

# Beyond Dispute

## Sense-Data, Intentionality and the Mind-Body

### Problem

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Thomas Reid remarked that we hardly ever attend to the visible appearance of objects, but that our attention is normally drawn to the objects themselves and those features of them which best fit our intentions and interests.<sup>1</sup> For example, I can with a cursory glance take in the lavender bush at the end of my street, some fifty metres away, and note the overall colour of the bush—a dull green at this time of year—and its rough, somewhat square, shape. But it takes more attention, reflection and skill to move beyond this description and to discover the distinctive ways in which these objects can appear to me. I may note, for example, that the lavender bush appears more flattened than the garden hedge some mere ten metres from me. Or it may strike me that the distinctions that I can make among the branches of the lavender bush are a matter of the pattern of shading across its apparent surface while for the hedge each branch stands out distinctly.

Many different trades and professions seek to refine the skills of attention and articulation required in order to discern and express the ways in which things can appear. Over many generations, painters have developed skills for attending to the particular appearances of objects at different distances and in different lights in order better to depict them. Attention to colour and form is as much a concern of designers and producers of decoration as of painters, and it is also a skill useful for those engaged into research on visual cognition. What holds for the visual case is as true, perhaps even more so, for other sense modalities: perfumers and brewers have an obvious interest in treating the appearances of smell and taste as complex and differentiable.

These observations on the difficulty in attending to the appearances of objects contrast with an assumption common in philo-

1. (Reid 1997 (1785)), Ch. 6, sect. III.

sophical discussions of perception and consciousness: that appearances—both the ways things appear to one to be and one’s state of mind of being appeared to in such ways—are obvious to one. This assumption is present in much of the discussion of qualia and consciousness, where it is often suggested that one can do no more than indicate to the reader the obvious presence of such qualities.<sup>2</sup> When Thomas Nagel challenges the explanatory pretensions of physicalism by denying that we could know what it is like to be a bat, his background assumption is that we all *do* know what it is like to be human, and exercise the sensory faculties we have.<sup>3</sup> Arguably, the assumption is also at work in the theory of knowledge. In different ways, both A.J. Ayer and Roderick Chisholm appeal either to appearances or judgements about appearance as the foundations of empirical knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Such foundationalism, with its assumption that there are judgements which can stand both as the basis of empirical knowledge but which themselves are beyond defeat, is now unfashionable. Yet few are prepared to challenge the thought that one cannot go wrong when one restricts one’s judgements simply to a report of appearances. Rather, it is more common to challenge the idea that such restrictive judgements could act as a basis for the rest of one’s body of knowledge. So, it is common to think that thoughts about one’s own perceptual states are easy to arrive at, and not particularly susceptible to error.

The contrast is such that one might at first think that the actual method of those who have a practical interest in appearances simply contradicts the assumptions of those who merely theorise about them. But this is merely a seeming contradiction: we can reformulate the philosophers’ claims to be quite consistent with the actual practice of those who have an interest in attending to how things appear to them. The philosophers’ assumptions about the obviousness of appearance properly only relate to the move from having attended to some object, some feature of it, or how either appears to one, to knowledge of how it is for one when things so appear. The skills that the artist, the perfume-maker, or the psychologist nurture give each a richer hoard of elements of experience to enjoy or scrutinise than the rest of us. In some cases such learning may even lead to a difference in how one experiences the world rather than just a dif-

2. Cf. Ned Block: ‘...what is it that philosophers have called qualitative states?: As Louis Armstrong said when asked what jazz is, “If you got to ask, you ain’t never going to get to know.”’, in (Block 1980), p.278.

3. (Nagel 1979).

4. For the former see (Ayer 1940), and (Ayer 1956), Ch.2; for the latter see (Chisholm 1959), Ch.5 and (Chisholm 1966).

ference in what one knows of how one experiences the world: someone so skilled may be able to make finer discriminations than the rest of us. A theorist can quite consistently accept that such experts have both greater powers of discrimination among objects in the world and better developed powers of attention to aspects of how things appear, while claiming that the reflective move, from attention to the features of objects to knowledge of what it is like for one so to be aware of those features, is the same for all of us. One's reflective judgement about how one's own state of mind is grounded is explained in the same way for all: as being grounded in what is obvious to such reflection.

