here is that it is because there can be more than one thing true of what is seen that more than one description of it can be correct. It is not completely clear how these two facts—that more than one thing is true of what is seen and that more than one phrase can be used to refer to it—are related. If the phrases in question were co-referential terms they could be held to be substitutable for each other, on the grounds that substitution will not alter the truth-value of the statement. This cannot be the justification for the claim that either of the phrases 'was born in Jerusalem' and 'being shaved in Oxford' will do as means of saying what was seen, however. Neither of the phrases is (being used as) a referring expression in the context in question. Austin has provided an alternative justification for the "equally satisfactory" claim—viz., that both phrases can be truly predicated of the man who was seen. (It might be suggested that two phrases being truly predicatable of one and the same subject is the non-reference analogue of the substitutivity of co-referential expressions.)
In both cases the relevant pair of terms is said by Austin to "be true of" one and the same object. In his discussions of this and other examples Austin seems to be adhering to a principle of correctly reporting what one sees which might be stated as follows:

I. I can correctly report that I see an F only if it is true that what I see is an F.

To show how Austin uses (I) I appeal to three of his examples.

First, then, the familiar case of the stick in water. Of this case Ayer says (a) that since the stick looks bent but is straight, 'at least one of the visual appearances of the stick is delusive'; ... Well now: does the stick 'look bent' to begin with? I think we can agree that it does, we have no better way of describing it. But of course it does not look exactly like a bent stick, a bent stick out of water--at most, it may be said to look rather like a bent stick partly immersed in water.30

Here Austin is mainly concerned to settle the question of whether the stick in water is a case of "delusive" perception, and what follows is an argument to show that we need not import sense-data or anything else to attach the quality bentness to, since there is nothing which is bent, but only the straight stick which looks bent. This suggests that, according to Austin, if one were to say "I see a bent stick" in the present circumstances, he would be wrong. Austin does say that there is "no better way of describing" the stick in water than to say "it looks bent." So although "I see a bent stick" would be wrong,
"I see a stick that looks bent" would be right. 'Right' and 'wrong' here mean "correct" or "inaccurate" in a sense appropriate to evaluating descriptions of the sort made in perceptual reports such as those given in the two cases under consideration.

The second example is this:

If, to take a rather different case, a church were cunningly camouflaged so that it looked like a barn, how could any serious question be raised about what we see when we look at it? We see, of course, a church that now looks like a barn. We do not see an immaterial barn, an immaterial church, or an immaterial anything else. And what in this case could seriously tempt us to say that we do?

What we see in this example is a church, not a barn, because by the original description of the situation the church is done up to look like a barn. It is the church that we see, because that's what is there.

The question Austin asks at the end of this passage is the sort that Ayer always tries to answer. I think that the proper response to Austin's question is that the sense-datum theorist does not deny that we see "a church that now looks like a barn." But what does it mean to say that the church looks like a barn? What are we saying about the church when we say that it looks like a barn? These are questions that the sense-datum theorists are interested in pursuing. It is held that we are saying of the church that it appears barn-like, or presents a barn-like appearance. Now, the reasoning continues, appearances
are not, like churches, material objects. But since they can be characterized, described and seen, they must "exist" in some sense, even if not as material objects. Thus if appearances are not material objects, and still exist, they must be immaterial objects. All this might constitute an attempt to answer Austin's question as to what might seriously tempt us to say that we see an immaterial barn.

The answer suffers from a serious irrelevancy, however. It is claimed that the appearance of the church is barn-like. And this is surely right. But the next step of the argument requires a different backing; it assumes that the appearance is something with a quality—viz., being barn-like—hence that it exists, and is an immaterial object. Austin's question was not why we would be tempted to say that the appearance of the barn was immaterial, but why the barn is. And in the reply I offered, no barn is said to exist, not even as an immaterial object. I confess that I am unable to think of a plausible answer to Austin's question.

The third example Austin discusses is this:

And when the plain man sees on the stage the Headless Woman, what he sees (and this is what he sees, whether he knows it or not) is not something 'unreal' or 'immaterial,' but a woman against a dark background with her head in a black bag. If the trick is well done, he doesn't (because it's deliberately made very difficult for him) properly size up what he sees, or see what it is; but to say this is far from concluding that he sees something else.\textsuperscript{32}
The implication I draw from this example is that if the plain man were to report his experience by saying, "I see a woman with no head" he would be wrong, even though what he sees looks like a woman with no head. As we shall see shortly this case bears in an interesting way on the star-speck case.

What is indicated by these three cases seems to be that to report what one sees by saying 'I see a stick that looks bent,' 'I see what looks like a woman with no head' or 'I see a building that looks like a barn' one will be saying something true in the circumstances described. Likewise the canny perceivers who say 'I see a straight stick in water,' 'I see a woman with her head in a black bag' and 'I see a church done up to look like a barn' would be correctly describing what they saw. But it is not acceptable in these cases to say 'I see a bent stick, headless woman, or barn.' These things cannot be said to be seen. There are no such things.

I think that Austin does regard the case of the man born in Jerusalem as analogous to the star-speck case, and that he believes that his remarks about the former can be applied to the latter. Thus in the former case he argues that I may allude to either of the two facts that are true of the man in saying that I saw him. This is Austin's alternative to saying that the word 'see' is being used in different senses if I mention different facts in my
report. Analogously, Austin treats different answers in
the star-speck case as being variations in what facts I
appeal to in identifying what I see, rather than variations
in the sense of the word 'see':

Suppose that I look through a telescope
and you ask me 'What do you see?' I may answer
(1) 'A bright speck'; (2) 'A star'; (3) 'Sirius';
(4) 'The image in the fourteenth mirror of the
telescope.' All these answers may be perfectly
correct. Have we then different senses of 'see'? Four
different senses? Of course not. The image
in the fourteenth mirror of the telescope is a
bright speck, this bright speck is a star, and the
star is Sirius; I can say, quite correctly and with
no ambiguity whatever, that I see any of these.33

It might be thought that Austin here commits himself
to holding that the star is identical with a bright speck,
Sirius and the image in the fourteenth mirror of the tele-
scope. Such an objection could be forestalled, perhaps,
by noticing his ordering of the four phrases, 'the image
in the fourteenth mirror of the telescope,' 'a bright speck,'
'a star,' and 'Sirius.' While he does say that the speck is
a star, he does not say that the star is a speck. And
since a relationship of 'being identical with' must be
symmetrical we might conclude from the ordering that Aus-
tin does not regard the star and the speck as identical,
and the same point would hold for the other two phrases he
mentions.

However, this raises another question. How, other
than the desire to avoid claiming that the star and the
speck are identical, can such an ordering be justified?
This further question is supported by something Austin says which makes it very tempting to interpret 'the speck is a star' as an identity statement: Austin remarks that it is not clear to him that one might be tempted to conclude that one of the two reports — 'I see a large star' and 'I see a silvery speck' — must be false. One might be so tempted, Austin says,

if one were in a state of extreme astronomical ignorance — if, that is, one thought that those silvery specks in the sky couldn't really be stars larger than the earth, or if, conversely, one thought that something larger than the earth, even though distant, couldn't really be seen as a silvery speck.34

Most of us, he says, are not in such a state of ignorance; we know that stars are large and far away, and we are aware to some extent of what they look like to the unaided, earthbound eye.

Thus, I can't see any reason at all why we should be tempted to think that 'seeing an enormous star' is incompatible with 'seeing a silvery speck.' Wouldn't we be quite prepared to say, and quite correct in saying, that the silvery speck is a star?35

Austin remarks that the only reason one might suppose that the man who says 'I see a silvery speck' says something false is "extreme astronomical ignorance" of how large and far away stars are and how they look to us here on earth. (Notice that Austin, in his "conversely" remark, acknowledges the possibility that the other assertion -- 'I see a large star' -- might be the one we are tempted to
think is false.) The implication of the astronomical knowledge that most of us possess is that we know that stars look like specks, and so one who reports seeing a star by saying 'I see a silvery speck' is appealing to how stars look, and, since that is how they do look, is not saying anything false (nor presumably is he implying anything false) in so reporting his experience.

If we compare this reading of the star-speck case with Austin's treatment of the Headless Woman and bent stick examples, however, there is an apparent discrepancy. In his discussion of the Headless Woman example he seems to hold that I can correctly report seeing a headless woman only if what I am seeing is, in fact, a headless woman. Thus

when the plain man sees on the stage the Headless Woman, what he sees (and this is what he sees, whether he knows it or not) is not something 'unreal' or 'immaterial,' but a woman against a dark background with her head in a black bag.36

I conclude from this passage that Austin would hold that if the plain man were to report his experience by saying 'I see a woman with no head' he would have said something false.37

The problem is that if he holds that saying one sees a headless woman is correct only if what one sees is a headless woman (and not the Headless Woman) then it would seem to follow by analogy that saying one sees a silvery speck is correct only if what one sees is a silvery speck.
It is surely not true that the star is a silvery speck. This is, after all, the point of denying that the speck is identical with the star. So how can the man who says he sees a silvery speck be correct in so reporting his experience if his experience is that of seeing a star?

Thus, there is an immediate objection to Austin's treatment of the case so far: since the speck cannot be identical with the star because specks are small and stars are huge, and there is no speck there to be seen, it follows that when the man reports seeing one he is wrong. I will give an argument which spells out this objection in Section 5 of the present chapter. I will argue in Section 6 that Austin's attempt to avoid this objection is not successful.

Austin criticizes Ayer for having said that in the sense in which the man truly sees the speck "it is not possible that anything should seem to have the qualities that it does not really have." What Ayer meant was that the speck—which is how the star looks to the man—must be silvery and no bigger than a sixpence if that's how it appears to be. Austin fixes on the quality of 'being no bigger than a sixpence' and says

Remember that we are talking here about the speck, not the star. And can the question whether the speck really is no bigger than a sixpence, or whether perhaps it just seems to be no bigger than a sixpence, be seriously raised? What difference could there be between the supposed alternatives? To say 'It's no
bigger than a sixpence" is itself nothing more, after all, than a rough-and-ready way of saying how it looks.38

This passage deserves comment, for it is not at all clear from what Austin says just what the disagreement is. In the first place, Ayer would agree that to say "It's no bigger than a sixpence" is a crude way of saying how the speck looks, and Ayer's point is that there is no way to distinguish how it looks from how it is. Perhaps Ayer says that because he doesn't really think there is a speck qua speck at all. The speck is just the appearance of the star, or, I should say equivalently, how the star looks to the perceiver. Now Austin refuses to distinguish between seeming to be and really being no bigger than a sixpence because 'being no bigger than a sixpence' is not a quality "with respect to which it could make any sense at all to distinguish between really having it and only seeming to."39 He thinks it makes no sense because being no bigger than a sixpence is just a way of saying how the speck looks.

So far he and Ayer seem to be in perfect agreement. But Austin, surprisingly, also thinks that the speck could seem to have a color that it didn't really have, and thus that there is a real color that the speck has:

For of course, when someone sees a speck in the night sky, it might, through some abnormality in the state of his eyes for instance, look greyish to him though its really pinkish.40
This makes it clear that Austin is not saying that the speck does not exist. If he were he could be read as holding that with respect to non-existent specks there is no point in distinguishing what size they seem to be from what size they "really" are, since they are no size at all.

The second objection to Austin's initial treatment of the star-speck example is that there is no speck—there is a star that looks like a speck. So if the man reports seeing a speck he is mistaken. Austin replies:

If a man says 'I see a silvery speck,' of course he 'implies' that the speck exists, that there is a speck; and if there is no speck in the region of the night sky at which he is looking, if that part of the sky is perfectly blank, then of course he does not see a silvery speck there.41

In this passage Austin is apparently reiterating the view mentioned earlier about uses of the word 'see'—i.e., that to say "I see a silvery speck" implies that the speck exists "in some sense." But the notion of 'existence' has slipped. Austin makes it clear that (for example) when one is looking at a church disguised as a barn what is seen is the church; even though it looks like a barn you do not see a barn. In that case the explanation was that you do not see a barn because there is no barn there to be seen. But there is no speck to be seen either. The "speck" is, at best (but this still sounds somewhat strained to me) "the look of the star (from this distance)."
And, by analogy with the stick in water, just as we wouldn't want to say that the "look of the stick" actually has the quality of being bent, we wouldn't want to say that the "look of the star" actually has the quality of either being pinkish, or being no bigger than a sixpence.

In the following sections I will pursue this point in more detail, for I think there is a real problem in Austin's account so far.

Section 5: An argument to show we don't see specks.

In Section 4 I mentioned that it might be objected to Austin's treatment of the star-speck example that there is no speck there to be seen, so when one reports seeing a speck in those circumstances he is wrong. It seems clear that Austin holds that the way we talk allows for 'I see a speck' to be acceptable as a description of what one sees when that is a star, but it also allows for remarks such as 'you did not see a ghost--there are no such things.' The ghost-remark, but not the star-speck case, seems to adhere to Austin's principle (I). Austin's support of (I) thus seems to conflict with his intuitions about the correctness of 'I see a speck.' The apparent conflict can be exhibited by the following argument:

1) A statement that classifies (describes, categorizes, identifies) x as a $\emptyset$ is true only if x is a $\emptyset$.42
ii) In reporting what he sees a man might state that he sees a $\varnothing$. His statement classifies (etc.) what he sees as a $\varnothing$.

iii) It is, therefore, a necessary condition for the truth of 'I see a $\varnothing$' that what I see be a $\varnothing$.

iv) Conversely, it is a sufficient condition for 'I see a $\varnothing$' not being true that what I see not be a $\varnothing$.

v) 'x is a speck' is true only if x is a speck.

vi) Specks are small.\(^{43}\)

vii) Therefore, the statement that one sees a speck is true only if there is a speck being seen.

viii) Therefore, the statement that one sees a speck is true only if what one sees is small.

ix) Stars are not small.

x) Therefore, the statement that one sees a speck is not true if what one sees is a star.

In the next section, I will present and discuss a distinction in Austin that seems to be motivated in part by a desire to avoid just the sort of argument presented here. Let me also point out, that there is some serious objection to the formulation in the above argument of the truth-conditions for such statements as those made by uttering 'I see a speck.' Austin's articles on truth\(^{44}\) provide dozens of objections to such formulations. I will not attempt to go into those here. I think they will be relevant at a later stage in my discussion, and will be useful in the context of understanding the role of such assertions.
Section 6: The distinction between identifying and describing.

Austin hints at a solution to this problem when he suggests that there is a distinction between identifying what it is that is seen (as a very large star) and describing what is seen (as a silvery speck).

... I may say 'I see a silvery speck' or 'I see a huge star'; what I see--in the single, ordinary 'sense' this word has--can be described as a silvery speck, or identified as a very large star; for the speck in question is a very large star.45

The distinction between identifying and describing applied to the star-speck case seems to be a distinction between saying what something is and saying how it looks. The distinction is not originally made along these lines, however. Originally the distinction seems to have been based on the degree of specificity, or the amount of detail, contained in a phrase.

If I am asked 'What did you kick?', I might answer 'I kicked a piece of painted wood,' or I might say 'I kicked Jones's front door'; ... What I kicked--in just one 'sense,' the ordinary one--could be described as a piece of painted wood, or identified as Jones's front door; the piece of wood in question was Jones's front door.46

Describing what I kicked as a piece of painted wood is not saying how it looks--it is simply less specific, more evasive than identifying it as Jones's front door. Probably the sort of thing Austin has in mind is that identifying what I kicked as Jones's front door singles out which thing
of the kind front door or piece of painted wood it was
that I kicked. The identification would enable a suitably
informed audience to inspect the object I had kicked.
Describing what I kicked as a piece of painted wood is not
informative enough to enable an audience to pick out what
I kicked. Understood in this way the distinction is a
functional one. It is based on the amount of specific
information provided. This functional interpretation is
of no help in the star-speck case, however. It is not
simply less informative to describe what I see as a silvery
speck than to say it is a star; it is not true of the thing
that I see that it is a silvery speck. If Austin wants to
allow that I can correctly describe what I see as a $\varnothing$
even if it is not true of what I see that it is a $\varnothing$ then he
would also have to hold that in the examples discussed in
Section 3, 'I see a bent stick,' "I see a headless woman'
and 'I see a barn' are or could be correct descriptions of
what I see.

There is another, grammatical, interpretation of
the distinction between identifying and describing.
'Jones's front door' can be easily translated into a
definite description--'the door at the front entrance to
Jones's house'--while 'a piece of painted wood' is an
indefinite description and therefore does not qualify as
a referring expression. This interpretation does not help
in the star-speck case either, for both 'a star' and 'a
silvery speck' are indefinite descriptions. Thus, on the grammatical interpretation neither would count as an identification of what is seen.

I would like to return to Austin's final comment on the star-speck case:

Suppose that I look through a telescope and you ask me 'What do you see?' I may answer (1) 'A bright speck'; (2) 'A star'; (3) 'Sirius'; (4) 'The image in the fourteenth mirror of the telescope. All these answers may be perfectly correct . . . The image in the fourteenth mirror of the telescope is a bright speck, this bright speck is a star, and the star is Sirius; I can say, quite correctly and with no ambiguity whatever, that I see any of these."

Now the distinction between identifying and describing will not answer the objection raised in Section 4 about this passage on even the most charitable reading of 'correct description.' Remember that we can say 'the speck is the star' but not 'the star is the speck.' In terms of descriptions and identifications the formula is 'D = I' but not 'I = D.' Identifications must, on the functional interpretation of the distinction, conform to (I).

Consider 'the image in the fourteenth mirror of the telescope is a bright speck.' It is not at all obvious what the relation of either of them to 'a star' or 'Sirius' is to be. It is plausible to suppose that there may be varying degrees of specificity in identification, so that 'a star' may serve in one context to identify, and in
another to describe what is seen. But 'the image in the fourteenth mirror of the telescope' is surely not a description of what is seen, any more than 'the image in the mirror' is a description of my image in the mirror when I am standing in front of a mirror. If anything it is an identification, and I see nothing terribly wrong with saying that if I am looking into a telescope I am seeing the image in one or more of the mirrors. But then the phrase won't do to identify the star, for it is not true of the star that it is the image in one of the mirrors of the telescope.

Others have made use of the distinction between identifying and describing and have made some attempt to clarify it. The general tendency has been to hold that identifying something is (roughly) to say what it is, assign it to some class or category, or label (name) it. Describing something is saying "what it is like." Thus describing something is not the same as identifying it, though an identification may be possible on the basis of the descriptions given:

Saying that a thing has certain properties, or that it is like various things, is not saying what it is, although it may follow from the fact that it has certain properties that it is a thing of a certain sort.  

Using Locke's way of stating the distinction as a model we might say that 'That bright speck is a star' is quite correct if we take the first phrase as a description
(what it looks like) and the second phrase as an identification (what it is). And this is, it seems to me, what Austin had in mind. However, it is not, as Austin seemed to say, true of the star that it is a speck, only that it may look like one. So far so good.

Consider the other phrases he gives: 'Sirius' and 'the image in the fourteenth mirror of the telescope.' 'That star is Sirius' cannot be read as a description and an identification, since both 'star' and 'Sirius' are identifications. So in this sentence we have two identifications, and perhaps we want to say that the name serves to further identify what has already been identified (classified) as a star. The same analysis does not work with 'the image in the fourteenth mirror of the telescope is a star' because 'the image in the fourteenth mirror of the telescope' does not identify what is seen as being a thing of a certain sort because it is too vague, any more than 'that reflection in the mirror is Herbert' identifies what is seen as a reflection in the mirror. Rather the phrase 'that reflection in the mirror' serves to pick out what is being identified—namely, Herbert's reflection. Thus it is a description in the sense of a definite description (hence is an identification in Locke's sense) and not a description in the sense in which a description of something is saying "what it is like."
The distinction as Locke makes it might, however, be used to explain certain sentences which Ayer and others have taken to be implicit contradictions. For example, "that bright speck is a star" is not a contradiction unless we take both 'bright speck' and 'star' as identifications of what is seen. The obvious reading would be that 'bright speck' is a description (what I see looks like a bright speck) and 'star' is an identification. And this is what Austin first suggests. However no satisfactory way of sustaining the distinction, or applying it to a number of cases has been reached.

Before going on to state what I take to be a promising new approach to the star-speck case I should like to mention a dispute over the application of the distinction between identifying and describing. Suppose Macbeth reports his famous apparition by exclaiming "I see a dagger!" A. R. White, discussing this exclamation, says that it is a description of what Macbeth sees. Macbeth, he says, can describe what he sees as a dagger because what he sees is like a dagger; but it would be wrong to identify it as a dagger. Presumably this is because what he sees is not a dagger; there is nothing that he sees. White's claim is somewhat weak, however. He says only that it would be "wrong" to identify what Macbeth "sees" as a dagger, but he does not say whether what Macbeth does when he says "It's a dagger!" is identifying or describing.
And he does not give evidence, other than the wrongness of identifying what is seen as a dagger, for ruling out what Macbeth says as an identification.

Don Locke, in discussing the same example, takes issue with White. Locke holds that "It is a dagger!" is much more like an identification than a description. This is consistent with Austin's examples. Austin gives the following as examples of identifying:

What I kicked was Jones's front door.
I saw Hitler
I saw Sirius.
I saw a very large star.

Locke denies that "It is a dagger!" is a description, since Macbeth is not saying what it (what he sees) is like, but what it is—subject to the context. Locke suggests that there are "context-bound" identifications, and that "It is a dagger!" is one of these. Thus in the context of the play where Macbeth hallucinates a dagger his exclamation clearly counts as an identification, and not as a description.

I would agree with the basic notion of a "context-bound" identification, and will introduce and make use of a similar notion in Chapter V to explain how it can be correct to say that Macbeth saw a dagger. One question that arises in connection with Locke's notion of context-bound identifications and with my parallel notion is how the context serves to bind what occurs in it so that normal
implications, i.e., those the context rules out, are sus-
pended. Austin suggests that

descriptions of dreams, for example, plainly
can't be taken to have exactly the same force
and implications as the same words would have,
if used in the description of ordinary waking
experiences. In fact, it is just because we
all know that dreams are throughout unlike
waking experiences that we can safely use
ordinary expressions in the narration of them:
the peculiarity of the dream-context is
sufficiently well known for nobody to be
misled by the fact that we speak in ordinary
terms.51

The "force and implications" of the word 'see' as used in
a dream-report are mediated by the understanding, communi-
cated from speaker to audience, by conventional means,
that this is a dream-report, and not a description of an
ordinary waking experience. Once that is understood, I
think there is no problem with "ambiguity" or in under-
standing how to take what is being said. A further point
in support of this method of handling dream reports: in
narrating a dream there are still occasions where one might
want to say that (in the dream) "It looked as if . . . ."
or "It appeared to . . . ." or "It seemed to me that . . . ."
As in ordinary narrative, there may well be pieces of it
that the speaker is not certain of, or clear enough about
in his memory to justify a claim that he saw. Thus the
more tentative phrases one uses in giving reports also
have a role in dream-reports, and this is some evidence
that 'see' has a role in those reports as well, and that
the role it has may not be so far removed from that it has in everyday discourse.

Section 7: The solution to the star-speck case.

As was shown in Section 6 there are problems with attempting to use the distinction between identifying and describing to solve the star-speck case. Neither a grammatical criterion (identifications are made with definite descriptions, while descriptions are made with indefinite descriptions) nor a functional criterion (based on the amount of detail provided by the phrase in question) have been satisfactory. Since, the distinction itself is not clear we cannot use it to clarify the problem posed at the end of Section 4 and in Section 5.

The question is how, given that what the speaker is looking at is a huge star he can— as Austin claims— correctly report what he sees by saying "I see a silvery speck." In order to answer this question I will return to the original discussion and propose a solution of a much different sort than those so far considered. The case as Ayer first presents it is stated this way:

For example, a man will say that he sees a distant star which has an extension greater than that of the earth; but if asked to describe what it is that he is actually seeing, he may say that it is a silvery speck no bigger than a sixpence.52

Notice that the man answers the first time he is asked what he sees by saying that he sees "a distant star
which has an extension greater than that of the earth." It is when he is "asked to describe what he is actually seeing" that he replies "a silvery speck no bigger than a sixpence." I think that the order in which these replies are given is crucial.

The case as given seems to involve a dialogue between a perceiver and his questioner. In this dialogue there is an implied rejection of the perceiver's first attempt to say what he sees. This rejection is implied by (in effect) a restatement of the question with added emphasis—"What is it that you are actually seeing?" A perceiver would be justified in assuming that, for whatever reason, his original answer wasn't satisfactory, that the questioner asked the same question again because a different sort of answer was called for. Now in the circumstances there are several revisions of his first answer that the perceiver might make. He might respond that he saw a star, but wasn't really sure that it had an extension greater than that of the earth. Or, he might admit that he saw either a star or a planet, but he wasn't sure which. As Ayer has it set up the revision takes the form of saying what the star appears as to the man. It isn't that the perceiver revises his judgment as to the identity of the object he sees—rather he is led by the repeated question to suppose that a more phenomenalistic description is called for—perhaps a report of what, in his visual field, he is taking to be a star.
This is not the only sort of revision a speaker might give in these circumstances. In fact, in the context it seems contrived. One might even say that the perceiver's second attempt to say what he sees changes the subject by switching from identifying the object to mentioning how it appears given the vast distances involved in his perceiving it.

Ayer's puzzlement over the case arises when he construes the speaker's second answer as competitive to, and on a par with, his first. As I have said, there are responses which would have been on a par with the first—e.g., 'I see a planet.' The answer Ayer suggests is not of this sort, however. Ayer asks how two such apparently incompatible reports could be answers to the same question, viz., "what do you see (in these circumstances)?" I am suggesting that the two reports are not answers to the same question. I think Ayer's distinction between the two senses of 'see' constitutes a recognition of the ambiguity in the question 'What did you see?' My point is that what makes the question different when asked the second time need not be that 'see' is ambiguous. If 'What did you see?' is taken as the same question both times, then the answers are—as Ayer recognizes—incompatible. But, if a question is asked and answered and then asked again, there is a sense in which it's not the same question the second time. One is at least on guard about supposing
that the same answer will do the second time. There are restrictions, or conditions, on what will count as an answer—e.g., not the first answer.

Austin's problem with the case arises from his failure to state why all of the four answers to the question "What do you see?" are correct. They are all correct because they are not equivalent; they are not all suitable in the same sets of circumstances. One might say that what he sees is a star, and then go on to say that in fact what he sees is Sirius, but surely not in the same way go on to say that what he sees is the image in the fourteenth mirror of the telescope. Furthermore, Austin seems to be minimizing or underplaying the role of the context in his discussion of what is relevant to the correctness of an answer to the question "What do you see?" Ayer's presentation of the case gives a context for the man's second answer—the context is that he has already said he is seeing a star and has been asked to "describe what it is he is actually seeing." His first response has been rejected, and no clue is given as to what would constitute an acceptable substitute. In that context it is only barely plausible to have him say "a silvery speck." Perhaps this could be made more plausible by reminding ourselves that the perceiver may know that his questioner, Ayer, is a philosopher interested in sense-data.
Indeed, the star-speck case in Ayer is like the following exchange:

Q: What do you see?
A: I see Dustin Hoffman.
Q: What is it that you are really seeing?
A: Some light-projected color patches.

The second answer in the star-speck case seems to me to be as relevant to the first as the second is to the first in the above example. The context may be supposed to include what the speaker knows about the interests of his audience, and this may lead him to know or suppose what sort of answer the audience is after. Both second answers seem to be changing the subject as defined by the first.

It might be agreed that everything I have said here regarding the contextual reading of the two reports is correct, and even that such considerations as these are relevant in deciding the appropriateness or the fittingness of certain perceptual reports. However, it might be argued, I have still not solved the real problem. It may be appropriate—in an extended sort of sense—to say, to Ayer, in response to his second question, that one sees a silvery speck. But is it correct to do so? Does one see a silvery speck? Is it true to say that one sees a silvery speck?

I think it is clear that Austin would say that it is correct to say one sees a silvery speck if, in the circumstances of the case, one is looking up at the sky
and there is a star there, where one is looking. At least Austin offers the absence of a star, or a silvery speck, or something which might felicitously be called a silvery speck, as a condition under which to report seeing one would clearly be wrong. This follows, indeed, from the fact that Austin consistently uses 'see' in such a way that to say you see something implies that what you claim to see exists.

If a man says 'I see a silvery speck,' of course he 'implies' that the speck exists, that there is a speck; and if there is no speck in the region of the night sky at which he is looking, if that part of the sky is perfectly blank, then of course he does not see a silvery speck there.53

This passage makes it clear that Austin does think that there are criteria for correctness here.

Now the question of truth is more complicated. And without going into a full-scale discussion of Austin's theory of truth, let me say something which might indicate the lines Austin would take in answering the question "Well, is it true that he sees a silvery speck?". Austin regards truth, like accuracy, correctness, appropriateness, suitability and other related concepts, as something which must be seen to depend on the circumstances. A person might state something which, for any number of reasons, can be called "true." Yet that same person, making the same statement in different circumstances, could be said to have said something misleading, not quite true, or even
false. This is the point of the following remark:

The truth or falsity of statements is affected by what they leave out or put in and by their being misleading, and so on. Thus, for example, descriptions, which are said to be true or false or, if you like, are 'statements,' are surely liable to these criticisms, since they are selective and uttered for a purpose. It is essential to realize that 'true' and 'false,' like 'free' and 'unfree' do not stand for anything simple at all, but only for a general dimension of being a right or proper thing to say as opposed to a wrong thing, in these circumstances, to this audience, for these purposes and with these intentions.54

The point of this remark is that degree of precision (of which truth is one type) is a function of the circumstances and purpose for which an utterance is designed.

In "Truth" Austin suggests a related point. This, it seems to me, speaks to the function of saying (or asking whether) a certain statement is true. He says that 'is true' is not "logically superfluous" and asks that we consider the following as a way of coming to appreciate "what sort of a statement it is to say that a certain statement is true."

There are numerous other adjective which are in the same class as 'true' and 'false,' which are concerned, that is, with the relations between the words (as uttered with reference to an historic situation) and the world, and which nevertheless no one would dismiss as logically superfluous. We say, for example, that a certain statement is exaggerated or vague or bald, a description somewhat rough or misleading or not very good, an account rather general or too concise. In cases like these it is pointless to insist on deciding in simple terms whether the statement is 'true or false.' Is it true or false that Belfast is
north of London? That the galaxy is the shape of a fried egg? That Beethoven was a drunkard? That Wellington won the battle of Waterloo? There are various degrees and dimensions of success in making statements; the statements fit the facts always more or less loosely, in different ways on different occasions for different intents and purposes.55

This is not intended to be summary statement of Austin's views on truth. It does indicate one aspect of his view which bears directly on the questions I raised about the truth of the claim that one sees a silvery speck. For Austin suggests that there are many ways of evaluating utterances, depending on their nature—e.g., descriptions, accounts or statements. The man's saying that he sees a silvery speck is said by Ayer to be a "description" and a "report" of what he sees. As a description of what he sees it is, as I have suggested, rather fanciful. But stars do look like silvery specks, and since we already know (because he told us) that he sees a star, his describing what he sees as a silvery speck is not so far-fetched as to be misleading or inaccurate. It is not true that what he sees is a silvery speck no bigger than a sixpence. It is correct to describe what he sees (the star) as a silvery speck no bigger than a sixpence, however, and in the case that is what he is asked to do.

I conclude about the "truth" of the statement made by the man who says "I see a silvery speck no bigger than a sixpence" that its truth is not really the question—
is intended to be a description of what the man sees, and
since what he sees is a star, it is correct for him to
describe it in that way.

In the remaining chapters, I turn to the argument
from illusion and the issues that underlie the introduction
of sense-data, for it will be felt by many readers that
the real problems to which sense-data are proposed as a
solution have not yet been discussed.
Footnotes for Chapter II

1 Cf. above, Chapter I, Section 2.

2 Austin (1962), p. 95.

3 Ibid., p. 95, footnote.

4 Ibid., p. 96, footnote.

5 Ayer, 1940, pp. 20-21

6 Ibid., p. 22.

7 Ibid.


10 Hirst, 1959, p. 49.

11 Ayer, 1940, p. 22.

12 Ibid., p. 23.

13 Austin, 1962, pp. 97-98.

14 In Section 6, I will discuss a distinction Austin draws between identifying and describing what is seen. I will suggest two ways of understanding and applying the distinction, and argue that neither of these yields a distinction that would explain the star-speck case and the apparent conflicts between the two different reports given in such cases.

15 Austin, 1962, p. 98, footnote.

16 I will attempt to answer this question in a slightly different context in Chapter V.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., pp. 303-304.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., p. 304.


24 Ibid.


27 Ibid.

28 Austin, 1962, p. 98.

29 Ibid., pp. 98-99.

30 Ibid., p. 29.

31 Ibid., p. 30.


33 Ibid., p. 99.

34 Ibid., p. 92.

35 Ibid.

Although, and this is a point about proper names and titles, he would not have said something false if he had said "I see the Headless Woman." The Headless Woman need not be headless, or a woman.

Austin, 1962, pp. 95-96.

Ibid., p. 96.

Ibid., italics mine.

Ibid., p. 94.

This is meant to cut across, not capture, the distinction between identifying and describing, with which I will deal in Section 6.

There are, of course, larger and smaller specks. Small specks are motes, points and dots. Large specks merge into blotches, smudges and spots.


Austin, 1962, p. 98.

Ibid., italics mine.

Ibid., p. 99.


Austin, 1962, p. 42.
52 Ayer, 1940, p. 22.

53 Austin, 1962, p. 94.


CHAPTER III
THE ARGUMENT FROM ILLUSION

Introduction.

In Chapter II, I pointed out some problems with Austin's attempts to account for the correctness of different reports of what is seen. It is important for Austin to provide such an account because it is the conflict between different perceptual reports that Ayer appeals to in arguing that there are two different "senses" or "uses" of 'see' and 'perceive' in ordinary language. Austin, as we saw in Chapter II, wants to deny that there are two senses of 'see, ' and, in particular, he denies that 'see' is sometimes used with the implication that what is said to be seen may not exist at all. This raises a problem in Ayer's star-speck example, however. In discussing the case Austin seems to maintain his view that what is said to be seen must be held to exist "in some sense." Yet he also wants to treat "I see a silvery speck no bigger than a sixpence" as a correct report of what is seen. The problem is just how the speck (what is said to be seen) does exist "in some sense." For there does not
seem to be a speck—only a star that looks like one. In my conclusion to Chapter II, I proposed a solution to the problems I raised concerning the star-speck case. My solution rests on using the contexts in which the two apparently conflicting reports are made to explain how it is that the two reports are, in fact, answers to different questions although we don't know, given what Ayer tells us what the second question is. Their "correctness" depends on their function, their information-giving use, and in the star-speck case the information provided by each of the two is appropriate to the situation in which it is given.

In this Chapter, I will turn to the argument from illusion, an argument which purports to show that we always perceive sense-data and that we do not perceive material things. In the Introduction to Chapter I, I noted that the assumption underlying this argument and the sense-datum theory is a distinction between the content of one's sense-experience and the inferences based upon that content. I will show how two versions of the argument from illusion rest on this distinction. I will suggest that the epistemological issue concerning the possibility of knowledge about material things can be stated in terms of this distinction. Finally, I will begin to outline my analysis (to be given more fully in Chapter IV) of the basis for the distinction and of the reasons for its widespread acceptance.
Section 1: The argument from illusion (Quinton).

The "argument from illusion" is not a single argument, it is, rather, a type or form of argument which usually begins with the assumption that in some cases a perceiver may be led to hold false beliefs about the properties or the existence of some physical object on the basis of his perceptual experience. The argument proceeds on this assumption through a series of moves which may vary from application to application to show that all we ever directly perceive are sense-data. In this section, I am going to discuss the version of the argument from illusion stated by Anthony Quinton. He characterizes the argument this way:

This argument holds that objects are not always what they appear to be and that there need be no discoverable difference between two situations in one of which an object is and in the other is not what it appears to be. In consequence, all that we really know is what appears to be the case, since, even when what appears to be the case is the case, we cannot there and then tell whether it is or not. Since we know only what appears to be the case, the only things we really perceive are appearances.

The steps in the argument as stated by Quinton seem to me to be these:

1. Objects are not always what they appear to be.

2. Even when what appears to be the case is the case, we cannot, then and there tell whether it is or not.

3. Therefore, we can know only what appears to be the case.
4. Therefore, the only things we perceive are appearances.

There are two premises missing from Quinton's statement of the argument. They are needed to bridge the step from (3) to (4):

3a. What appears to be the case are appearances.

3b. We know only what we perceive.

In Quinton's statement of the argument the conclusion that we really perceive only appearances is based on the claim that all we really know is how things appear.

Quinton's objection to this argument is that appearances are not the contents of our sense-experiences (at least not normally), and so

a statement of what appears to be the case is rarely a description of our sense-experience and is normally a modified, guarded claim about what is the case, expressing an inclination to believe something about objects.²

This constitutes an objection to premise (3) of the argument, for as Quinton construes it, premise (3) would entail that the only statements we can make with confidence about our sense-experience would be those expressing what seems or appears to us to be what we perceive, and that any statement about what is, in fact, being perceived will be, at best, uncertain.

Quinton's version of the argument from illusion begins with the claim that things are not always what they appear to be. If we make the further assumption that things always
appear to be some way or other, and that the first premise of Quinton's version of the argument can be taken to mean that things sometimes appear one way and are different from the way they appear, then we may rewrite the argument to take account of the following two sorts of situations:

a. An object 0 appears to be a $\phi$ (or appears to have a property P) and is a $\phi$ (does have P).

b. An object 0 appears to be a $\phi$ (or appears to have a property P) and is not a $\phi$ (does not have P).

Then premise (1) could be rewritten as follows:

1. There are situations which are correctly characterized by (b).

Quinton's premise (2) says that even when (a) obtains, we cannot then and there tell whether (a) or (b) obtains. As Quinton has stated it there is a further qualification in this premise: it is that there need be no discoverable difference between a situation in which (a) obtains and one in which (b) obtains. From that the argument concludes that we cannot tell which situation obtains just from the clues afforded by the situation alone. We cannot tell, in a visual situation, just from looking, whether (a) or (b) holds. Thus premises (2) and (3) of Quinton's argument can be rewritten to express this inference as follows:

2. Even when (a) obtains we are unable to tell then and there, by looking, whether (a) or (b) obtains; (and there are situations in which (b) obtains but we are unable to tell then and there by looking whether (a) or (b) obtains).
3. Even when 0 actually is a $\emptyset$, we only know then and there by looking how 0 appears.

Hereafter when I mention the premises of Quinton's argument, I will be referring to the second of the formulations of those premises.

Notice that (2) amounts to the claim that we are unable to distinguish by looking between a situation in which things are as they appear and a situation in which things are not as they appear. The reasons for such a claim are traditionally that the visual data provided by a perceptual situation are themselves neutral as to the further perceptions one might have, or the corollary perceptions that could be had by means of the other senses. This is the reason why additional information is needed to offset the impression of inequality in the lengths of the lines in the Muller-Lyer diagram, or the impression of a stick in water being bent. And, it is claimed, even when such additional information is available the initial impression of inequality or bentness remains, indicating that the force of such illusory perceptions rests in the data given by the visual experiences themselves, and not solely in the beliefs or expectations of the perceiver.