However, there is something paradoxical here, nonetheless. For if we look simply to the disputes among philosophers we find substantive debate about the nature of appearances. Some philosophers claim that we have visual sensations, that there is more to what our visual perceptions of the world are like than the presentation of visible objects and features in the world around us. Others insist that our experience of the world is transparent or diaphanous, that there is no more to be introspected in this than the world as it is presented to us. Some philosophers claim that we perceive non-physical entities in virtue of which we perceive the world around us. Others insist that perception of the physical environment is direct or immediate. Some philosophers claim that perception is intentional, akin to belief or judgement in being about or representing the environment around us. Others insist that they can make no sense of this, that there is all the difference in the world between feeling and thinking. While not all of these disputes are framed in terms of claims about appearances, most, if not all, of these positions put forward claims about perceptual experience or what it is like consciously to apprehend the world around us. These various proposals concerning conscious experience conflict with each other.

Now if we take seriously the thought that appearances really are just obvious to one—or obvious given a bit of reflection—then it should be puzzling how there can be such disagreement. For surely the slightest amount of thought will reveal that a given account is correct or incorrect. The persistence of dispute would seem to indicate that at least one of the parties is confused, or that the character of philosophers' inner lives is far more varied than we previously had reason to suspect.

This is no mere idle puzzle. Nor should we take it as simply a sign that either the conception of appearances in play or the debate about them is something just not in good order. Rather, it reflects something at the heart of the problem of perception, something

which is rarely made fully articulate in discussion of it. It has become fairly standard to present the problem of perception as primarily a problem about our knowledge of the world around us, where such knowledge is derived from the senses. While discussions of perception are commonly framed within the context of an attempt to give an explanation of our knowledge of the common place—my knowledge that there are more than twenty houses on my street; that there are two coffee cups on the table; that there is traffic in the street—the real problem here is one concerning our knowledge of our own minds. What sense can we make of conscious perceptual experience as it reveals itself to us through introspection?

Perceptual awareness of the world around us and of one's own body provides the paradigm example of episodic, or phenomenal consciousness. When one comes to reflect on what it is like so to be conscious, and to be aware of the world, one comes to reflect on such perceptual consciousness. The various debates about the nature of perception, or the objects of perception, or states of perceptual experience, disagree about what is to be said about such perceptual consciousness. At the same time, most of these accounts assume that phenomenal consciousness *per se* is open to immediate reflection such that the defining truths about it should simply be obvious to us. Yet, the very fact that such dispute can be sustained indicates that such an assumption is questionable. And in rejecting this assumption, we will need to mark a distinction between the real nature of appearances—states of being appeared to in a certain way—and how those states seem to us, even if such a distinction may sound paradoxical to some ears. Moreover, as we shall see, we can only properly understand the debate about perceptual consciousness, once we recognise that the various views of it are committed to supposing that appearances may mislead us not only about the world around us, but also about themselves.

In this paper I want to set the above set of concerns within the historical context of the developments within Anglophone discussions of the problems of perception. One can easily gain the impression from the slightest acquaintance with writings about the problems of perception that there has been a marked change in the ways in which the problems are formulated, and competing theories are presented. If we go back only as far as debates around the middle of the twentieth century, we find such a striking shift in the terms of the debate and assumptions that are brought to bear that it becomes too difficult to discern what continuity, if any, there is in the debate. This presents us with a genuine problem of interpretation: how are we to make intelligible to ourselves the past history of debate?

I shall seek to show that this apparent discontinuity and apparent unintelligibility are simply symptoms of the more general issue we have raised here. How can there be dispute about the nature of perceptual consciousness, if the nature of such consciousness is supposed simply to be obvious to one given the slightest reflection? We can make best sense of the different positions here by understanding them in the light of a rather different conception of perceptual consciousness than is currently favoured. Both traditional sense-datum accounts of object-perception and recent theories of perceptual experience as an intentional phenomenon stand opposed to a supposedly crude form of naïve realism about perception. Naïve realism is taken by both traditions to be falsified by considerations about the existence of illusion. The different traditions that have developed show continuity in the centrality of this problem. The striking differences between them can be explained in terms of the different intellectual contexts of debate in early modern times, at the beginning of the century and more recently.

In the first part of this paper, I lay out the problem of interpretation more exactly. In trying to make sense of the traditional debate, we then need to look in more detail at formulations of the argument from illusion, here Hume's discussion in *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* provides a useful stalking horse; in the sections which follow I argue that the standard explanations of such forms of argument are inadequate to the task of making intelligible the debates of the past. In the final section, I first sketch an alternative way of making sense of the argument from illusion as it has developed in the sense-datum tradition, and then on the back of that propose a different way of seeing the development of the debate.

## 1. A Discontinuity in the Debate

A remarkable shift has taken place in Anglophone discussion of perception over the twentieth century. For much of the early part of that century, and for some time in the latter half, discussion of perception focused on the existence or nature of immediate objects of perception which could not be identified with physical or public objects of perception. J.L. Austin begins his lectures *Sense & Sensibilia* with the following rather withering assessment of the content of that debate:

The general doctrine... [that] we never see otherwise perceive (or "sense"), or anyhow never *directly* perceive or sense, material objects (or material things), but only sense-data (or our own ideas, impressions, *sensa*, sense-perceptions, percepts etc.)... is a typically *scholastic* view, attributable, first, to an obsession with a few particular words, the uses of which are over-simplified, not really understood

or carefully studied or correctly described; and second to an obsession with a few (and nearly always the same) half-studied “facts”.<sup>5</sup>

Austin’s intention here is not just to reject the doctrine that there are sense-data, but rather to dismiss the terms of the whole debate. Yet the problems he seeks to dismiss are ones that had preoccupied such figures as Russell, Moore, Broad, Price, and Ayer.<sup>6</sup> That debate focused on a conflict between so-called *Naïve Realism*, sometimes alleged to be the view of common sense concerning perception and its objects, and a more philosophically and scientifically sophisticated alternative, which was answerable to the discoveries of Enlightenment science, labelled, Representative Realism.<sup>7</sup> The turning point of such disputes concerns the clash between common sense views concerning the objects of perception and their characteristics and certain fairly evident reflections concerning the possibility of perceptual illusions or hallucinations. The latter considerations are often grouped together under the heading of ‘the argument from illusion’.

The debate between Naïve Realism and Representative Realism can be traced back at least as far as Hume, though its main tropes are already present in Berkeley.<sup>8</sup> The argument from illusion, or the closely related argument from conflicting appearances (which avoids denigrating any appearance as illusory or privileging any as veridical) is more ancient: traces of it are found in the earliest fragments we have of Greek philosophy, and it plays a central role in Plato’s *Theaetetus*.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, Austin took his task to show us how

5. (Austin 1962), pp. 2-3.

6. For example, see (Russell 1912), Ch.1; also *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*; (Moore 1959), (Moore 1957); (Broad 1923), Chs. VII, VIII, (Broad 1925), Ch.IV, (Broad 1965); (Price 1932), (Price 1940). For Ayer’s construal of the debate see (Ayer 1940), Chs. 1-2 and (Ayer 1973), Ch.V. It is common to take Ayer as representative of the whole tradition (as indeed Austin does), but in fact Ayer’s work involves a substantial revision of key assumptions common to Moore, Russell, Broad and Price. (For more on this see my ‘Austin and the Sense-Datum Tradition’ (forthcoming).) Although the debate about sense-data predominantly took place in Britain, there are similarities with it in some US debate: cf. (Lewis 1929), and Roderick Firth’s discussion of the whole debate in (Firth 1965).

7. One should also include idealism and later phenomenalism as among the parties to this dispute—typically defenders of such a bold metaphysical view of the nature of empirical reality saw themselves as holding on to the claims of common sense while paying due respect to the arguments of indirect realism. There are also important connections with discussions within the phenomenological tradition, particularly in some works of Husserl, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty although the role of realism within the Anglophone tradition bears a problematic relation to the setting of the phenomenological debate.

8. Berkeley is also the source of idealism, and Hume in the *Treatise* has been taken, by Herbert Price and Norman Kemp Smith in particular, as inspiration for phenomenalism.

9. See, for example, the discussion in (Burnyeat 1979).

we could:

... rid ourselves of such illusions as 'the argument from illusion'—an 'argument' which those (e.g. Berkeley, Hume, Russell, Ayer) who have been most adept at working it, most fully masters of a certain special, happy style of blinkering philosophical English, have all themselves felt somehow to be spurious.<sup>10</sup>

If one contrasts the writings of Russell or Ayer with recent discussions of perception, one might think that, simply as a matter of intellectual history, Austin has been remarkably successful in his crusade.<sup>11</sup> Where the argument from illusion could once have been seen as the arch under which all debate about perception would take place, no such structure has replaced it in recent discussion. Indeed, the argument itself is often now used as an example for first-year students of how not to construct philosophical positions.