It seems to me that there is a sense in which such a claim is justified, but not in such a way that would support the much stronger claim that we cannot tell whether
(a) or (b) obtains in any situation. The conclusion of the Quinton version of the argument as originally stated is that all we ever know is how things appear, and not how they really are. This is much too strong for the support given by premise (3). The point is that from looking at the Muller-Lyer lines we may not be able to tell whether they are equal in length or not. (We may even be unable to tell whether in a particular drawing of the diagram the artist has in fact made the lines of equal length.) But we have other means of finding out, and by these other means we can lay claim to know more than just how the lines appear. We can know that they are, in fact, the same length. As Quinton has stated the argument from illusion, then, (and he does not, of course, wish to defend the argument) the conclusion about what it is possible for us to know is stronger than is warranted by the premises.

This is the same sort of point I raised in Chapter II concerning the solution to the star-speck case. There I pointed out that if the context of the assertions Ayer takes to be conflicting is examined, it will be seen that the conversation in which they are made shows why they occur and why they are cited as occurring in that order. Here it is important again to take into account the context; in this case the context of the perception fills out the information derived from a momentary visual presentation in just the way that is needed to cast that perception
into an understandable, interpretable framework. So we may not be able to tell by looking whether the lines are equal or not, but it does not follow, nor should it be concluded, that we can only know how the lines appear, and not how they are. There are other ways of telling.

Many critics of the argument from illusion have pointed out that (3) does not strictly follow from (2). From the fact that sometimes we are unable to tell by looking that (a) or (b) obtains it does not follow that we are never able to tell which situation obtains. Quinton suggests that the justification for this step is that there need be no discoverable difference between a situation in which we can, and one in which we cannot, tell whether (a) or (b) obtains. The fact remains that there are situations in which we can tell by looking which obtains, and the fact that there need be no way to tell does not mean that there is never a way to tell. The premise that would be required to justify the step from (2) to (3) on Quinton's grounds would be:

2a. The fact that sometimes there is no way to tell by looking whether (a) or (b) obtains renders it impossible for us to know, in a given situation, whether this is one in which (a) or (b) obtains.

It seems to me that (2a) is not plausible. It is important to remember that our knowledge of the circumstances is relevant to knowing whether (a) or (b) obtains. That is, we are not restricted, in estimating the likelihood of our
needing further data, to what we can discern merely from the visual perception, as we are in estimating whether (a) or (b) obtains. If we are attending a magician's demonstration we can expect that we will not be able to tell merely by looking whether (a) or (b) obtains.

As Quinton states the argument what is said to follow from (2) and (3) is

4. All that we can know by looking is what appears to be the case.

And since

5. What appears to be the case are appearances.

it follows that

6. Therefore, all that we can know by looking are appearances.

The conclusion drawn to (6) has to do with what we can know based on just the information provided by our sight. What we can know are "appearances," or "what appears to be the case." Now Quinton himself objects to step (5) in the argument; he maintains that a judgment about what appears to be the case is not a judgment about the visual data provided in the perception, but should rather be understood as a guarded claim about what the perceiver is inclined to believe is the case. His objection points to the fact that defenders of the argument from illusion tend to take "appearances" as something like uninterpreted or "neutral" data, in themselves providing no clues that would allow us to base inferences on them of the sort we make.
when we judge that some visual experience constitutes the perception of a table, or an object of any sort.

Quinton's objection that what appears to be the case is what I am inclined to judge is the case, and is not "appearances," is addressed to a further step in the argument by which appearances are identified with sense-data:

7. I can know something by looking if and only if I perceive it.
8. All that we perceive are appearances.
9. Appearances are sense-data.
10. All that we perceive are sense-data.
11. All that we can know by looking are sense data.

In the next section, I will raise a question concerning premise (8) of this argument. Quinton objects to the claim that our knowledge is restricted to appearances. Ayer defends the claim that our sense-experience provides only partial justification for our perceptual judgments. Both claims are based on an interpretation of "appearances" or sense-data as purely phenomenal visual impressions, patterns of light and colors. In the following section, I will present Quinton's objection and Ayer's defense. I treat them together because Ayer might be seen as attempting to answer the central point of Quinton's argument against treating sense-data as phenomenal visual impressions (or as the objects of perception). In subsequent sections this notion of sense-data as the sole objects of perception will be examined from other angles as well.
Section 2: Another version of the argument from illusion.

In The Problem of Knowledge Ayer presents another version of the argument from illusion, based on the claim that the content of a perception provides less information than is normally contained in judgments that we make based on our perceptions. He cites cases of illusions as evidence that

The ordinary way of describing what one perceives appears to make a stronger claim than the perception itself covers.\(^3\)

The gist of his argument for this general claim is that if illusion is always possible, then any claim based on a perceptual experience must be modified to take account of the fact that we could be mistaken.

If I can be undergoing an illusion when, on the basis of my present experience, I judge, for example, that my cigarette case is lying on the table in front of me, I may, in saying that I see the cigarette case, be claiming more than the experience strictly warrants: it is logically consistent with my having just this experience that there should not really be a cigarette case there, or indeed any physical object at all.\(^4\)

He says that this might prompt us to make a more cautious claim: e.g., 'it seems to me as if there is a cigarette case lying on the table before me.' Not, he assure us, that the latter form of statement may be completely free from error; rather, such statements are such that

if they are true, they serve as descriptions of the contents of our sense-experiences, irrespective of any larger claims that these experiences may normally induce us to make.\(^5\)
As we shall see, these statements are the same as those he calls "Experiential Statements" in his reply to Austin. They are such that they simply describe the content of experience, without prejudice as to the status of the experience—i.e., whether it is of a material thing.

Ayer clearly thinks that illusion is always possible with respect to perception of material objects. No experience carries its own warrant. Thus he claims that:

Because of the possibility of illusion, it will not necessarily be true that whenever it seems to me that I am perceiving something, I really am perceiving it. On the other hand, the converse is intended to hold. From the statement that I see the cigarette case it is supposed to follow that it seems to me that I see it. Or, if this cannot be maintained, it is at least supposed to follow that it seems to me that I see something or other. It is to be a necessary fact that whenever anything is perceived something must, in this sense, seem to be perceived.

So far the argument can be stated like this:

1. It is not necessarily true that whenever it seems to me that I am perceiving something, I really am perceiving it.

This is very close to the beginning of Quinton's version of premise (1) of the argument.

2. It is a necessary fact that whenever anything is perceived something must, in this sense, seem to be perceived.

This is not the same direction that Quinton's version takes at this point. For in Ayer's premise (2) the tendency on the part of the perceiver to believe that there is something that he perceives—that it seems to him that
he is perceiving something—is mentioned. In Quinton's version the beliefs of the perceiver are never mentioned, and not given as reasons for the introduction of something that a perceiver is aware of when what he takes himself to be aware of is other than what is actually there.

3. Given (2), whenever anyone perceives or thinks he perceives a physical object, he must at least be, in the appropriate sense, perceiving a seeming-object.

This last step comes from Ayer's conversion of the sentence 'It now seems to me that I see a cigarette case' into 'I am now seeing a seeming-cigarette case.' And this seeming-cigarette case, which lives only in my present experience, is an example of a sense-datum. Applying this procedure to all cases of perception, whether veridical or delusive, one obtains the result that whenever anyone perceives, or thinks that he perceives, a physical object, he must at least be, in the appropriate sense, perceiving a seeming-object.7

Thus we may finish the argument:

4. Seeming-objects are sense-data.

5. It is always sense-data that are perceived in any perceptual situation, whether delusive or veridical.

There are several things to notice about Ayer's version of the argument. Ayer says that "From the statement that I see the cigarette case it is supposed to follow that it seems to me that I see it."8 I take it that the statement is in the first-person--i.e., "I see a cigarette case"--and that what is said to follow from this statement (made by a speaker under the appropriate circumstances) is
a belief on the part of the speaker—viz., that it seems to him that he sees a cigarette case. This all seems quite right. Yet, Ayer retracts this by saying "Or, if this cannot be maintained, it is at least supposed to follow that it seems to me that I see something or other." From someone's stating that he does see a cigarette case we are surely justified in inferring that it seems to him that he does, unless we allow for untruths, but the modification Ayer suggests would not rule out the speaker's lying. Perhaps Ayer is simply confused here, between the statement's implying that the speaker takes himself to be aware of a cigarette case and the statement's implying that there is a cigarette case of which the speaker takes himself to be aware. For surely if I am only convinced that I am aware of "something or other" I will not assert that 'I see a cigarette case,' for the statement I will have thereby made advances a much more positive identification of the object than the one I would be justified, or inclined, to make.

Secondly, it is important to note that Ayer begins with the claim that

a. Whenever anything is perceived something must, in this sense, seem to be perceived.10

Then subsequently this is altered and strengthened considerably to read:

b. Whenever anyone perceives, or thinks that he perceives, a physical object, he must be . . . 11
The move from (a) to (b) is necessary if the sense-datum theorist is to be able to say that even in cases of total hallucination, where the perceiver believes that he is seeing something and there is nothing there at all to be seen, there is an existing thing that he is seeing—viz., a sense-datum. Sense-data, and Ayer's "seeming-objects," must be supposed to be sensed in all cases, and not just where the perceiver is correct in thinking there is something that he sees. That is, the move from (a) to (b) is a move toward letting sense-data be what one perceives in cases of complete delusion, as well as cases of perceptual misidentification, where the real object of perception is taken to be something other than what it is.

One might well raise a question about Ayer's initial introduction of this version of the argument from illusion, given the conclusion. He begins by saying that if it is always possible to be suffering from illusion when I take myself to be perceiving a cigarette case, then I must admit that the experiences on which I base such judgments are not adequate to justify those judgments. What sort of "illusion" is Ayer referring to here? That there might be nothing at all that I am seeing seems to be included toward the end of the argument. This brings up a question concerning the role of illusions in the argument from illusion, as well as the role of other cases of perceptual error which perhaps should be distinguished from the sort of
illusion present in the Muller-Lyer lines or the moon illusion.

In Chapter IV, I will discuss one type of illusory perceptual situation on which the argument from illusion has been traditionally based. How illusions are thought to lend support to the claim that we are immediately aware of sense-data in sense-experience will be examined.

In the following section, I will return to the original claim I made about the argument from illusion—viz., that it assumes a distinction which the argument itself does not establish.

Section 3: An assumption underlying the argument from illusion.

On the basis of the formulations of the argument from illusion given in Sections 1 and 2, I would like to present one of the important assumptions underlying the notion of sense-experience in this argument. Briefly, I will argue that the efficacy of the argument from illusion rests on a distinction between the content of a sensory experience and the conclusions or judgments based upon that content. The content is the purely phenomenal “given”--the "sensory core"--or the sense-data. Thus sense-perception is thought of as consisting of both a neutral phenomenal "given" and a process of inference based on what is "given." The conclusions of such inferences are embodied
in such judgments as 'this is a table' or 'what I see is orange.' Error in perception is the result of wrong inference, and this must be so, since sense-data—the phenomenal—are simply given, and there are no judgments involved.

There is some question whether sense-data can be reported or described in such a way that captures this neutrality; judgments about how things appear or seem or look would seem to be the most obvious candidates. However, there is disagreement as to whether statements about how things "look" are used to express judgments or to describe one's sense-experience. 12

This model of sense-perception as consisting of a neutral sensory element plus an inferential or judgmental aspect is the model of sense-experience contained in the argument from illusion. Once it is clearly described it becomes obvious why the argument from illusion begins with cases of illusion and delusion and is able to use such cases as evidence that we directly experience only sense-data, even in "normal" cases of perception where no error is, or is likely to be, made.

Quinton's version of the argument from illusion concludes that all we can know on the basis of a visual perception are the "appearances" or sense-data. We cannot know whether things are "as they appear to be." The only judgments we can base on our visual perceptions with any certainty are those of the form 'It appears to be Ø.'
Quinton argues that such judgments as these, about what appears to be the case, are not judgments about neutral visual impressions—they are not about sense-data. Instead, he argues, judgments about how things appear are guarded judgments about how things are.

Quinton's objection seems well-taken as far as it goes which is, I take it, just a comment on the ordinary, everyday use of statements of the form 'It appears to be \( \emptyset \).' But his point leaves it open whether there might be some other form of judgment which would simply be a report of the phenomenal content of sense-experience, or whether there is no way of reporting that content at all. What his objection does count against is the tendency on the part of some defenders of the argument from illusion to take 'appears'-statements as always expressing such neutral reports. I think that Quinton is right at least in the sense that many, if not all, of the uses of statements which say how things appear are not phenomenal reports. If he is right it follows that there is no need to justify the inference from 'appears'-statements to 'is'-statements, since 'appears'-statements are usually already about how things are. And this is exactly Quinton's conclusion:

'This appears to be \( \emptyset \) is no more evidence or a reason for 'this is \( \emptyset \)' than are 'this may be \( \emptyset \)' or 'this is probably \( \emptyset \).' All three are simply modified ways of saying 'this is \( \emptyset \),' appropriate for one who is inclined, but not inclined quite confidently enough, to make the categorical statement itself.'
Quinton does not seriously question the notion of a neutral, phenomenal sense of "appearance" in which appearances are the contents of our sense-experiences. He simply questions the status of statements about how things appear. He leaves intact the distinction between the content of sense-experience and the judgments based on it, but he argues that 'appears'-statements are judgments rather than phenomenal descriptions or reports.

For example, Quinton distinguishes between the contents of my visual field when I perceive something, and what I conclude about what is contained in my visual field given my beliefs and expectations about what I am seeing. This is a way of making the distinction I am speaking of. But Quinton denies that we are always primarily aware of the contents of our visual fields. In order to be aware of the contents of our visual fields we must attend to them, but we do not usually, normally or easily attend to them. If we were to attend to them we would, on Quinton's view, find the phenomenal content that sense-datum philosophers appeal to.

To this extent, then, I am in sympathy with those who have argued that if the stick half in water looks bent then something really is bent. When I say the stick looks bent, I should discover, if I were to direct my attention to it, that my visual field contained a bent brown line.14 Nevertheless, he claims that we are not usually in a position to describe the contents of our visual fields; indeed,
that to be able to describe our sensory experience is a sophisticated procedure and one seldom called for.\textsuperscript{15}

Quinton holds that although in all perceptual situations we may be said to know what appears to be the case, this is "not usually to be in a position to describe our experience."\textsuperscript{16} So he holds that

It may be true that we can be said to have sense-experiences in every perceptual situation . . . but this is quite another matter from being aware of them, noticing them, being in a position to describe them, and nothing less than this can be involved in the claim of the sense-datum theory that it is our experience which we really perceive.\textsuperscript{17}

I would restate the final sentence of this passage: the sense-datum theory holds that it is the contents of our sense-experience that we really perceive, for most sense-datum theorists would be inclined to agree that sense-experience must be construed to include the beliefs, expectations and past experience of the perceiver.

Quinton is inclined to hold, then, that there is a phenomenal element in sense-experience, that sometimes we may be aware of and be able to describe that phenomenal element, but that we are not normally in a position to do so. A defender of the sense-datum theory would surely agree with Quinton. The fact that we are not normally in a "phenomenal frame of mind" and are not skilled at limiting our perceptual reports to what is strictly given does not count against his claim that there is a sensory core
there to be attended to and described. Normally our beliefs and expectations carry us far beyond the data that we are given by the senses. This is neither avoidable nor regrettable. The sense-datum theorist would only remind us that our inferences may sometimes be mistaken, and it is on the occasion of their failure that we are reminded of the inferential steps in our perceptual judgments. The failures are exemplified in cases where the sensory data tends to "mislead" us as in illusions and hallucinations. So it is that in these cases the machinery by which we arrive at perceptual judgments by a process of inference from the sensory data is most clearly exposed. The nature of the sense-experience we have when suffering from a hallucination or an illusion is indistinguishable from our ordinary sense-experience. That is, the only way to tell whether the data is misleading or not is whether the judgments we arrive at are confirmed or disconfirmed by further experience. Nothing in the experience itself warrants our assumption that the things that cause our experience are as they appear to be. Thus, it is argued, if the failure or success of the resulting judgments is the only difference between veridical and delusively perceptual experiences, there is no way to tell for any experience whatsoever whether it is veridical or delusively until the judgments we make are confirmed or disconfirmed. All that
we can be certain of given the experience itself is that something appears to be so-and-so.

In the next section, I will outline Ayer's view concerning the logical relationship between the content of sense-experience and judgments about material things that are said to be inferred from it. This view is developed by Ayer in his reply to Austin's attack on the sense-datum theory. Here Ayer seems much more inclined to interpret the sense-datum theory as the starting-point for an epistemological theory which purports to explain how it is possible to have knowledge of, or make true statements about, material things.

Section 4: Experiential statements and perceptual judgments.

Ayer holds that when someone states that he sees an object of a certain sort that statement is the expression of a "perceptual judgment." (Hereafter, "PJ".) PJs imply or "carry the assumption" that a material thing exists; i.e., that a public, persistent, spatial and (perhaps, but not necessarily) tangible thing exists. A speaker who expresses a PJ thereby commits himself to a number of further judgments, some of which could not be confirmed by his present experience; for example, that what he claims to see will continue to exist when unperceived. Thus PJs cannot be regarded as reports of direct perceptual experience.
Ayer contrasts PJs with what he calls "Experiential Statements" (hereafter "ES") which are neutral reports of direct perceptual experience. Ayer thinks that ESs would be expressed as mere verbal reports of the occurrence of a visual pattern, or an auditory sensation, without the implication that what is reported is caused by, or evidence of, the existence of a material thing. It is this fact that constitutes the "neutrality" of ESs.

Because PJs involve the further assumptions of persistence, etc., they cannot be reduced to any set of ESs. Ayer thinks that PJs are the conclusions of inferences whose premises are ESs, but since a PJ "carries assumptions" that go beyond those premises it is never conclusively established by them. ESs are certain; they are non-inferential and immediately known. Since no PJ is logically entailed by any set of ESs, the inference from ESs to a PJ is never sufficient to guarantee the truth of the PJ. The conclusion Ayer reaches is that if PJs are inferred solely from ESs a PJ can never be certain, and can never be known to be true. The inference involved from ESs to a PJ is always inductive.

Ayer claims that PJs are the results of inference on the grounds that the implications or assumptions they carry must be inferred, since they could not be known directly. The premises of the inference are confined to
what is immediately experienced and they require no further verification. PJs contain more information than is given in the experience. The dilemma that seems to emerge from this view so far is that what we say about our perceptual experience is either devoid of reference to physical objects, or it is unverifiable.

Before turning to a closer examination of the relation between PJs and ESs I would like to mention that there is an unclarity in Ayer's view thus far. This will come up again, in Section 6, but I would like to mention it here and suggest that there are two possible ways to interpret what Ayer says about the truth-values of PJs.

It is not clear whether Ayer thinks that

i) A PJ is never true because it is not conclusively verifiable.

or ii) A PJ can never be known to be true because it is not conclusively verifiable.

Both alternatives seem undesirable. Suppose he holds (i). Conclusive verification would involve confirming the assumptions associated with the PJ extending for an unspecified time into the future. This would have the consequence that PJs are to be treated like hypotheses. They may be more or less probable, but are never certain. Thus this treatment equates the truth of PJs with their certainty. And (ii) leads to a parallel conclusion; namely, that a PJ cannot be known to be true unless the
physical or logical impossibility of its being false is established.

I think that, as between (i) and (ii), (ii) is more plausible. But (i) and (ii) are not independent of one another. I believe, and will argue, that there is a common error responsible for them both, and that Ayer in fact sommits this error. The error is this: it is thought that if S knows that p then S cannot be wrong. S might be wrong by believing p without being justified in believing p, or by believing p when p is false. S would be wrong about p if p were false. So, it is reasoned, if S knows that p, p cannot be false. Now if we read 'p cannot be false' as 'it is impossible that p is false' we can conclude that if S knows that p, it is necessary that p is true. The mistake would be to suppose that the 'necessary' modifies the truth of p, so that if S knows that p, p is necessarily true. The mistake has been made before, and pointed out before, but the reasoning is very seductive, especially in the framework of the sort of approach to our knowledge of the material world that Ayer is using.
Section 5: The relation between PJs and ESs.