Austin himself was sceptical of offering any illuminating philosophical account of perception. But philosophical theorising about such issues has not gone away. Rather, accounts which predominate now are those which view the states of mind one has when perceiving—perceptual experiences—as analogous to beliefs, or judgments or desires as being about something and being so in virtue of how they represent the world. Such, for example, is suggested by Tyler Burge in the following passage:

I begin with the premiss that our perceptual experience represents or is about objects, properties, and relations that are *objective*. That is to say, their nature (or essential character) is independent of any one person's actions, dispositions, or mental phenomena. An obvious consequence of this is that individuals are capable of having perceptual representations that are misperceptions or hallucinations...<sup>12</sup>

We might call this kind of approach an *Intentional Theory of Perception*. Theories of this kind have been promoted by, among others D.M. Armstrong, G.E.M. Anscombe, John Searle, and Christopher Peacocke.<sup>13</sup> For proponents of such views, the idea that one's experience might be veridical or illusory, correct or incorrect, is just built into the conception of experience as intentional. That is, it is

10. *Op. cit.* p. 4.

11. Putnam claims, however, that Austin's effect was at best cosmetic, ruling out any appeal to terms such as 'sense=data' or 'impressions' but not a general appeal to such intermediaries—see (Putnam 1994).

12. (Burge 1986), p.125.

13. Cf. (Armstrong 1968), Ch.10; (Anscombe 1962); (Searle 1983), Ch.2; (Peacocke 1990), and (Peacocke 1992), Ch. 3. One can also add to the list: Fred Dretske, (Dretske 1981), Ch. 6; (Dretske 1995); Gilbert Harman, (Harman 1990); Ruth Millikan, (Millikan 1991); and Sydney Shoemaker, (Shoemaker 1991); and Michael Tye, (Tye 1992), (Tye 1995).

claimed that it is part of our conception of such experience that it is directed on to the world in such a way that its being so is no guarantee that the world is as it is experienced. So the argument from illusion can present no special problem about sense perception. At best, it can only point us to the intentionality of this state of mind. Such writers often present the view they defend as one which their readers can see as being obviously good sense or correct, and hence they imply that the traditional problem is no problem at all: it has simply been dissolved as a 'pseudo-problem'.

However, one might think that there is a sense in which Austin and others who have been critical of the debate about direct perception have also been just too successful in their critique. For in convincing us that there is no real problem of perception concerning the direct objects of perception and the status of sense-data, they have left us with a rather different, and in the end potentially more intractable, problem. If the assumptions which fuelled centuries of debate are themselves so obviously inadequate, one may wonder why the debate itself should have survived. As Burnyeat puts the point:

What emerges... is a typical philosophical problem. I do not mean the problem of deciding what does follow from the premiss that appearances conflict. For the answer to that question, I believe, is that nothing follows: nothing of any epistemological significance at all. The problem rather is to discover why so many conflicting conclusions have been thought to follow. Why have some philosophers been so impressed, while others like Austin, remain unimpressed, by the familiar fact that appearances conflict? What assumptions, spoken or unspoken, are at work to make the familiar fact seem problematic?<sup>14</sup>

The shift of perspective on these issues has been so remarkable that we are in danger of finding the past debate simply unintelligible. What was once taken as a compelling argument is now taken as patently fallacious; what was once seen as the central problem is now seen as no problem at all. One might be Whiggish about such things, of course, and simply take this to be evidence of progress within philosophy. But even the mildest scepticism about the powers of human reason should lead one to wonder at how recent and sudden the shift has been. Is it not more reasonable to think that the seeming unintelligibility of past debate may rather be a symptom of something else? That is indeed what I shall argue to be the case. The shift reflects our initial puzzle, namely that we have here a debate

14. *Op. cit.* p.73.



about the nature of appearance. The gulf between earlier debates and current ones seems so unbridgeable because on either side we have different assumptions about what is obvious about the nature of perceptual appearance. Making good that claim and making sense of how that can be will in turn unearth a deep continuity between the traditional debate and more recent concerns.