It seems to me that there are serious mistakes involved in Ayer's view. First, however, it will be necessary to sort out just what the view involves. The questions that need clarifying seem to me to be these:

iii) What is the (logical) nature of the relation between a PJ and the "assumptions" it "carries?"

iv) What is the relation between the truth of a PJ and the truth or falsity of its attendant assumptions?

To answer these questions it will first be necessary to re-examine Ayer's claim that PJs are inferred from ESs, or from the content of one's sense-experience.

Ayer holds that a PJ such as 'this is a table' is based on, or inductively inferred from, a number of particular statements (ESs) describing sense-data. Yet the PJ is not entailed by an finite number of ESs, and no finite number of ESs is sufficient to conclusively verify the PJ. In the course of defending this view Ayer takes issue with Austin's claim that normally such judgments as 'this is a table' are not the results of inferences. Austin interprets the claim that such judgments are the results of inferences as meaning that we infer from the look, feel, sound, smell, etc. of an object that it is of such-and-such a kind, and that the look, feel and other sensory qualities of a thing are the evidence on which we
base our conclusions as to what it is. Austin replies that we do not learn to make perceptual judgments in this way, by noticing the evidence and basing inferences upon it. We will have a misleading idea of how we verify statements about objects that we see, according to Austin, if we think of statements about the looks of things as evidence for, or as entailed by, statements about what things are. And Austin clearly rejects the idea that one type of statement (e.g., Ayer's ESs) are always evidence for another type of statement (PJs).

The evidence, if there is any, for a 'material-object' statement will usually be formulated in statements of just the same kind; but in general, any kind of statement could provide evidence for any other kind, if the circumstances were appropriate. 22

Now Ayer insists that even statements like 'this is a table' (uttered by someone looking at a table) embody "far-reaching implications" and that such statements cannot be wholly justified by the visual experience which gives rise to them. To judge that something I see is a table implies at least that it is a material object of a certain kind. And for something to be a material object of this kind

it must be tangible as well as visible; in the appropriate circumstances it must be perceived by others besides myself; it must satisfy the causal criteria of persistence; ... 23

And Ayer continues to argue that there is a sense in which
we do not see that the object we take to be a table satisfies these criteria:

There is indeed a sense in which I can be said to see that this thing is tangible, public and persistent. Namely, it looks like a perfectly ordinary table, and ordinary tables do have these properties. But, in making this judgement, I am drawing on my considerable past experience. I have found out that when things look like this, they normally do satisfy these further conditions.24

He takes this as evidence that the judgment that something is a table is the result of an inductive inference, the basis for which are one's present perceptions. The steps of the inference are justified by past experience with objects of this sort.

One starts with certain visual clues, and on the basis of these clues, one leaps to one's far-reaching conclusions. But the conclusions are not contained in the clues.25

This indicates that a statement like 'This is a table,' made by a perceiver on the occasion of his seeing a table, is to be taken as a conclusion of an inference, and not a direct report of the content of his experience. In fact, the content of the experience is interpreted by Ayer to be entirely neutral with respect to such conclusions as might be based on it.

If I may speak of a visual presentation in an entirely neutral sense, which carries no implication about the status of what is presented, then the existence of this visual presentation leaves it open whether the further conditions, of the object's being tangible and so forth, will be satisfied.26
This "entirely neutral sense" of the "visual presentation" is the sense in which Quinton rejects the notion of what appears to be the case. Quinton does not think that appearances are such neutral visual presentations; or, more accurately, he does not think that judgments about what appears to be the case are judgments about neutral visual presentations.

Ayer holds that the inferences made on the basis of the neutral visual presentations are never conclusive, and this follows from the fact that the conclusions of such inferences (e.g., that some object is a table) are related to the premises on which we base those inferences in such a way that the conclusion could be false while the premises are true. This, he says, is expressed by the sense-datum theorist "no doubt misleadingly" as the claim that even under the best of circumstances the existence of a chair is not certain. What the sense-datum theorist means is that the statement that the chair exists does not follow logically from any statement, or indeed from any finite number of statements, which are limited to describing the content of the observer's experience.27

Furthermore, Ayer holds that since such judgments are the results of inferences, it should be possible to state the premises of those inferences. These will be mere descriptions of the perceiver's experiences on which the conclusions of the inferences are drawn. In the next
section, I will examine the sort of formulation of these premises that Ayer proposes, and the assumptions on which his proposal can be seen to rest.

Section 6: Experiential Statements.

Ayer holds that there is a logical gap between the sense-experiences we have and the judgments we base on that experience. The judgments we make about material things embody assumptions which are not, and could not be, proven on the basis of just the experiences which we take to justify them. The process of arriving at a judgment to the effect that some material object exists is a process of inference. This leads Ayer to try to formulate, or suggest a procedure for formulating, the premises on which those inferences are based. The premises he is looking for will be entirely neutral; they will imply nothing about the existence of any material thing. They will not imply that the content of the experience being described is being caused by any object, or state of the perceiver. The suggestion that such premises could be formulated is, in itself, problematic as Ayer himself realizes, for to do so means that it is possible to formulate a statement which does not go beyond the evidence, in the sense that it carries no implication about the status of what is seen. A statement of this kind, which I propose to call an 'Experiential Statement,' will simply record the presence, say, of a visual
pattern. It will leave it entirely open whether the observer is right in treating this pattern as a manifestation of the kind of physical object which he claims to perceive, or indeed of a physical entity of any sort at all.28

There is a logical point involved in the introduction of Experiential Statements. The logical point is that in the experience of seeing a chair, for example, the content of the perceiver's sense-experience is "logically consistent" with the falsity of the judgment 'this is a chair.' Thus in introducing neutral ESs Ayer is proposing that it is possible to give a description of the content of one's experience of seeing a chair that does not imply or entail that a chair exists.

In one sense, it does not seem possible to completely restrict an ES to a description of one's present visual experience. For, to infer that what I see is a chair on the basis of my present visual experience requires that I associate the present experience with some past experience. In fact, the very use of the word 'chair' in speaking about what I am seeing presupposes that I have learned the word, and what chairs are, and remember how to use that word to talk about a class of objects. So in this sense, of course, reporting or describing a present sensory experience logically involves more than just the occurrence of that experience.
This is not all that Ayer is referring to, however, when he says that present experience does not justify judgments about material things. Any statement that a material thing exists entails that the thing conform to certain assumptions about material things. Another way to state Ayer's logical point would be that 'this is a chair' entails 'this is public, tangible, spatial, and persistent.' The content of the experience of seeing a chair, however, is simply what I see. And I cannot see that the object I take myself to be confronted with is tangible, for example. I may see that it is spatial (for how else could I be seeing it?), but not that it is persistent or public. Therefore, strictly speaking, I do not see that this is a material thing, or that it is a chair, since being a chair entails being a material thing.

Ayer is not satisfied with the fact that we are nearly always vindicated in our inductive inferences to physicalness. Very rarely does it turn out that one of the assumptions that goes along with thinking that something we see is a material thing was mistaken. The doubts Ayer and others of his persuasion raise are, they would say, philosophical or logical, rather than psychological. Nor can they be settled by appeals to ordinary language. For as Ayer says, from the fact that we have a use of the word 'certain' according to which it is correct to say that we are certain that this is a chair, it does not follow that
we can be certain in the strong, logical sense of 'certain.' This "strong" sense would be one in which, to be certain that this is a chair would mean not only that we are unable to doubt that this is a chair (that we could sit on it, show it to someone else, count on its being here tomorrow and in the intervening period), but that we are able to infer all this on the basis of indisputable premises. The inferences would have to be deductive rather than inductive to meet the requirements for this "strong" sense of certainty. The proof would have to be based solely on present experience (expressed in ESs) rather than on descriptions of present experience plus assumptions about uniformities based on past experience. Ayer thinks that our ordinary use of 'certain' allows us to say, even without these guarantees, that it is certain that something is a chair, but this is not the sense of certainty that he is looking for.

In the next section, I will continue to examine Ayer's view concerning the relation between the premises as formulated in Experiential Statements and perceptual judgments about material things. The question I am now interested in pursuing is just what assumptions are involved in stating of something that it is a material thing, and how those assumptions could be verified.
Section 7: Verifying the assumptions carried by PJ's.

As we have seen in Sections 5 and 6, Ayer thinks that a perceptual judgment is uncertain in a strict, logical sense unless the corollary assumptions that are attendant to the judgment can be verified. They cannot be verified because the assumptions are infinite and, in some cases, even if they were finite, they could not be verified by perceptual experience (for example, the assumption that the object will continue to exist unperceived). The crucial question, then, is why the confirmation of these assumptions is required for verification of a perceptual judgment.

Ayer's answer is that the statement that a chair exists does not follow logically from any finite number of statements which simply describe the content of a perceiver's visual experience. His argument seems to be this:

1. A PJ entails that a physical object exists.
2. The claim that a physical object exists is equivalent to a number of further claims about the future behavior of that object.
3. A PJ is not conclusively verifiable unless the further claims entailed by it can be verified.
4. They cannot be verified because there are an infinite number of them.
5. Therefore, a PJ cannot be conclusively verified.

At first glance there seems to be no good reason for accepting either (3) or (4). Why should we accept the
claim that there are an infinite number of claims that one must verify in order to have verified a PJ? Why not simply hold that after a certain number of the attendant assumptions have been shown to hold it no longer makes sense to doubt that the PJ is true?

Ayer's reply is that even when doubt is no longer reasonable the PJ still has not been conclusively verified for it is still logically possible that the PJ might turn out to be false at some future date. Possibly Ayer believes this because he is impressed by the fact that a material object might at any time start behaving in ways that conflict with our assumptions about it. But this is not really what his argument shows. What the argument shows is that a PJ is not verifiable. Ayer, if he is worried about predictability, is not concerned with verifiability, but with falsifiability. Thus, he might well have reasoned, if a PJ could (logically could) turn out to be false later, then it is not true now. It is not necessary to accept this, however. We could say simply that a material thing, one of those we are sure exists, has, for some reason yet to be discovered, started behaving uncharacteristically. (My dining room table begins whistling each afternoon at 3 p.m. Do I take back my claim that it is a table? That it ever was a table? Do I call it a whistling table? Do I suspect a prank?)
I raise these questions to indicate that there is a problem with the notion of falsifying judgments about material things, as well as with the notion of verifying them. Ayer, as I have suggested, is claiming that such judgments cannot be verified because it would require an infinite series of tests to do so. I suggested that perhaps Ayer insists on such strict criteria for verifying such judgments because he is impressed with the fact that so many happenings could falsify them, and of course he does not want to hold that a judgment could be true and known to be true if it should turn out to be false at some later period. But I want to suggest that the question 'What would count as falsifying a judgment that this is a table?' does not admit of a clear answer.

In any case, there is another consideration here. Ayer claims that the existence of an experience is consistent with the experiencer's having been "hypnotized or otherwise deluded." This means that any experience could be the result of hypnosis or delusion without the person having the experience being aware of any abnormality. (Of course Ayer could not mean that the experience itself could occur just as it does consistently with the observer's having been hypnotized or otherwise deluded, since other observers could surely attest to the differences. Ayer must mean that the experience does not feel any
differently—there is no internal way to tell the difference between this and a "normal" experience.) This suggests that no perceptual judgment is conclusively verifiable because no observer can claim to know, at the time he is having it, that he is in a "normal" situation. No one can claim to know that he is not at that moment hypnotized or hallucinating.

This considerably strengthens Ayer's case for saying that PJs are not justified by ESs. Even if the required infinite number of confirmatory experiences were waived, the present experience itself is not acceptable as grounds for the perceptual judgment. Seeming to see a chair just is not good evidence, according to Ayer, for the claim that a chair is seen. Even my being quite certain that I see a chair fails to provide the logical support necessary to verify the claim that I am seeing a chair.

In the next section, I will give a brief evaluation of Ayer's views concerning the logical support for perceptual judgments. Then I will return, in Chapter IV, to the distinction between content and judgments involved in sense-experience, and raise some fundamental questions about that distinction.
Section 8: An evaluation of Ayer's view.

It is interesting to note that Ayer's ground has shifted considerably from the views he held in The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge to the later reply to Austin. He no longer attempts to interpret the dispute between those who support and those who attack sense-data as a dispute over the uses of certain words. In fact, in his reply to Austin, he points to Austin's remarks about our ordinary judgments about material things being non-inferential as "the fundamental point at issue." And he dismisses Austin's arguments, which are based on the fact that we would not say that the existence of a chair we are looking at in broad daylight is uncertain, by saying that this is true, "so far as it goes," but that the real issue is not whether we have a word 'certain' which allows us to say that such judgments are certain, but whether there is any logical ground for claiming that they are. And since Ayer's "logical grounds" would seem to be strictly deductive, there is no such support to be found.

One might turn Ayer's own tables against him, and argue that he simply should be taken as recommending a use of 'certain' which differs from our ordinary use. Whether or not we choose to adopt his recommendation will depend on how useful this new sense of 'certain' is for whatever purposes we have in mind. If this were
to be the basis for evaluating Ayer's later arguments against Austin, I think we should be able to make a decent case for rejecting them on purely pragmatic considerations.

The views that I have outlined in this chapter strike me as being technically consistent, and at least traditionally acceptable. Yet they also strike me as being rather shallow. Suppose, after all, that we cannot prove that the statements we make about material things are and will continue to be true. That is, suppose that there is no finite set of statements describing the content of our sense-experience from which a judgment about material things follows by deductive reasoning. Did we suppose that it could?

I hesitate to label Ayer a sceptic. But I think that the sort of questions he raises concerning the possibility of verifying judgments about material things are sceptical questions; they have the tendency to allow less and less common sense to play a part in the answers. Ayer retreats to "logical points" when even he cannot make plausible the sorts of doubts he is raising. This reminds me of Hume's rather touching admission that he could not live according to his own sceptical convictions, or Descartes' fear that if he stopped writing he would realize that all he had proposed as a mere philosophical exercise in methodological doubt would actually turn out to be true.
Sceptics have to make their doubts plausible too. If there seems to be nothing to be gained from entering the sort of restrictions that Ayer, for example, wants us to take on, then we should ask ourselves what good would come of it. Does it allow us to understand more? Or does it merely solve some very complex issues at a rather tidy "logical" level? This is polemical.

My own reply to Ayer would take the following lines: I only sketch it here because it will be developed further in Chapter VI. But it is this: I would claim that the knowledge, justification and verification of claims we make about material things on the basis of our sense-experiences is not a topic that can be considered apart from considering specific cases and circumstances. What counts as verifying a judgment that this is a table depends totally on the circumstances in which that judgment is made. There might be circumstances where a second look might verify the claim; there might also be circumstances where it would be impossible to verify it. Furthermore, asking someone whether his grounds for making such a judgment are "certain" seems to be asking him whether it makes sense to them to doubt their judgment there, in those circumstances. Asking a person that question would usually produce a moment's thought, and what would be thought about is what could possibly be taken into account here.
that might make him hesitate about making the judgment. Most people are fairly careful when asked to be careful. But the question 'How do you know that's a table?' or even 'How do you know your evidence for taking that to be a table are sound?' need to be given a sense. Much of the sense is provided by the context, what the speaker and audience know about one another and their mutual expectations, etc. As many have argued, 'How do you know?' admits of different answers. And 'How do you know that this is a table?' does too. For one thing, the question needs to be answered in such a way that the respondent knows what the alternatives are. 'How do you know this is a table?' 'As opposed to what?' As opposed to a settee, a dresser, a part of the exhibit, a chair with no arms, etc.

Ayer and those who take his point of view insist on interpreting the question 'How do you know it's a chair?' as though it meant 'How do you know its a chair as opposed to an hallucination of one, a figment of your imagination, or an optical illusion?' And no wonder they have trouble specifying the answer—we are almost never called upon to deal with such cases.

So far I am not impressed by Ayer's arguments. In the next two chapters, I will take up these problems from a different angle. I will discuss the visual phenomena
of illusions, hallucinations and other "non-veridical" cases. These are the backbones of the argument from illusion and the sense-datum theory. I will argue that the uses to which they have been put are largely unwarranted. Again, the distinction between the content of sense-experience and the judgments based on it will play a central role. And I will point out, in my discussion of various examples, how this distinction is assumed rather than demonstrated by the examples. The conclusion I will attempt to defend is that the distinction itself is spurious, though difficult to avoid, and that once the myth of the given is recognized as being an article of faith rather than an established fact, many of the issues so far raised will be seen to change—in most cases they will seem to become more complicated. Which is all for the better, as far as I'm concerned.
Footnotes for Chapter III


4 Ayer, 1956, pp. 95-96.

5 Ibid., p. 96.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., pp. 96-97.

8 Ibid., p. 96.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., pp. 96-97.


14 Ibid., p. 506.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., p. 509.
Ayer grants that many of these inferences are not "conscious."

I do not take these questions to be vastly different or the answers independent of each other.

See Norman Malcolm, "The Verification Argument," in ed. by Max Black (
CHAPTER IV
SENSE-DATA AND THE ARGUMENT FROM ILLUSION

Introduction.

In Chapter III, I examined A. J. Ayer's later view concerning the relationship between the sensory element, or content, of our visual experience and our judgments about material objects. There it was shown that Ayer conceives of the relationship between these sense-data and judgments about material things as an inferential relation; we infer judgments about the existence and properties of material things on the basis of the sensory content of our sense-experience. The inference is inductive because the premises are descriptions of present sensory experience, while the conclusion states that a material thing is perceived. For this to be true the material thing must exist; and the claim that a material thing exists is, according to Ayer, essentially predictive. To assert that a material thing exists is to assert a number of things concerning its duration, tangibility, spatiality and publicity. These further claims cannot be fully justified by either present observation or past experience, so no claim that a material thing is perceived can be conclusively verified. An
infinite number of tests or observations would have to be performed in order to conclusively establish, for example, that the object I take to be a real existing table is and will continue to be such.

Ayer emphasizes, of course, that this is a logical point. He grants that we do speak as though our perceptual judgments were "certain" and that we do not, in general, take ourselves to be in doubt as to the existence or the identity of objects we see. However, the logical point still stands, and can be expressed as the claim that our perceptual judgments are one and all "uncertain."

In Chapter III, I pointed out that Ayer's analysis of this inference presupposes that we can describe the sensory content of experience, and that this is distinct from claiming to perceive a material thing. This, in turn, presupposes that what we are reporting in describing the sensory content of experience are not material things. Thus Ayer's view rests on an implicit distinction between what we "sense" or "experience," and material things. This distinction is, not coincidentally, what the sense-datum theory requires; for sense-data are held to be what we are immediately or directly aware of in sense-experience, and are to be distinguished from material things.

Some version of the argument from illusion is typically offered in support of the claim that there is a
distinction to be drawn between sense-data and material things. In this chapter, I will begin in Section 1 by stating the first stage of the argument from illusion and suggest several alternative ways of stating the crucial premise. The first stage consists of several premises that are taken to show that in some cases it is necessary to suppose that a strictly sensory element exists in perception. Stage two goes on to argue that we must suppose that such an element exists in all cases of perception. I will discuss the alternative formulations of the crucial premise in Sections 2, 3 and 4, and suggest an interpretation that I think makes explicit the rationale for this step in the argument. In Section 5 I summarize by arguing that if we use the reformulation of the crucial premise, the argument can be made plausible, but that it cannot then be used to prove the existence of some entity other than a material thing that is perceived.
Section 1: Stage one in the argument from illusion.

For the purposes of this chapter, I would like to distinguish two stages in the argument from illusion. Stage one of the argument proceeds by enumerating cases in which, it is claimed, a distinction between how things appear to a perceiver and how they really are must be drawn. Suppose the case in question is that of a perceiver looking at a straight stick in a glass of water. Stage one would include the following steps:

1. The stick is not bent.
2. The stick looks bent to the perceiver (S).

The justification for (2) is apparently thought to be so obvious as not to need argument. Even Austin says:

Well now: does the stick 'look bent' to begin with? I think we can agree that it does, we have no better way of describing it.

He goes on to add that of course it does not look exactly like a bent stick out of water, for we can see the water that the stick is in. But we can describe the stick as "looking bent," as long as we do not take this to mean "looking like a bent stick."

At this point there are several alternative premises one could appeal to.

3. It seems to S that he is seeing something bent.
4. S is presented with a bent appearance.
5. There is something in S's visual field which he could correctly characterize as being bent.
These alternatives will be discussed individually in Sections 2, 3 and 4. If I understand defenders of the argument, it is thought that either (2) alone or the conjunction of (1) and (2) requires or allows the further step to (3), (4) or (5). Yet none of these follows from the first two steps in the argument. Something like (3) - (5) is needed if the argument from (1) and (2) to the rest of the premises is to be valid. For the function of (3) - (5) is to explain why it is that, given the way the stick looks to S, we must say that there is something bent which, given (1), cannot be supposed to be the stick. (3) explains the introduction of something bent by attributing the belief that there is something bent to S. (4) and (5) attempt to justify the claim that there is something bent by distinguishing what S experiences from the stick. What S experiences—an appearance, or an element in his visual field—is said to be bent. I will argue that there is no need to explain the stick's looking bent to S by asserting that there really is something bent.

I will also argue that sense-data are actually smuggled into the argument at just this point, when some thing (appearance, look, visual impression, an element of S's visual field) that is bent is introduced apparently in an attempt to justify (explain, elaborate on, or merely to restate) the fact that the stick looks bent to S.
The assumption in this step is that there must be something (other than the stick) to carry the quality of bentness. Perhaps this is because S might be tempted to attribute bentness to the stick itself. But we need not suppose that S actually does attribute bentness to the stick itself; or even that he is seriously tempted to do so. The fact that he could say of himself that something looks bent to him is apparently thought to be sufficiently problematic to call for an explanation. A defender of the argument might ask us to explain why, if indeed there is nothing that has the quality bentness, S might characterize himself as seeming to see something bent.

Before discussing (3) - (5) in more detail, I will finish setting out the steps involved in the first stage of the argument from illusion. It is argued that, given the earlier premises,

6. Bentness is a quality of something.
7. Given (1), bentness is not a quality of the stick.
8. Bentness is, therefore, a quality of the look (appearance, visual impression, sense-datum) of the stick.
9. Whatever has the quality bentness is what S is visually presented with.4
10. Therefore, S is visually presented with the look (appearance, visual impression, sense-datum) of the stick.
11. Furthermore S is not (in the same sense) visually presented with the stick.
Premise (6) can be defended by appealing to the principle that a quality must be a quality of something. If the quality bentness is somehow presented or perceived, then there must be something that has that quality. The question, then, is what it is that has the quality in this case. The logical candidate here would be the stick, but since the stick has already been asserted in (1) not to have it, it is concluded that bentness is not a quality of any material thing. But since bentness must a quality of something (by the above principle), another sort of substantive is required. Hence the move from (7) to (8).

Premise (9) is based, it seems to me, on the idea that the cause of S's perception of bentness must be something that has that quality. There is felt to be a causal connection between the qualities things have and the qualities they appear to have. In most cases such causal connections can be characterized in a fairly straightforward way. For example, the cause of the table's looking brown to me is that the table is brown. In the case of the stick in water, however, there is a potential difficulty in specifying the cause of the stick's looking bent because here the cause of the stick's looking bent to S is not the shape of the stick, or so one might argue. Premise (9) represents the assumption that the cause of the stick's looking bent to S must be something with which he is visually presented, and which is bent.
(11) is not usually read as the claim that S does not see the stick in any sense at all. Rather typically, it is said that the relation S bears to the stick is that he perceives it, but perceiving is distinguished from sensing, or being presented with, a sense-datum. Perceiving (or whatever one chooses to call the relation between S and the stick) is held to require some cognitive activity on S's part—ineference, judgment, association, memory—over and above his having sensed the appropriate sense-data.

Stage one of the argument purports to show that in certain cases we are visually presented with sense-data and not with material things. Stage two of the argument goes on to show that we are directly aware of appearances or sense-data in all cases, and not just those mentioned in stage one. There are several reasons given for this extension of the conclusion of stage one. It is frequently claimed that the cases in which how something looks differs from how it is are, from the perceiver's point of view, qualitatively indistinguishable from cases in which how they appear are how they are. As we saw, Quinton's version of the argument rests on the claim that we cannot tell the difference between a situation in which things are as they appear and one in which they are not as they appear. If two experiences are qualitatively indistinguishable, it is argued, it is unreasonable to suppose that we are aware
of one kind of thing (sense-data) in one, and a different kind of thing in the other. Thus, since by stage one it has been shown that we are aware of sense-data in the "deceptive" cases, it follows that we are aware of sense-data in all cases. This assumption—that if two things (in this case, two experiences) are "qualitatively indistinguishable" then they must be of the same (metaphysical) genre—is one for which no justification is provided (that I have found).

It is interesting to note that the argument just outlined maintains that the experience of having a "delusional" perception is indistinguishable from the experience of having a "veridical" perception. And this is taken as evidence that what the experiences are of in each case cannot be different sorts of things. This seems to me to be deficient as an argument. In the first place, to say that two experiences are indistinguishable is to say that a perceiver is unable to distinguish between them. But whether a perceiver is able to distinguish between two experiences has something to do with his ability to discriminate them. The fact that a perceiver cannot tell the difference between two things does not show that there is no difference there to be noticed. Secondly, it is usually held that for two visual experiences to be "qualitatively indistinguishable" it is enough for them to look
just alike. Thus a wax figure may be indistinguishable by sight alone from a living person. This shows, at best, that two different sorts of things can look exactly alike. It does not show that they are qualitatively indistinguishable since, of course, there are other sensory means by which we could tell the difference between them. The problem for the sense-datum theory, then, is this: if it is being argued simply that we cannot, by sight alone, distinguish between two different sorts of things, then, although this is true, it is not a very powerful claim. The claim they apparently wish to make is that it might be the case that we are always liable to error in perception. Of course, if we are restricted to the use of only one sense, at a certain specified angle and distance, it may be impossible to accurately judge what it is that we are perceiving. But the fact is that we are not so restricted in most cases. If the more powerful claim is to be defended, therefore, it must be shown that no matter what I do, I could not discover whether I am perceiving one sort of thing or another. And this seems highly implausible. As psychologists have often noted, it is largely cues provided by the surrounding context that enable us to accurately identify what we are seeing, hearing, etc. I would suggest that, to the extent that the sense-datum theorist must rule out the use of such cues,
his theory will not reflect the actual facts about how we form judgments and arrive at conclusions on the basis of our perceptual experience.

Another way of stating the second stage of the argument is this: the so-called "veridical" experiences (where things are as they appear) are not really different from "delusive" cases, except as a matter of degree. For example, seeing a three-dimensional object always involves seeing it from one point of view; hence only part of it can be seen by one person at one time. This gives rise to potentially conflicting conclusions drawn on the basis of the visual data about the "real shape" of an object. This was the basis of Ayer's argument that 'see' must have two senses in Chapter I, Section 2. So, it might be argued that "veridical" experiences are not any more direct or reliable as access to material things and their qualities than the "delusive" cases mentioned in stage one. Thus, it is implausible to hold that we see sense-data in one but not in the other.

One comment about the terms 'veridical' and 'delusive.' It does not seem to be a very useful or exhaustive distinction, though the terminology comes easily (and perhaps for this reason one should be especially careful with it). Is seeing a stick in water that looks bent a "delusive" perception? As I have been using the term, a
"delusive" perception is one in which things look differently than they really are. There are two possible ways of attacking the claim that the stick in water case is an example of a "delusive" perception. One is to claim that the stick in water does not look otherwise than as it really is, because straight sticks in water do look bent in just that way. The other is to point out that "delusions" are cases where there is something "seen" or believed (in cases of delusions of grandeur, for example) that is totally unreal. Thus, the stick in water is not a delusion; there is the real stick. It is, at best, an illusion; one sees it as bent, rather than as straight.

Austin criticizes defenders of the argument from illusion for lumping together cases of optical illusion, hallucinations, and variations in appearance caused by perspective and medium and calling the conclusions drawn from them the argument from illusion. Austin's point was not merely that the argument may have been misnamed. His point was that the argument gains some plausibility from failing to distinguish the different cases. Austin distinguishes illusions and delusions, summarizing as follows:

The most important differences here are that the term 'an illusion' (in a perceptual context) does not suggest that something totally unreal is conjured up—on the contrary, there just is the arrangement of lines and arrows on the page, the woman on the stage with her head in a black bag, the rotating wheels; whereas the term 'delusion' does suggest something totally unreal, not really there at all.
He points out that the argument from illusion, so-called, is produced as establishing the conclusion that some of our 'perceptions' are delusive.

Then he shows that the argument trades on the distinction between illusions and delusions, in a sense, by not ever explicitly making it:

The way in which the 'argument from illusion' positively trades on not distinguishing illusions from delusions is, I think, this. So long as it is being suggested that the cases paraded for our attention are cases of illusion, there is the implication (from the ordinary use of the word) that there really is something there that we perceive. But then, when these cases begin to be quietly called delusive, there comes in the very different suggestion of something being conjured up, something unreal or at any rate 'immaterial.' These two implications taken together may then subtly insinuate that in the cases cited there really is something that we are perceiving, but that this is an immaterial something; and this insinuation, even if not conclusive by itself, is certainly well calculated to edge us a little closer towards just the position where the sense-datum theorist wants to have us.
Section 2: (3) It seems to S that he is seeing something bent.

(3) might well be the weakest of the three proposed premises. It has the initial advantage of capturing the fact that S, the perceiver, may be inclined, on the basis of what he sees, to judge that something (presumably the stick in water) really is bent. I will argue that if (3) is understood in such a way that it implies that S does or might be inclined to so judge then the truth of (3) will be of no consequence in the stage of the argument under consideration. Furthermore, if (3) is understood in such a way that it does not carry this implication, then it will not serve to provide the required transition between premises (1) and (2) and (6), since it will then be simply another of saying that the stick looks bent to S—hence equivalent to (2).

I would hold, as did Austin, that saying 'It seems to me that . . .' is a way of expressing a tentative judgment or conclusion. Austin thought that in many cases the use of 'seems' involves making reference implicitly to the existence of evidence on which the judgment is based. 'He seems guilty,' for example, fairly clearly, makes an implicit reference to certain evidence—evidence bearing, of course, on the question whether he is guilty, though not such as to settle that question conclusively—'On the evidence we've heard so far, he certainly seems guilty.'
And again,

'The hill seems steep'--to judge by the fact
that we've had to change gear twice.11

It seems to me that Austin is quite correct in these remarks
about 'seems' and the implicit reference to evidence conveyed by the use of that word.

Applying them to the case at hand, we might say
that if S were to say "The stick seems bent" he would be
expressing a tentative inclination to judge that the stick
is bent, and the evidence to which he would be referring
would be how the stick looks. But notice that we are not
given a first-person statement in (3). What (3) says is
that it seems to S that he is seeing something bent. And
in the third-person, the implication is merely that whoever
is asserting (3) takes S to be inclined to make a tenta-
tive judgment concerning the shape of the stick. The
question, then, is how the tentative judgment and implicit
reference to evidence for that judgment serves to further
the argument; in particular, how one can use (3) to get
from (2) to (6).

First let us look at the connection between (3)
and (6). It might be suggested that if (3) is true, then
(6) must also be true; if it seems to S that he is seeing
something bent, then there must be something bent (some-
thing that has the quality bentness), whether or not we
suppose that it is the stick that is, or that S is inclined
to think is, bent. In other words (6) might be thought to be justified by (3) on the grounds that if something in the situation leads S to express even a tentative judgment that something is bent, then there must be the quality and something which has it.

This line of reasoning seems to me to be wrong, however. Although S may be inclined to express such a judgment on the shape of the stick, it would be much too hasty to conclude that his judgment must be, in a sense, perfectly right. To argue that if S wrongly takes the stick to be bent there must be something bent to explain his error is just to overlook the fact that such error is possible—that perceivers can be wrong. Of course, the stick may look bent to him, and he might even judge that it is bent (given his unfamiliarity with the phenomenon of refraction), but we certainly do not need, and I think are unjustified in offering, the move being proposed.

The connection between (2) and (3) also presents problems. (3) might be thought to be simply a restatement of (2). I have already said that, given Austin's remarks on the use of 'seems,' I think that 'It seems to S to be bent' and 'It looks bent to S' should not be taken to be equivalent, at least not if the third-person manner of stating (3) is understood in such a way that the implicit judgment is being attributed to S. However, if someone
were to argue that one might say of S that 'It seems to him that he is seeing something bent' and only mean by that that 'It looks bent to S,' then (2) and (3) would clearly be equivalent. But notice that, in that case, (3) would be of no use in providing a transition between (2) and (6).

Section 3: (4) S is presented with a bent appearance. (4), on the other hand, suggests that there are grounds for S's taking the stick to be bent without suggesting that S actually believes that the stick is bent. (2) does not suggest that S might take the stick to be bent. So both (2) and (4) manage to avoid bringing in a potential false belief on the part of S and thereby implying that S has a false belief which he need not be supposed to have. This is an advantage over (3). But the notion of 'a bent appearance' in (4) is a problem. One could paraphrase (4) as

4a. Something appears bent to S.

and that would have the advantage of omitting reference to a bent appearance (which already imports the thing which is bent). However, (4a) is just another way of saying what (2) says, and so cannot be used to explain (2) and its relation to (6). To assert that (4) and (4a) are equivalent would not help if what is being argued is that
"appearances" are to be the bearers of such qualities as bentness, since it is then open to reply that (4), like (4a), simply restates (2).

Some philosophers have argued that (4) and (4a), while not equivalent (because of their grammatical forms), are harmless paraphrases of one another, and suggest that in any case we cannot seriously hope to avoid sense-data by refusing to use the word 'appearance' in its noun form. Timothy Sprigge, for example, takes this line on (4) and (4a):

I am not unaware that many philosophers would say that there is a play upon words in moving from the fact that things appear, for instance look and feel, somewhat differently in different perceptual circumstances, to saying that there are looks, feels, or, more generally, appearances, which they present. Sprigge is unmoved by the fact that we do not need to talk about appearances, that we could always substitute (4a) for (4):

the fact that one could 'get by' without a certain noun qualified by such words as 'the' and 'an' and occurring when thus qualified as the subject of sentences, is no good reason for saying that there is nothing such as it seems to designate.

Then he challenges those who might still balk at accepting "appearances":

If I am to be shown that there are no such things as sense-data, I need to be shown positively what is wrong is saying that there are, not just to be shown that I could convey information about them without nouns which refer to them.
So even if we decide to use (4a) and similar locutions uniformly in place of (4), we are "conveying information about" sense-data (appearances) nonetheless.

Now this is a rather startling piece of news. Sprigge has completely turned the tables on the critics of sense-data in this last passage. For what he says means that the critics are going to have to show that sense-data do not exist, instead of the other way around. He, in effect, accuses the anti-sense-datum philosopher of begging the question against sense-data by refusing to admit their existence. If Sprigge is right we cannot help but talk about sense-data when we describe our sense-experiences. I am tempted to think that some of this is bravado on Sprigge's part; my evidence is that he himself offers an argument, called the "argument from variation," which is very similar to the argument from illusion, and which is designed to prove that "the sense-datum is never identical with the material thing,"15 and that we need to distinguish these two elements in perception in all cases. But the point at issue in this stage of the argument is just why we should draw such a distinction in even one case, let alone in every case. At least that is what I take to be the point at issue, and despite Sprigge's reverse strategy, I think he really thinks so too.
So far, then, premise (4) does not seem to be based on anything but a conviction that, if something looks bent to S there must be something—in this case an appearance—that is bent. In the next section, I will turn to the final attempt to formulate a premise that will yield the desired claim, and there I will present what I take to be the strongest possible case for saying that, in this case, there is something bent.

Section 4: (5) There is something in S’s visual field which he could correctly characterize as being bent.

Anthony Quinton provides the following explanation of why he would want to say that when we are looking at a stick in a glass of water that looks bent there really is something bent:

To this extent, then, I am in sympathy with those who have argued that if the stick half in water looks bent then something really is bent. When I say the stick looks bent, I should discover, if I were to direct my attention to it, that my visual field contained a bent brown line. What is bent, for Quinton, is a line in my visual field. And it is the presence of this line, presumably, that prompts us to say that the stick looks bent. It seems clear that Quinton would opt for (5) as an explanation of the fact that the stick looks bent to S.

There are several questions one should raise about this explanation. Is the bent brown line in my visual
field to be identified as "the look of the stick?" Or is the line identical with the stick? I doubt that Quinton would want to say that the stick and the line are identical, for the stick actually is straight, while the line is said to be bent. But if they are not held to be identical, there is a question of the relation between the stick and the bent line in my visual field. Does my visual field contain the stick as well as the bent line? (Indeed, what is a visual field?) Is the bent line to be identified with "the look of the stick?" And, if so, does my visual field contain the stick and its "look?"

It seems to me that there is a way to use the notion of a visual field that will account for the case of the stick looking bent in water along the lines suggested by Quinton. I will call this conception of a visual field an "objective visual field."

In an "objective" visual field the contents of the field are not to be identified with sense-data. An "objective" visual field is the area which is visible to me, given my physical location. Someone else could determine the contents of my "objective" visual field by knowing where I was standing, the direction my eyes were pointing, and the range of my peripheral vision. The contents of one's "objective" visual field would be those objects occupying the area of physical space that can be seen at a given time.
D. M. Armstrong uses what I am calling an "objective" visual field to explain the fact that there is a sense in which things "look larger" as we approach them, or in which a penny viewed from a certain angle "looks elliptical." He asks whether, in the "strictest phenomenological sense of the word 'look'" it is always the case that objects look larger as we approach them or pennies look elliptical when viewed from an angle. He suggests that we do not need to distinguish between the apparent size of an object (a sense-datum) and its real size if we notice that we can normally see the relations that our body has to an object, as well as the object itself. He explains how this is so by introducing the notion of an object's "square" size and shape:

Suppose that there were an open grille with squares like graph paper set up perpendicularly at a short, but fixed, distance in front of our eyes. Suppose further that lines are drawn from the perceived object to our eyes. These lines will form a pattern on the grille of a certain size and shape. Let us call what is projected on the grille the 'square' size and shape of the object perceived.

Now the "square" size and shape of an object are objectively determinable. The "square" size and shape of an object is determined by both the size and shape of the object, and its relative position to a perceiver's body. Furthermore, the "square" size and shape of a perceived object actually has the qualities that we say the object "appears" to have, and this is a geometrical fact.
As we get nearer an object it is geometrically necessary that the 'square' size of the object increases. If we view a round penny from an oblique angle it is geometrically necessary that its 'square' shape is elliptical.19

Since the "square" size and shape of an object are objectively, geometrically determinable, they are not to be identified with sense-data. Furthermore, the contents of the "objective" visual field are physical objects. Their "square" sizes and shapes are a function of the spatial relation in which a perceiver stands to the objects in his "objective" visual field. This could be used to explain Quinton's remark that when he looks at a straight stick in water that looks bent, there really is something bent—viz., a brown line in his visual field. The bent brown line is simply the "square" shape of the stick.

Godfrey Vesey introduces a similar model which he calls the "optical appearance" of an object. His example is that of a round plate looking oval to someone who views it from a certain angle:

... if one put a transparent screen at right angles to one's line of vision, between oneself and the plate, and drew on it the outline of the plate seen through the screen, the shape drawn would be oval. I shall call this measurable, objectively determined appearance of an object its "optical" appearance.20

Vesey notes that some illusions can be explained by means of optical appearances; one of these is the stick looking bent in water. If one drew the shape of the perceived
stick the drawn shape would be bent. The Muller-Lyer lines cannot be so explained, for the lines as drawn would be equal in length. He calls the Muller-Lyer lines a "visual" illusion. Just as Armstrong says about the "square" sizes and shapes of objects, Vesey emphasizes that the optical appearances of objects are objectively determinable and measurable.

It will be remembered that the question with which I began this section was whether the initial steps in the argument from illusion can be saved from a charge of non sequitur by postulating an element in one's visual field to be the thing, not identical with the stick, that actually has the quality bentness. My preceding remarks have been directed towards showing how one's visual field could be said to "contain" something bent, along the lines suggested by Quinton. I think that both Vesey and Armstrong have managed to explicate, by means of the model of the transparent screen or grille, what it is in the situation that is bent—namely, the outline of the shape of the stick as seen by a perceiver from a certain angle. Their discussions do not offend common sense. The problem is what use, if any, this sort of explanation will be in our search for the elusive premise in the argument from illusion.

It is clear, first of all, that the line drawn on
the hypothetical transparent screen before my eyes is bent. But now is the line an element in my visual field? Not unless there is a screen on which it is drawn, of course. However, when the model was described it was said that the line that was drawn was the tracing of something in the visual field. This is the outline of the shape of the stick as seen from a certain angle. And this might be claimed to be what, in the situation with a perceiver and the stick in water, is really bent. The next question, then, is whether or not the outline of the shape of the stick as seen from a certain angle will meet the further requirements of the argument from illusion. According to the argument what it is that is bent is to be distinguished from the stick, or any other material thing. So with the appropriate reformulation of (5), the first stage of the argument from illusion will go like this:

1. The stick is not bent.
2. The stick looks bent to S.
5. The outline of the shape of the stick as seen by S from where he is standing is bent.
6. Bentness is a quality of something.
7. Given (1), bentness is not a quality of the stick.

This much of the argument seems to be consistent with the reformulation of (5). The problem comes with the next two premises:
8. Bentness is, therefore, a quality of the look (appearance, visual impression, sense-datum) of the stick.

9. Whatever has the quality bentness is what S is visually presented with.

Given my reformulation of (5), bentness is a quality of the outline of the shape of the stick as seen by S from a certain angle. It is, in other words, a relational quality of S's perception of the stick from a certain place. Bentness cannot, therefore, be held to be a quality simply of the look of the stick if the look of the stick is held to be an entity, somewhat on a par with the stick. If we understand 'the look of the stick' as being a shorthand way of saying 'the look of the stick to S,' which is a relation, then (8) can be plausibly read in such a way that it is consistent with (5). But what about (9)? Can we say that S is visually presented with a relation between himself and the stick?

This would depend on what it means to say that S is visually presented with something. As I have formulated the argument what S sees is the stick—i.e., the stick is an element in S's "objective" visual field. Furthermore, given the model of the "optical" appearance, or the "square" size and shape of the stick, we can say that the outline of the shape of the stick when viewed by S from a certain place is bent. I have suggested that the outline of the shape of the stick as viewed by S is not an element
in S's visual field—only the stick is. Yet if there is something bent it is the relation in which S stands to the element in his visual field such that given his location, the stick "looks bent" to him. There are several further questions one might want to raise here. One is whether or not the shape, or the outline of the shape, of the stick is an element in S's visual field. I would say that the stick is, and that its shape as seen from a point of view is not. But its shape as seen from a point of view is objectively determinable—a matter of geometrical fact, as Armstrong says. Therefore I would also hold that the quality bentness itself is not an element of S's visual field, for bentness does not characterize any object in S's line of vision, but only the shape of the stick as seen by S from a place. Bentness is, therefore, a relational quality obtaining between S and the contents of his visual field, and not a quality of something in that visual field.

I have argued that the basis for the claim that S is presented with a sense-datum in the stick in water case is that something must be supposed to be bent in order to explain how it is that the stick looks bent to S. I have argued that there is no justification for this move, however, since the stick's looking bent to S can be explained in terms of the "optical appearance" of the stick, as Vesey does, or in terms of Armstrong's "square" size and shape.
of an object. At this point, I suggest that the entire first stage of the argument can be rendered plausible by understanding the claim that the stick looks bent to S as expressing an objectively determinable relation between S and the stick in a certain context (the stick is in a glass of water and S is viewing the stick from such and such an angle).

Section 5: A reconsideration of the argument for sense-data.

As I have argued in Section 4, the first stage of the argument from illusion can be made plausible by using the model suggested by Vesey and Armstrong, and interpreting the claim that there is something bent in S's visual field as the claim that there is a relational quality—looking bent to S—which characterizes the stick, and which can be objectively determined on the basis of S's position and the stick. This interpretation suggests that 'the look of the stick to S' is to be understood as 'how the stick is seen by S,' and not as designating an entity which S sees over and above the stick. In the case of the stick in water the stick is seen as having a bent shape—its shape is seen as bent.

With regard to the first stage of the argument from illusion, this rendering will have the effect of making the argument useless in proving that sense-data
exist. The bentness, for which the sense-datum was to be imported as the bearer, is now held to be a relational quality, and not something that needs a bearer. Thus the argument as I have construed it would show that what we see is not a neutral, uninterpreted sense-datum, but simply material things. The additional conclusion that the argument yields is that our perceiving material things contributes to, or is an element in, the way they look to us. We cannot talk about the stick looking bent without supposing that it is being perceived by someone from a place. Thus although the stick does not change as a result of being perceived, how it looks differs according to how it is perceived.

My conclusion is that if we are careful we can state the first stage of the argument from illusion without drastically changing the format of that argument. What this shows is, I think, that the "neutral" or cognition-free notion of a sense-datum that is usually thought to be established by this argument represents an additional assumption made by those who use the argument. The argument does not really show that any such entity as the sense-datum need be postulated in perception.

It might be objected that all I have done is to rewrite the argument from illusion in such a way that it begs the question against those who would insist that a
strictly sensory element in perception can be distinguished from what we conclude about objects that we perceive. I hope to have vindicated myself from this charge by my discussions of the alternative ways of stating the crucial premise in the argument. For I think I have made it clear that the argument as first formulated includes a step for which there is no clear justification. And if this is so, then the rewriting I have provided is the only plausible version available. It cannot be used to prove that sense-data exist. But in its original form it did not succeed in proving that they exist either.

It could be said that I have unfairly concentrated on only one of the many sorts of cases on which the argument from illusion has been based. This is perfectly correct. An entirely different type of problem is posed by cases of hallucination, and it should be clear that my analysis of the stick in water case will not carry over to explaining the famous dagger scene in Macbeth, for example. So, in the next chapter, I will turn to the subject of hallucinations. I will argue that hallucinations and related phenomena are not persuasive as grounds for the introduction of sense-data.
Footnotes for Chapter IV

1. The argument, so interpreted, will be seen to differ in details from the versions I discussed in Chapter III, Sections 1 and 2.


3. It has been suggested that a stick in a glass of water does not, in fact, "look bent." It looks, rather, fractured. On the plane of the water's surface the stick seems to have slipped sideways. Prof. Peter K. Machamer has photographs of this phenomenon that support this suggestion. I will continue to speak of the stick's looking "bent" however, rather than fractured, though the latter is more accurate.

4. It might be suggested that we need another premise here; namely, the claim that bentness is seen. I have attempted to formulate the argument in such a way that this occurs as a premise, and for reasons which will emerge in Section 4, it seems that we cannot hold that bentness is seen per se, although it is necessary to admit that something looks bent to S. It can be held that there is something in the situation that is, in fact, bent, but this something is not the quality bentness. Now it might be argued to be necessary to say that bentness is seen, if it is admitted that something which has that quality is seen. I see no good reason for saying this, other than a certain tendency (which I do not share) to reify qualities.

5. See Chapter III, Section 1.

6. Recall Quinton's argument (Chapter III, Section 1) and Ayer's claim that we might always be either hypnotized or "otherwise deluded" in any perceptual experience (Chapter III, Section 2).


8. Ibid., p. 22.

9. Ibid., p. 25.
10Ibid., p. 37.
11Ibid.
13Ibid., p. 7.
14Ibid.
18Ibid., p. 12.
19Ibid., p. 18.
CHAPTER V

HALLUCINATIONS AND SENSE-DATA

Introduction.

In this chapter I will argue that cases of hallucination, of seeing things that are not there, are not good cases to appeal to in trying to isolate an exclusively sensory element in sense-perception (sense-data) from the cognitive factors of belief and judgment. Hallucinations do not provide a compelling reason why we should admit the existence of sense-data. In fact, I think it can be argued that hallucinations pose a problem for those, like Ayer, who want to say that sense-data experienced in delusive perceptions can be regarded independently of the perceiver's beliefs and judgments about what he is perceiving.

In my discussion of hallucinations, I will suggest that we need to distinguish among at least three sorts of cases, all of which have been called hallucinatory. I will proceed to the example most often cited in the literature—that of Macbeth and the dagger. In my examination of this example, I will examine the relevant lines of the play in order to see what Macbeth says about his
experience. There is an advantage to be gained from looking at the text of the play itself, not only in terms of scholarly accuracy, but also in understanding just what kind of delusive experience he was supposed to be having. For Shakespeare had to make Macbeth's experience plausible to the audience. It is interesting to see, with this in mind, what we as readers are given to believe about Macbeth and the situation.

I will consider various other types of hallucinatory experiences. I will suggest that we need to distinguish between hallucinations and delusions. I will, in my discussion, emphasize the role of the perceiver's beliefs and expectations about the situation as the central factor in both labeling and analyzing the experience. This emphasis will lead, in my conclusion in Chapter VI, to a number of remarks concerning the importance of beliefs in perceiving.
Section 1: Hallucinations.

Hallucinations are traditionally held to be cases in which objects that are not really there are seen (or "seen"). Ayer says that hallucinations are "mainly exemplified by cases of seeing objects which are not really there, such as Macbeth's dagger and the drunkard's pink rats."\(^1\) Cases of hallucination are thought by some to show clearly both that there is an element in sense-experience which can be called a sense-datum, and that this element is common to both hallucinations and other types of experiences. A good example of an argument based on hallucinations is the following quotation from Sprigge:

Consider, as many philosophers have done, Macbeth and his hallucination of a dagger before him. Does one not have to be very oversophisticated . . . to fail to recognize that in such a hallucination something is before or in Macbeth's consciousness, just such as would be if he were really perceiving a dagger before him in mid-air, or, if you prefer, were perceiving a dagger before him in mid-air which really existed?\(^2\)

Notice several things about the argument so far. First, Sprigge's lengthy question contains the claim that

i. Something is before or in Macbeth's consciousness.

It is not clear to me what the distinction is between something being "before Macbeth's consciousness" and "in Macbeth's consciousness," although the former certainly
makes it sound as though there were an outside object of which Macbeth was conscious, while the latter does not. If we say that the dagger was "in" Macbeth's consciousness it is not clear whether he was merely thinking of a dagger, or apparently seeing one. Sprigge also claims that

ii. What is before or in Macbeth's consciousness is just such as would be if either (a) or (b):

a. He were really perceiving a dagger before him in mid-air.

b. He were perceiving a dagger before him in mid-air which really existed.

The choice between (a) and (b) is left to the reader's preference, but there is quite a difference. If we choose (a) it follows that what is before or in Macbeth's consciousness is exactly like what would be if he were really perceiving, which he is not. If we choose (b) it follows that this something in or before Macbeth's consciousness is just like what would be if he were perceiving a real dagger. (b) allows that Macbeth is perceiving a dagger, but not one which really exists. (a) implies that he is not really perceiving at all. Sprigge seems to hold that it does not matter:

We are not suggesting that Macbeth perceived this something which we, of course, call a sense-datum. One can say either that he perceived a dagger which did not exist, or that he seemed to himself to be perceiving a dagger, which really he was not doing. I have no special axe to grind on that little question of language.3
But I think it does matter which way of stating Macbeth's situation one chooses. There are two different conceptions of what, in his experience, was delusive. Either way of stating it asserts a logical relation between 'M perceives x' and 'x exists.' They differ in that, according to Sprigge's first formulation in the above quote,

(c) 'M perceives x' does not imply that 'x exists,'

while according to the second,

(d) 'M perceives x' does imply that 'x exists.'

(d), unlike (c), also involves the converse:

(e) 'x does not exist' implies 'M does not (really) perceive x.'

Following (c), I think Sprigge would hold that:

(f) From 'M perceives x' and 'x does not exist' it follows that 'M perceives a non-existent x.'

Both (c) and (d) allow that a perceiver (here Macbeth) has a false belief about the situation, and the statements of these beliefs will also differ. His false belief given (d) is about his own experience--he believed he was perceiving when he wasn't. According to (c), his false belief is about the object of his experience, in particular about its existence.

Sprigge allows that the dagger did not exist, but maintains that something did--and that was whatever was in or before Macbeth's consciousness.
That something is a perfectly definite and far from non-existent something and needs to be distinguished from the dagger, which in fact did not exist.¹

Sprigge argues that the "content" of this argument from hallucination lies in its drawing attention to a certain common element present in the situations both of Macbeth's having a hallucination of a dagger and of a man's really seeing a dagger hanging in mid-air (perhaps on an unnoticed string).²

There are two possible candidates for what this common element is; it could be either the sense-datum, or the belief or the inclination to believe that he was seeing a dagger. Sprigge argues that the common element is not the belief or inclination to believe that he is seeing a dagger, on the grounds that Macbeth could decide that there was not a dagger there, and thus make no false judgment, and yet continue to be tormented by this image or sense-datum.³

On this point Sprigge is quite right; this is, in fact, what does happen in the play. He takes this to show that the sense-datum of the dagger is the common element between Macbeth's experience and a normal one of seeing a dagger.

There is a further consequence of Sprigge's argument: he cannot appeal to the state of a perceiver's beliefs to distinguish between illusions and delusions. Sprigge would, I conjecture, distinguish between illusions and delusions on the grounds that, in illusions something
(some existing thing) is (actually) perceived, whereas in delusions nothing real is perceived, or nothing is really perceived.

Austin suggests that delusions are cases in which the perceiver either believes (falsely) that the object of his delusion is real, or is not aware that it is not real. Typical cases of delusions are delusions of grandeur or persecution; these are

primarily a matter of grossly disordered beliefs (and so, probably, behaviour) and may well have nothing in particular to do with perception.7

He includes the drunkard's seeing pink rats on the presumption that the drunkard's beliefs are disordered too:

But I think we might also say that the patient who sees pink rats has (suffers from) delusions—particularly, no doubt, if, as would probably be the case, he is not clearly aware that his pink rats aren't real rats.8

Even though Austin says that the drunkard may only "not be clearly aware" that the rats aren't real, we should distinguish between someone not clearly aware that the object he takes himself to see does not exist, and someone who believes (falsely) that the object exists. If there is some doubt in the mind of the perceiver as to the actual existence of the thing that he is perceiving, then he is not completely deluded. This is important, for it is sometimes said that it is possible that at any given time we could be hallucinating and not be able to tell
whether we were or not. Yet this is a very strong claim—that any case could be one in which the perceiver continues to think the object exists when it does not. This is, I suspect, why Austin chose psychoses as the paradigm delusions; in those, the mind persists in tricking itself.

Austin thinks of delusions as involving disordered beliefs and behaviour on the part of the “patient.” He thus distinguishes them from illusions, for there need be nothing out of order in someone’s beliefs for them to be experiencing an illusion.10 If I am having an illusion “there is nothing wrong with me personally, the illusion is not a little (or a large) peculiarity or idiocyncrasy of my own.” Illusions are public. Illusions may trick us:

Furthermore, if we are not actually to be taken in, we need to be on our guard; but it is no use to tell the sufferer from delusions to be on his guard. He needs to be cured.11

This is another indication of Austin’s tendency to assimilate delusions to mental aberrations.

There is a matter of degree involved in distinguishing delusions from other sorts of false beliefs. If a man says he is Adolph Hitler, and behaves as though he believes himself to be Hitler, then we would no doubt conclude he was suffering from a delusion (of grandeur? of persecution?). But someone who said that he wondered every so often whether he had just seen a pink rat would just be taken to be confused (or weak of vision). But there are problem cases:
could someone wonder from time to time whether he might be Adolph Hitler and not be deluded? Well, they might if they believed in reincarnation. (Notice that this would simply move the questionable belief away from the psychiatric and into the religious realm.)

Austin later hints at another distinction. In arguing that there is no one way of being "unreal" as opposed to being "real," he says

> When it isn't a real duck but a hallucination, it may still be a real hallucination—as opposed, for instance, to a passing quirk of a vivid imagination.12

This distinction between a "real hallucination" and a "quirk of a vivid imagination" raises a question that neither he nor any other philosopher I know of has attempted to answer: What is a real hallucination, and how are they to be distinguished from other sorts of experiences in which what is experienced is primarily imagined, rather than sensed or perceived? Dreams are not hallucinations, although they are cases of seeming to see something that does not exist. Mishearing someone can involve hearing something that was not said, but we may not want to say mishearing is an auditory hallucination. What sorts of distinctions can and should be drawn among such cases?

I think that some exploration of this topic is called for. The term 'hallucination' has been used too loosely to go unexamined. For example, D. M. Armstrong
defines hallucinations as cases in which someone believes or is inclined to believe that a false existential proposition is true, when the falsity of the proposition is due to the non-existence of the object. Then he goes on to say that mirror-images might be taken to be hallucinations, on the grounds that

one might maintain that a thing's place at a particular time was so essential a part of the concept of the thing that mirror-images should rather be classified as a sort of hallucination, as the false belief or inclination to believe that there is a thing like me, but other than me, behind the surface of the glass. I am inclined to say that it does not matter which of these two things we say here.\textsuperscript{13}

The other thing we could say is that mirror-images are illusions in which

we perceive ourselves, but that we perceive ourselves subject to certain distortions, in particular, subject to a distortion of place.\textsuperscript{14}

I would agree that there may well be cases in which it just isn't clear whether we have an illusion, or a delusion. Austin mentions seeing ghosts and mirages as two other cases that might variously be classified as either delusions or illusions, depending on whether the cause is held to be the state of mind of the perceiver, or the conditions in the vicinity of the perceiver. What I find odd about Armstrong's remarks is that it does not matter to him whether we say we see ourselves as being behind the mirror, or whether we merely (are inclined to) believe
that a duplicate ("mirror-image") self exists behind the mirror. Why should anyone want to say either of these? When I say I see myself in the mirror I certainly do not mean either of these; I mean that I see my reflection in the mirror. Notice that Armstrong does define hallucinations as involving a certain false belief, or tendency to believe falsely, that an object exists. On Armstrong's definition of an hallucination Macbeth was not hallucinating, as I will argue in the following section.

Section 2: Macbeth.

Macbeth, it will be remembered, is planning to murder Duncan, the king. It is the night on which he intends to commit the murder. Macbeth is alone, awaiting summons from Lady Macbeth, and commences a soliloquy:

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand?15

Notice that he opens by questioning whether it is a dagger that he sees, and mentions its physical attitude in relation to his own body. Obviously one of the reasons for this way of opening is to inform the audience, who cannot, of course, see, of the apparent hallucination. This opening might also be taken as an indication that even at the beginning, Macbeth is not inclined to believe that he is really seeing a dagger. I think, however, that the question could equally, perhaps better, be taken in the sense
of "What was that sound I heard?"—i.e., as a question about the identification of what he sees, rather than about its existence.

He continues, addressing the dagger:

Come, let me clutch thee!
Are thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?

He discovers that he cannot grasp the dagger. It can only be seen, but not touched. He conveys this fact by asking "Are thou not . . .?" and reasons that if the "fatal vision" cannot be touched, then it is "a false creation" caused by his own "heat-oppressed brain." He calls it "a dagger of the mind"—thereby classifying it as imaginary. Still he continues to see it:

I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which I now draw.

One may assume that here Macbeth draws his own dagger. He shows that he is aware of the difference between them, and is, by now, becoming convinced that one of them is imaginary.

Next he addresses himself to the significance of his seeming to see a dagger. He interprets it as an omen, portending the planned murder,

Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going,
And such an instrument I was to use.
Mine eyes are made the fools o' th' other senses,
Or else worth all the rest.
Macbeth raises the question whether what his eyes tell him might not, in some sense, be more reliable than his touch. It is sometimes suggested that vision is less reliable than touch; that in some cases we would be inclined to revise a judgment based on sight in favor of one based on feeling. This is true, of course. Still there are many "objects" which can be seen but not touched—e.g., shadows, reflections in mirrors or ponds.

Macbeth continues:

I see thee still,
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such thing.
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes.

Even though he doubts the existence of the dagger, he continues to see it. And not only does he see it, it changes while he is seeing it from being clean to being bloody. He protests "There's no such thing" (as this dagger), and attributes the cause of his seeing blood to his own knowledge of the "bloody business"—the impending murder.

I think this passage shows that Macbeth does not believe that the dagger is "real." He takes the cause of his seeing it to be his own mental state. He projects that state onto the vision, reading into the vision an affirmation of his own intentions. He clearly takes the experience to be produced by his own imagination, his
preoccupation with the murder. This shows that he is not suffering from a complete delusion of the type Austin takes to be paradigmatic. His beliefs, at least about the dagger, are not grossly disordered. He seems to be completely aware that it is not real. Notice that he says

It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes.

Literally this means that the murder takes form before his eyes: the dagger becomes bloody and this signifies the fact of the murder.

Let me suggest several possible claims that might be made about Macbeth's experience.

1. Macbeth is seeing something.
2. Macbeth is not seeing anything.
3. Macbeth is imagining that he is seeing something.
4. Macbeth is (really) seeing an imaginary dagger.
5. What Macbeth is (actually) seeing is a visible but intangible dagger.

Given what Macbeth says about his experience, I think we would have to say that he claims that he is seeing something. Is this sufficient for deciding that (1) is true rather than (2)? Many would say not; it could be argued that, despite what Macbeth says, the fact that there is no real dagger corresponding to the one characterized as being before his eyes entails that Macbeth is not really seeing anything at all. One could then go on to explain
the fact that Macbeth claims to see something by suggesting that (3), rather than (1) is true; Macbeth imagines that he is seeing something when he is not. This would correspond with one of the alternatives presented by Sprigge in the previous section: that 'S perceives x' implies that 'x exists,' and if 'x does not exist' then 'S does not (really) perceive x.'

The issue involved here is whether the claim that something is seen entails an existence claim—either that what is said to be seen exists, or that something (though not necessarily what is said to be seen) must exist. In this case there is the additional problem of deciding whether when Macbeth says "I see a dagger before me" his saying this is to be understood in such a way that he is also asserting that (he believes that) a dagger exists. It is clear from the soliloquy, I think, that Macbeth intends to assert both

6. I see a dagger before me.
and 7. There is no real, physical dagger there.
The question I am now raising is whether (6) and (7) can be consistent.

Ayer would respond that (6) and (7) can both be true if we acknowledge that Macbeth is using 'see' in the sense I have called 'see-2.' I have argued that Ayer is not completely consistent on this point, however, since he
introduces "phenomenal objects" to be what has the qualities that the object of the verb 'see-2' must have. And "phenomenal objects" (bearers of phenomenal, or apparent, qualities) do exist in some sense, though not as physical objects. The upshot is that even if we say, with Ayer, that Macbeth "sees" a (non-physical) dagger before him, it will not follow that (2) is true; it will not follow that there is nothing that Macbeth 'sees-1.' What is seen-1 might be called an imaginary dagger. (Hence (4).) Macbeth himself says that what he sees is both visible and intangible (5). So, contrary to Ayer's earlier analysis of such cases, according to which Macbeth's claiming both (6) and (7) should be taken to indicate that he is using 'see' in a sense not involving existential import, I would claim that Macbeth is using 'see' in Ayer's sense 'see-1' or 'see-3,' both of which do involve existential import. He does not imagine the dagger—rather he is seeing an imaginary dagger.

The next question is whether or not the claim that Macbeth sees an imaginary dagger implies that Macbeth sees something. It is to this question that I turn in the next section. First, however, let me note that Austin indicates that delusions involve "grossly disordered beliefs" on the part of the perceiver. On these grounds Macbeth is not suffering from a delusion, for his beliefs, at least about
the dagger and its existence, are quite in order. I will propose a distinction in the following section between delusions and hallucinations according to which we can say that Macbeth was having an hallucination.

Section 3: Defining hallucinations.

I have been referring to cases of hallucination as cases where objects were seen but did not exist. This is, of course, vague. What sorts of objects are these that are seen but do not exist? In what sense are they "seen"? In what sense don't they exist? I will suggest two ways of understanding the claim that an hallucination is seeing an object that does not exist. One of them is acceptable; the other is not.

The first is this: an hallucination is an object that can only be seen, which is of a sort that can normally be perceived by means of touch as well as sight.

This is designed to handle Macbeth's experience. It has serious drawbacks, however. It is prone to counter-examples; someone might argue that seeing the back of one's own head without the aid of a mirror (as though from outside) would surely be a visual aberration, but that this definition could not encompass it, since it is aberrant because the back of my head is normally visible to everyone but me. It is my seeing it that is odd, not the existence of what I see.
Rather than propose step-by-step amendments of (I) to handle such objections, I offer the following as a replacement; an hallucination is

II. Seeing an object that is not a possible object of sight in that situation because it does not exist.

There are, of course, objections that could be raised to (II) as well; and it is rather vague. Before I turn to a closer look at (II), I would like to suggest the corresponding definition of a delusion as

III. Having an hallucination in the sense given by (II) without being clearly aware that one is hallucinating.

The first problem with (II) is that it implies that since the object is not a possible object of sight, it cannot be an actual object of sight, in this situation. Thus it could be argued that this leaves us two means of escaping the apparent inconsistency involved in claiming that an hallucination is seeing an object that it is not possible to see. One way of getting around this awkwardness is to say that

a. The object of an hallucination is not really seen.

The other way of avoiding the inconsistency is to hold that

b. There is no physical object seen (but there may be something other than a physical object seen).
Before a choice can be made between (a) and (b), I think it is necessary to look at the phrase 'does not exist.' Some might want to say that an object that does not exist can be seen; others that such an object can be seen on the grounds that people do claim to see nonexistent daggers and pink rats. But what does it mean to say that an object does not exist? To say that Macbeth's dagger 'did not exist' means that it could not be touched or perceived in any way but by sight. It may also indicate that Macbeth's seeing the dagger was a private visual experience—i.e., what he saw could, presumably, be seen by him alone. So it might be suggested that 'does not exist' be understood in terms of the privacy of the object that is said not to exist. (It is not perceived as objects of that sort usually are—by more than one sense—and by more than one person.) This will explain the sense in which Macbeth's dagger did not exist, but if we adopt it as a definition for 'does not exist' it would force us to hold that after-images and double-images do not exist either. Considerations like these lead me to think that 'does not exist' must be understood differently depending on what sort of object it is that is claimed not to exist.

Thus to say that an object does not exist will be to say that it fails to meet some ('enough') of the conditions that are generally thought to be necessary for that
sort of object to exist. Macbeth's imaginary dagger did exist, since he claimed to see it. (It would be a sufficient condition of the existence of an imaginary dagger that someone sincerely claimed to imagine seeing it.) But a real dagger corresponding to Macbeth's imaginary dagger did not exist because the latter cannot be touched, and so violates the condition of tangibility generally associated with real daggers.

To return to the decision between (a) and (b). We might attempt to resolve the tension between the first and second occurrences of 'seeing' in (II) by putting scare quotes around the first occurrence: hallucination is

II (a). "Seeing" an object that is not a possible object of sight in that situation because it does not exist.

Such a move might lead one to ask what 'see' means when enclosed in scare-quotes. A possible answer is that it means "thought (believed) to be seen." This answer would not be acceptable to me, since it would tend to blur the distinction between delusions and hallucinations. For the same reason, I would resist the suggestion that it means that it seems to someone that they see.

One could turn to a similar reformulation of (II) along the lines suggested by (b), rather than (a), in order to avoid answering these questions about the sense of 'see' in (II) (a). Such a reformulation would look like this:
II (b). Seeing an "object" that is not a possible object of sight in that situation because it does not exist.

In defense of (II) (b) one could point out, with some legitimacy, that there is no more reason to put 'see' in scare-quotes than 'object.' In what sense is an "object that does not exist" an object? This seems to be one of the questions the sense-datum theory is trying to answer, by claiming that what is seen exists as a sense-datum, although not as a physical object.

I think there is good reason to interpret (II) along the lines suggested by (II)(a). First, I think Austin's point is well taken when he says that if someone claims to see something then they imply that what they claim to see exists in some sense. In saying that I see an object, I imply that I believe that object exists. However, it seems clear that people--e.g., Macbeth--sometimes say they see things whose existence is doubtful, even to the speaker. In such cases their using 'see' could be argued to be a misuse. I would not be satisfied with that move. Nor would I want to distinguish between two "senses" of 'see,' one being a sense in which a speaker can claim to see (what he believes or knows to be) non-existent things. This would be to adopt something like Ayer's 'see-2.' Yet how am I to avoid either of these moves, given that I claim that in saying I see an object I imply that (I believe that) it exists?
I would maintain that it is the speaker who implies the existence of the object, and not the word 'see' per se. That is, it does not follow from my claim to see 0 that 0 exists, nor is my claim false if 0 does not exist. For all my claim implies is that I believe that 0 exists. If I were to discover that I am having an hallucination, I might wish to take back my claim to see 0. But not necessarily; upon being convinced that what I think I see doesn't exist, I might protest "But I see it--I really do!" In the context the meaning is clear; that despite a conviction that it doesn't exist, the object is still visible, that the change in belief does not alter the sensory experience I am having. This is what I take Macbeth to be saying when he protests

    I see thee yet, in form as palpable
    As this which I now draw.

This can be taken to convey that Macbeth continues to have a visual experience, which is vivid enough to extend the word 'see' to, even though he is convinced that the object of his experience does not exist.

It follows from my proposed distinction between hallucinations and delusions (II) and (III) that if a person is in some doubt as to whether he is hallucinating or not, and he is hallucinating, then he is experiencing a delusion. Thus wondering whether you are hallucinating, or suspecting that you are, are states associated with
delusions. A person who is hallucinating would have grounds for coming to believe that he is. The shift from being deluded to hallucinating comes with a shift of belief. Thus one might wonder if he were hallucinating if what he saw seemed wholly unexplained on other grounds—if he "saw" a ghost disappear through a wall, for example. In such cases one may search for other causes but if these are not available, one still need not conclude that they are hallucinating. A perceiver might suppose that he had seen a real ghost; and if he holds that there are no such things he would have to say that, since he is apparently seeing ghosts, he is hallucinating. Suspecting that one is hallucinating is a state in which one is tempted to choose hallucinating as a more rational explanation for the phenomena than unknown external causes. There are, again, always grounds for one's suspicions. Macbeth suspects he is hallucinating when he finds he cannot touch the dagger. It is not possible to suspect that everything I seem to see is an hallucination. If I think I see a ghost disappearing into a wall, and I don't believe in ghosts, I would be hallucinating the ghost. I do not suspect that perhaps the wall, too, was hallucinated. The assumption that the wall, at least, is "real" provides the evidence that what else I "saw" was strange.
Believing that one is hallucinating is like believing that one's experiences are no longer being determined by external reality. Regarded this way, hallucinating in awareness that one is doing so is very similar to imagining, or fantasizing. We can imagine at will, without always or usually being able to control the content of what we imagine. Some very vivid, or prolonged, visual imaginings will, by (II), be called hallucinations. I think this is not an intolerable extension of the term 'hallucination.' It is, in fact, what allows us to say that Macbeth had an hallucination. Still, Macbeth's experience was caused as he admits, by his own "heat-oppressed brain." And we do not want to say that anyone with a particularly vivid imagination suffers from hallucinations. So in the section following, I turn to the subject of eidetic imagery which may be more a phenomenon of vivid imagination than of hallucinating.
Section 4: Eidetic imagery.

In experiments with eidetic imagery it has been found that some people (mainly children) are able to reproduce, as it were, their earlier experience of seeing a picture, for example, and are able to reproduce it in such a way as to see it as located outside themselves. In eidetic imaging the subject knows what he images, and that he is doing it. He can do it on command, and it does not occur unless it is willed. In this respect, eidetic imagery differs from hallucination, for in hallucinations the occurrence of the visual experience is not willed by the perceiver. Another difference between hallucinations and eidetic imagery is that what is imaged always is familiar to the imager, and conforms to his normal expectations and beliefs (even when, as sometimes happens, the images become movie-like).

There are, then, three forms of visual experience which share the following characteristic:

A. The subject visually experiences an object in the absence of any real, existing physical object that might be mistaken for it.

(A) is shared by hallucinations, delusions and eidetic imagery, and is not shared by normal visual experience or by illusions.

Hallucinations and delusions are also characterized by the following condition, which does not characterize eidetic imagery:
B. The "content" of the subject's visual experience is not determined by him; it varies or has qualities independently of any conscious decision or effort on his part.

This condition (B) also governs normal visual experience.

It is the factor of passivity that Berkeley points to in the following exchange:

**Philonous:** Then, as to seeing, is it not in your power to open your eyes or keep them shut, to turn them this or that way?

**Hylas:** Without doubt.

**Phil:** But does it in like manner depend on your will that in looking on this flower you perceive white rather than any other color? Or, in directing your open eyes toward yonder part of the heaven, can you avoid seeing the sun? Or is light or darkness the effect of your own volition?

**Hyli:** No, certainly.

**Phil:** You are then in these respects altogether passive? I?

**Hyli:** I am.

It is not quite true, as noted earlier, that in eidetic imagery the content of the image is wholly under the conscious control of the subject. According to one experiment\(^{18}\) if they are asked to describe a picture from memory, the children with eidetic imagery were able to do this with normal competency. If asked to look at the surface against which the picture had been shown them, and image the picture they were, nearly without exception, able to supply detail in their descriptions of the image which was missing from their descriptions based on memory. It was found that some of the children corrected their
memory-based descriptions on the basis of detail "seen" in the image. Now since there was detail in the image that the child does not, without imaging, remember, the "content" of the image must, in some sense, be independent of his will. Yet the image is voluntarily produced. The subjects in this experiment were unable to "see" every detail in the imaged pictures. They could not usually make out letters of a long, unfamiliar word in a foreign language written above the door of a building in one picture, yet they were able to tell from their images that there was a word there. And in another experiment, subjects reported spontaneous movement in their images. They were told to image a donkey standing at a distance from a manger of hay. Then they were told that the donkey was hungry. At this suggestion, the subjects reported that without their willing it, the donkey moved to the manger and began eating. The images became movie-like.

Hunter notes that

all these distortions, additions, and movements which occur in eidetic imaging are, like the qualitative changes which occur in recalling generally, in full accordance with the subject's framework of expectations. They are always consistent with the child's normal experiences and he is definitely unable to introduce into his imaging features which are ridiculous or unnatural.19

To summarize what has been said about eidetic imagery and the contents of eidetic images, something like (C) seems to characterize them:
C. They are voluntarily produced, and can be voluntarily or spontaneously altered, but the alterations conform to the subject's expectations based on conformity with his past experience.

(C) serves to distinguish eidetic imagery from hallucinations and delusions, as well as from normal visual experiences, since in hallucination and delusion the subject cannot voluntarily alter the content, nor do the spontaneous changes that might be "seen" in an hallucination or delusion necessarily conform to the subject's expectations.

Hallucinations have been known to contain elements which are "ridiculous and unnatural," to use Hunter's phrase. And these features may be "unexpected." Of course, the question could be raised as to how the fact that the subject of an hallucination knows he is hallucinating affects the state of his expectations. As I suggested earlier, believing that one is hallucinating is like believing that what one is visually experiencing is no longer being determined by external reality, and given that it cannot be controlled by will, internal reality also seems causally inaccessible. Perhaps the difference between the normal mental state of the person having eidetic images and the abnormal one of someone hallucinating could be traced to the fact that in the latter the subject's normal expectations are forceably suspended, and he has a feeling that
nearly anything can happen. In certain drug-induced experiences, for example, subjects describe themselves as feeling at the mercy of their environments, without the ability to effect rational understandings of them. The following is an amusing account of such a feeling:

I suspect we could have done the whole thing on acid... except for some of the people; there were faces and bodies in that group who would have been absolutely unendurable on acid. The sight of a 344-pound police chief from Waco, Texas, necking openly with his 290-pound wife (or whatever woman he had with him) when the lights were turned off for a Dope Film was just barely tolerable on mescaline—which is mainly a sensual/surface drug that exaggerates reality, instead of altering it—but with a head full of acid, the sight of two fantastically obese human beings far gone in a public grope while a thousand cops all around them watched a movie about the "dangers of marijuana" would not be emotionally acceptable. The brain would reject it: The medulla would attempt to close itself off from the signals it was getting from the frontal lobes... and the middle-brain, meanwhile, would be trying desperately to put a different interpretation on the scene, before passing it back to the medulla and the risk of physical action.20

Somehow hallucinations and delusions are visual experiences which are unanticipated in terms of one's past experience in a different way than the sense in which normal visual experience can include unexpected elements. Normal experience is passively taken in, and does not bend to the will of the perceiver. From the passage just quoted, it might be surmised that the drug-taker, unlike the normal perceiver, is temporarily unable to "compute" or make sense of what the normal person would readily accept. The drug-
induced hallucination is an experience in which normal expectations are suspended, in such a way that his expectations and beliefs are reflective of his altered state. Perhaps LSD acts as much on the belief-structure of the subject as on his perceptions. ²¹

Section 5: Delusions, hallucinations and sense-data.

In this section, I will attempt to say what conclusions I think can be drawn from the three types of non-normal visual experience I have discussed in this chapter. In particular, I will be arguing that these cases do not lend support to the claim that whatever it is that we are aware of in hallucinations or delusions must be the same sort of entity as what we are normally aware of, and that this entity is a sense-datum.

I do think that a prima facie case for the existence of sense-data can be generated from hallucinations and delusions. The basis for such a case would be the fact that:

1. What one experiences in an hallucination or delusion is enough like what is normally experienced that one would or could be inclined to be misled.

Notice, first, that as I have defined hallucinations in (II) and (II)(a), they would lend no support to (1), for they involve no false belief, or tendency to be misled on the part of the hallucinator. Even in the case of delusions,
however, (1) needs to be spelled out in more detail. I will now try to clarify the reasoning behind (1). I will suggest that it does not, in fact, constitute a good case for saying that whatever we experience in delusive cases must be experienced in normal cases as well.

Rewriting (1) in such a way that only delusions are mentioned would give us (2):

2. Delusions are cases in which the victim is inclined to judge falsely that he really does see something. The victim cannot tell for sure that the object he thinks he sees is not real.

(2) suggests a similarity between delusions and normal cases of perception, namely:

3. Delusions and normal experiences have in common the belief, or lack of disbelief, on the part of the perceiver, in the existence of what he sees (or "sees").

The reasoning then continues:

4. What the two experiences—delusive and normal—have in common must be something qualitatively indistinguishable. What is sensed in delusions must be the same kind of entity as is sensed in normal perception, or the two sorts of entity would be distinguishable in the two experiences.

Austin attacks just this step in the argument from illusion. He holds that even where a perceiver might mistakenly judge that he is seeing some object, the sense-datum theorist is not justified in concluding that such cases must be "qualitatively indistinguishable" from others where there is no mistake in judgment. Austin says that (4) involves an "erroneous principle".
Another erroneous principle which the argument here seems to rely on is this: that it must be the case that 'delusive and veridical experiences' are not (as such) 'qualitatively' or 'intrinsically' distinguishable—for if they were distinguishable, we should never be 'deluded.'

But he replies:

But of course this is not so. From the fact that I am sometimes 'deluded,' mistaken, taken in through failing to distinguish A from B, it does not follow at all that A and B must be indistinguishable. Perhaps I should have noticed the difference. If I had been more careful or attentive; perhaps I am just bad at distinguishing things of this sort (e.g. vintages); perhaps, again, I have never learned to discriminate between them, or haven't had much practice at it.

He goes on to say that he is not denying that there might be cases where "delusive and veridical experiences" are "qualitatively indistinguishable," but he does deny that there have to be such cases to accommodate the undoubted fact that we are sometimes 'deceived by our senses.' We are not, after all, quasi-infallible beings, who can be taken in only where the avoidance of mistake is completely impossible.

He also points out that even if it is allowed that we "directly" perceive sense-data in delusions, it does not follow that we perceive sense-data in non-delusive cases as well, for from the fact that the two cases are indistinguishable we cannot conclude that we are perceiving the same sort of entity in the one as in the other. And this seems to strike at the basis of the second stage of the argument from illusion, for it is assumed there that if two experiences are qualitatively indistinguishable then they
cannot be experiences of two different sorts of things—sense-data in one and material objects in the other.

I think that Austin's point is this: there must be some qualitative difference between a real physical object and an imaginary object, even if I am not able to discern them in a single perception. This is the same point that I made in connection with the argument from illusion in Chapter IV, Section 1. If I did pay attention to what I was perceiving more closely, I would have to come up with some qualitative difference between what I see when there is a real physical object before me and when there is an imaginary object before me. Therefore, it does not follow from the fact that we do not see the qualitative differences at a glance, that there are none. So it does not follow that we are seeing sense-data when we are perceiving veridically, because the two experiences are qualitatively distinguishable, even if not qualitatively distinguished.

Some might accept the reasoning as I have laid it out through step (3), and not wish to go on to assert (4). There are two motives for refusing to take the step to (4). One is that (3) is true—there is a common element to the two experiences—while (4) is false; that common element is not a sense-datum. Rather, it could be argued that what delusions and normal experiences have in common is
simply the belief, or lack of disbelief, in the existence of what is thought to be perceived. Taking this position enables one to explain the fact that sometimes we are deluded on the grounds that sometimes our imaginations or our mental and physical states are the causes of completely convincing experiences, which are, nevertheless, delusive.

Another, very different, motive for stopping with (3) is that one may argue that what the belief or inclination to believe in the two experiences points to is a common "form of awareness" or "consciousness" in the two experiences. In both cases there is something apprehended by the perceiver such that he cannot judge that what he is apprehending does not exist. On these grounds, then, one could defend sense-data as the objects of this state of consciousness, and argue that since the states are the same their objects must be the same. They cannot be held to be material things in delusions, so they cannot be material things in normal experiences either.

R. J. Hirst attacks this particular way of arguing. He points out that the sense-datum theorist must, if he defends this line, say that the drunkard's awareness of his pink rats is just as reliable, that his consciousness is just as acute, as the normal person's. Hirst thinks that this fails to take into account the fact that the
drunkard is, after all, drunk. On this issue, Hirst says, the common-sense view seems superior to the sense-datum theory. The common-sense view accounts for the close correlation between hallucinations and disturbing factors such as drunkenness, fever, or emotional unbalance, by allotting these factors a causal role. One would expect them to affect perception as they do other mental faculties; but the Sense-datum Theory claims not only that the sufferer has perceptual consciousness of the same kind in hallucinations as in normal perception, but also that this consciousness involves an incorrigible form of awareness, an intuitive apprehension which always exists in full perfection or not at all. 'Incorrigible' may fit the drunkard's morals, but neither it nor 'perfect' is appropriate to his cognitive faculties.

Hirst's main point is that the sense-datum theorist fails to take account of the fact that perceiving is a mental faculty, and like other such faculties, tends to be affected by abnormal mental states, such as those produced by drunkenness, etc.

Section 6: Delusions and certainty.

As I have defined the phenomenon of delusion, it follows that in a delusional experience the perceiver cannot be certain that what he is "seeing" is not real. This brings to mind Ayer's claim that our perceptual judgments about the properties and existence of material things are always uncertain because these judgments are based on perceptual experiences which could be just as they are,
even though the judgments were false. Ayer claims, it will be remembered, that the sense-datum theorist is looking for a satisfactory way of describing the perceptual experience which does not presuppose that the perceiver is having a veridical experience:

The kind of description which is needed for this purpose is one that will uncover rather than conceal the fact that the observer could be having the experience in question even though the physical object which he takes himself to be perceiving did not exist; that the occurrence of the experience is consistent with his having been hypnotized or otherwise deluded. 27

This kind of radical uncertainty about our perceptual judgments is supported, in Ayer's case, by the claim that our perceptual judgments are the conclusions of inductive inferences, based on our immediate sensory experiences, together with certain assumptions based on past experience. I cannot, for example, use the following as a premise in such an inference:

If I see an object and none of the circumstances are such as to cause me to doubt that the object exists, then the object I see is real--does exist.

Ayer's claim is that we cannot appeal to principles or generalizations such as that expressed above, because we cannot know, in any given case, that we should not doubt the existence of the object we seem to see. That is, whether we do doubt the existence of an object or not, it is suggested that perhaps we ought to, since we cannot know that the circumstances we are in are "normal."
The reason for this seems to be that we cannot be sure that we are not either suffering from a delusion, or under a post-hypnotic suggestion.

I have claimed that we can know that we are not suffering from a delusion by testing the belief-sets we have in a situation. We can test our own beliefs by finding out what others' are. I can and do notice internal inconsistencies in experiences; in the case of "seeing a ghost," for example, it is the fact that the ghost seems to disappear through what is assumed to be a solid wall that makes one question the reality of the ghost. And I will, if I have grossly disordered beliefs about something I see, behave on those beliefs and in doing so will discover their incorrectness. If I never act on the beliefs, there is no one else around, and nothing seems out of order then the experience can safely be taken at face value.

The point is that the possibility that all these means of finding out what exists and what does not do not fail all at once. We may maintain a false belief for some time, but not forever. 28

In Chapter VI, I will conclude this dissertation with some remarks on the place of error in our claims about material things as it is conceived of by the sense-datum theory and as I conceive it.
Footnotes for Chapter V

1 Ayer, 1969, p. 295. Notice that Ayer says that hallucination is "mainly" exemplified by these cases; this implies that there are other sorts of hallucination, but he does not say what they are.

2 Sprigge, 1970, p. 11.

3 Ibid., pp. 11-12.

4 Ibid., p. 11.

5 Ibid., p. 12.

6 Ibid.

7 Austin, 1962, p. 23.

8 Ibid.

9 Recall, for example, Quinton's version of the argument from illusion in Chapter III, Section 1.

10 This can be a vexing fact, if you dwell on it. I know that the Muller-Lyer lines are equal in length. I have measured and even drawn them myself. Still I cannot see them as equal. This indicates that "seeing as" is not solely a question of beliefs, or of "will."


12 Ibid., p. 69.


14 Ibid.

15 Shakespeare Macbeth II, i, 34-49.
16 See Chapter I, Section 3.


21 Bertrand Russell once argued that mystical visions or experiences of people in altered states of consciousness could not be legitimate sources of knowledge about the world. He says:

> From a scientific point of view, we can make no distinction between the man who eats little and sees heaven and the man who drinks much and sees snakes. Each is in an abnormal physical condition, and therefore has abnormal perceptions. Normal perceptions, since they have to be useful in the struggle for life, must have some correspondence with fact; but in abnormal perceptions there is no reason to expect such correspondence, and their testimony, therefore, cannot outweigh that of normal perception.


22 Austin, 1962, pp. 44-54.


Even in Mission: Impossible episodes, the villains find out at the end that it is really 1973, and not 1945, as they had been carefully manipulated into believing. I always enjoy imagining their reasoning when they find out. In most cases, on looking back, they will be able to discern little things that, given the new information, seem like clues to the deception. The trick in MI is that the operators can enter into the expectations and belief-sets of their victims enough to gradually change their worlds from inside.
Chapter VI

Summary and Conclusion

Section 1: Summary.

The main points for which I have argued in this dissertation are the following:

(1) In Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, Ayer holds that the sense-datum theory can be interpreted as a linguistic doctrine according to which talking about seeing sense-data is just an alternative manner of speaking to talking about seeing material objects. I have argued that this is somewhat misleading. Ayer later defends the sense-datum theory on epistemological grounds. I suggested that Ayer takes sense-data to be the sensory content of perceptual experience. He holds that claims about material things are not conclusively verifiable, and that to the extent that they can be verified, doing so involves formulating statements about sense-data. I have argued against Ayer's view in two ways: first, by raising a number of questions about the alleged inductive inference that is said to be necessary to justify claims about material things, and second, by suggesting that the difficulties Ayer encounters in trying to formulate descriptions of sense-data are insuperable.
(2) Ayer says that the word 'see' is ambiguous in ordinary language. It seems to me that there are several important issues here. One is whether saying one sees something carries the implication that what is said to be seen exists. Another is whether we can properly use 'see' in reporting hallucinatory or delusive perceptual experiences. I answer the first by claiming that the word 'see' itself does not carry an implication of existence. Speakers who claim to see things imply that they believe that what objects they claim to see exist, except in certain circumstances. For example, Macbeth both claims to see a dagger and that he believes it to be imaginary. The main point about the alleged ambiguity of 'see' is that there is no one "kind" (e.g., material objects, or sense-data) of thing that we do or can say we see.

(3) I stated Austin's reply to Ayer's claim that we must recognize a distinction between two ordinary senses of 'see.' Austin does not hold that the word 'see' implies an existential claim. He does hold that using the word to report an experience usually, even always, indicates that the speaker believes that what he claims to see exists. Ayer takes the star-speck example to indicate the need for two senses of 'see.' Austin's treatment of this example is confused. He holds that the fact that different replies to the question 'What do you see?' is ambiguous. Austin
is led to claim that the reason we can say we see a star, a silvery speck, Sirius or the image in the mirror of the telescope is that the speck is the star, the star is Sirius and the image is the speck. I argued that these cannot be construed as identity statements, since they are not symmetrical. I then explored the possibility of using a distinction between identifying and describing to explain how the predications work. The distinction was found to be of limited value, however.

I concluded my discussion of the star-speck example by proposing that instead of regarding 'a star' and 'a silvery speck' as different answers to the same question, we might treat them as answers to different questions. My analysis of the question-answer exchange has two advantages. First, it exhibits the rationale for Ayer's conclusion that there must be two senses of 'see' being used in the two answers. Ayer thinks of the two as being answers to the same question. Thus, he is led to ask how both can be "correct," given that they differ so radically. So it is natural that he assumes that there is an ambiguity in the question, the nature of which can be discovered by noticing the different objects mentioned in the answers. The second advantage is that it shows how we can hold that both answers are "correct" without having to say that 'see' is ambiguous. It also avoids the problems inherent in Austin's account of the case.
(4) I argue that the argument from illusion does not provide strong support for the distinction between material things and sense-data. There is an assumption involved in the argument—namely, that there are cases in which we directly sense qualities of sense-data, rather than of material things. It is argued that unless sense-data exist we are reduced to saying that we sometimes see material things as having qualities they do not really have. I have suggested that the difficulties that are supposed to arise can be handled without introducing sense-data as objects of perception. I argue, along lines suggested by Austin, that cases of perceiver error do not need to be accounted for by transforming them into cases of misidentification or misperception. It is not always possible to tell exactly what we are perceiving, nor is it usually impossible to find out.

(5) The sense-datum theory maintains that there are two elements in perception, and the sensory element—the sense-datum—is the same "type" of entity whether we are hallucinating or seeing normally. It is also maintained that it is the cognitive element in perception that explains error in identification of material things and their qualities. The way error comes about is that when we are presented with sense-data we go through a process of interpreting those elements, sorting them out as it were, and
constructing beliefs as to what we are perceiving. It's rather like doing an anagram, although the interpretive process is not usually conscious. Sometimes there are unfamiliar sensory elements to deal with; sometimes more than one interpretation of the elements is plausible and we simply cannot come up with a single coherent belief-set about what we are seeing.

I think that some of this is correct. For example, I think it is correct that we "arrive at" beliefs about the world, and that the beliefs we come to hold are based on our expectations, past experience, conceptual sophistication, and what have you. I also agree that error in perception can be explained in terms of error in cognition; but I agree with this partly because I take it to be necessarily true. There is no error in "seeing" as such for there is nothing to be right or wrong about. There is no mistake possible until someone comes to hold a belief, express an opinion, or assert something. Unfortunately, this fact is sometimes taken to prove that sensing sense-data is an incorrigible procedure, of which we can always be certain. Our descriptions of sense-data may "go wrong" but the errors will be verbal--slips of the tongue, using the wrong word, etc. Such reasoning is behind Ayer's conviction that, at the bottom of our inferences to the existence of material objects, must lie experiential statements--
utterances describing the raw "data" that we get from the senses.

Even if it could be shown that there is such "raw," "neutral" or uninterpreted "data" as Ayer envisions, we could never describe it. I have been arguing that there are no grounds for supposing that there is such "data." There is a further point, however, about the possibility of experiential statements. Words are designed, as Ayer himself admits, to talk about the world of material objects. Using language descriptively involves choosing among hundreds of words that classify, identify, distinguish and characterize the things we want to describe. Language is a rule-governed activity; making those choices, and having good grounds for making the choices we do is sufficiently cognitive that the results will not be neutral in the required sense. Any use of language involves thought, memory and concepts. Thus, there seems to be no way for anyone to describe, in language, what is sensed or "given" without relying on a great deal of past experience to even be able to put it (given that there is an "it") into words.

The sense-datum theorist must, according to Ayer, invent a language in which to talk about the entities he takes us all to be acquainted with, in order to ostensively define them to us or describe them for us. This is what Ayer intends to do with his experiential statements.
Alternatively a sense-datum theorist can, like Sprigge, indicate in ordinary talk what he means by 'sense-data' and then refuse to argue for their existence since that they exist seems too obvious to need argument. He takes himself to be directly aware of them, and to be able to believe in them more easily than in material things.

Section 2: Conclusions.

We are aware of whatever it is that we are aware of. This is a tautology. But being aware of something is, I would maintain, a function of and necessarily involves noticing and attending to something. Sometimes I am aware of "physical objects"—when I am looking for something to sit on, for example. Sometimes I am aware of the "looks" of things—as when I am choosing a piece of furniture to buy. Sometimes I am aware of creations of my own imagination which I find it natural to describe in visual terms. Sometimes I am aware, visually, of things that "aren't really there" in a tangible sense—after-images, mirror-images and rainbows. I can imagine how my house looked when I was four years old—then, too, I am visually aware of something I create myself (a mental image), and these, unlike images and shadows and rainbows, cannot be seen by anyone but me.
I have said that what we are aware of is a function of our noticing and attending. What we notice and attend to is, likewise, a function of our interests, beliefs, expectations, emotional states, goals, alertness, etc. I would also claim that if we pay reasonable attention to what we see and the circumstances in which we see it, then we will almost always be able to arrive at an accurate belief about what we see. Sometimes we will not, and this can be explained by lack of experience or information which would allow us to do so.

It seems to me that the justification of claims we make "on the basis of perception" are context-relative. They are not closed, finished or conclusive; nor are they uncertain.

Consider the question "How do you know that this is a Y?" where, for the moment, the referent of 'Y' is left unspecified. In order to give that question a sense it is necessary to know "as opposed to what--is it a Y as opposed to being a Z, or an X?" I will argue that the senselessness of the first question, unexpanded in this way, is at the bottom of a number of problems with Ayer's account of knowledge based on perception. As we have seen, Ayer holds that perceptual judgments are uncertain because they cannot be conclusively verified. They are essentially predictive, and cannot, therefore be proven to be true.
without performing an infinite number of tests. Perceptual judgments are held to be uncertain in principle because it is logically possible that they would turn out to be false.

Wittgenstein distinguishes between 'it is certain that . . .' and 'I am certain that . . .'. The justification of these two sorts of claims are usually held to be different; the former involving the logical consequence that what is claimed to be certain could not be false; the other that the psychological state of the person making the claim is such as not to admit the possibility of doubt.

Ayer, in his reply to Austin, maintains that a perceptual judgment is certain when it could not turn out to be false. Austin, on the other hand, maintains that such a judgment is certain when reasonable attention has been paid to the situation and the words one speaks and when "nothing could be produced as showing that I had made a mistake."\(^1\) Ayer is using 'certain' in a strong, logical sense, so that for perceptual judgments to be certain they must be necessarily true. On the subject of judgments and their justification Austin, of course, prefers to talk about the circumstances under which the judgments are made.

Identifying the notions of certainty and logical necessity, as I think Ayer does, leads to a deductive standard for inference. Naturally, the inductive evidence that
we are said to have for our perceptual judgments looks weak by comparison. The deductive model gets in by way of the idea that a perceptual judgment is justified if it can be treated like the conclusion in a sound deductive argument. Of course, any claim can be treated as the conclusion of a valid deductive argument. But someone like Ayer will be fairly particular about what is allowed to serve as the premises in such inferences. For example, one might argue that

If I see an object and none of the circumstances are such as to cause me to wonder whether the object I seem to see exists, the object I seem to see does exist.

I see an object and, . . . .

Therefore, the object I see exists.

I have already pointed out that Ayer would not allow this to justify a perceptual judgment, since the first premise is a generalization and the second involves reference to a material object.

There is another point here. Ayer's viewpoint would indicate that an inaccurate knowledge claim is not actually a knowledge claim. What is known must be true, and if it needs to be revised in the face of future experience, then it could not have been known in the first place. Wittgenstein says

Whether a proposition can turn out false after all depends on what I make count as determinants for that proposition. 2
My claim has been that Ayer makes the wrong things count as determinants for perceptual judgments. The consequence is that such judgments can always turn out to be false—hence, on his view, cannot be known to be true. The attendant assumptions that perceptual judgments carry are the propositions on which the verifiability of the perceptual judgments rest. If they cannot be verified (as they cannot) then the perceptual judgment is unverifiable as well.

The sceptic demands that we justify our claims to know. Ayer thinks that to justify a knowledge claim, or a claim to certainty, means giving propositions from which the truth of what is said to be known (or certain) can be logically derived. And these propositions (experiential statements) must be such that they are justified themselves. My approach, which I share with many others, is to say that our claims to know or be certain are justified by appealing to a variety of things, depending on what is being claimed.

The question 'How do you know that this is a chair?' does not demand any sort of answer just as it stands. "As opposed to what?" is the appropriate reply. Consider the possibilities: as opposed to part of the exhibit, as opposed to an end table, as opposed to a loveseat. Rarely if ever are we asked that question in a context where the sense of the question is to be taken as "as opposed to a delusion." This shows, I think, that we take the "reality"
of chairs for granted. Their identity as chairs, but not as physical objects, is sometimes questioned. (Notice that in a context where someone could be supposed to be suffering a delusion, the "as opposed to" would be "as opposed to a figment of your imagination," and this could be determined by other observers.)

The question 'How do you know that this is a chair?' lacks a sense--the question has no point--outside a context which provides the setting in which the question 'As opposed to what?' is settled. The mistake made by Ayer and others who overlook the senselessness of asking about justification of claims about physical objects in general is that they take the question as asking how I know that this is a physical object. This is a mistake because, in the first place, if I am right about the need to give such questions a sense, the question 'How do you know that this is a chair?' is simply not the same question as 'How do you know that this is a physical object?' The first is about the classification of a physical object as being of a certain sort. The second is about the experiences which give rise to the question itself. Ayer suggests that the question 'How do you know this is a physical object?' can be broken down into questions like 'How do you know that this is spatial, persistent, etc.?' where the answers he would accept would not include 'Because I see that it is.'
would hold that often we do see that chairs exist, and that they are chairs.
Footnotes for Chapter VI

1 Austin, 1962, pp. 114-115.

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Shakespeare Macbeth.