To justify this claim, we need to look first at a concrete example of a form of argument which no longer looks remotely compelling to us. Our task here is to understand how anyone might have been moved to put forward just such an argument, rather than simply to criticise the arguments proposed. I shall first present an argument drawn from Hume, note certain puzzles concerning it and then consider two strategies of explaining why Hume should have put it forward as he did.

## 2. The Argument from Illusion

Although even a cursory reading of past discussions of sense-data and perception reveal the importance of the so-called ‘argument from illusion’, it is in fact difficult to find an explicit statement of the argument as an argument. This has led some philosophers to suggest that strictly there is no such argument, but rather a set of considerations which place a duty of explanation on any theory of perception or thought.<sup>15</sup>

Such a claim would be an over-statement if it were taken to mean that there are no examples of these considerations put forward as straightforward arguments. For we can find such in the work of, for instance, Hume, Russell and Ayer.<sup>16</sup> However, when we look at what is presented as supposed argument, it is often difficult to determine what its exact form is, or to identify the premisses or mode of reasoning involved. It is this problem which indicates the real difficulty in interpreting past debate.

Given that the reasoning in question is supposed to lead us to an avowedly surprising conclusion, we should expect each step of the argument to be clear and obvious, and the mode of reasoning to be

15. Cf. Dummett, ‘We commonly employ a distinction between how things appear and how they really are; and it is therefore natural to push this distinction to its limit. This seems to me the best way in which to view the so-called “argument from illusion”. If this is regarded as an argument, properly so called, with premisses and a conclusion, it is difficult to make out what are the premisses and what the conclusion. Rather, it is a *starting-point*.’ From (Dummett 1979), p.2.

16. (Hume 1975), sec. XII; (Russell 1912), Ch.1; (Ayer 1940), Ch.1. This point is pressed home forcefully in (Snowdon 1992). Snowdon’s discussion forcefully presses the need to provide a proper interpretation of the debate about the direct objects of perception, and the discussion here is indebted to it, although the strategy of interpretation diverges.

unquestionable. For otherwise, when faced with an unpalatable conclusion, we are as liable to reject one of the premisses, or the mode of reasoning used to arrive at the conclusion, as to submit to the conclusion. Where the argument is inexplicit, its suasive force becomes hidden and it is rendered more obscure why someone should have thought there was a genuine argument or justification for the claim. So the need to explain what is really involved in this kind of reasoning becomes more pressing.

This is well illustrated by Hume's use of the argument in his first *Enquiry*. The argument is presented in the context of Hume's scepticism with regard to the senses, a form of scepticism he considers to be more profound than either ancient scepticism or that deriving from Descartes. His argument has two parts: in the first he outlines what he takes to be the view of the common man concerning the objects of perception and our relation to them, beliefs which we all hold as a matter of our nature:

...when men follow this blind and powerful instinct of nature, they always suppose the very images, presented by the senses, to be the external objects, and never entertain any suspicion, that the one are nothing but representations of the other. This very table, which we see white, and which we feel hard, is believed to exist independent of our perception, and to be something external to our mind, which perceives it.<sup>17</sup>

This view he takes to be destroyed by 'the slightest philosophy'. In its place, one is compelled by reason to adopt a 'philosophical' theory of perception and its objects which admits a distinction between the external, mind-independent objects of perception, and the mind-dependent images or impressions which are present to the mind and which represent those external objects. This latter view is not a natural one, but recommended solely by reason in the face of the failure of our common sense beliefs. Hume's slightest philosophy is a form of the argument from illusion, and he uses it against the view he takes to be that of common sense. At the same time, he employs sceptical reasoning against the philosophical view, familiar from Berkeley's attack on his predecessors. It is the combination of these two criticisms that Hume takes to establish scepticism with regard to the senses.

The form of Hume's challenge is first to find an error in our common sense beliefs concerning perception, and then to show that there is no reason to accept any positive philosophical account which can be put in its place. Hume's characterisation of the views

17. *Op. cit.* pp.151-2.

of the vulgar can be seen as the origin of Naïve or Direct Realism, in the sense discussed in the twentieth century debates about sense-data; while the ‘philosophical theory’ is the origin in such discussions of Representative or Indirect Realism. Hume’s sceptical challenge presents us with the origin of the assumption that Representative Realism faces a particular sceptical challenge involving ‘a veil of ideas’. The argument from illusion, as Hume uses it, is an attempt to show that our common sense views of perception, as Hume conceives of them, are evidently false. However, when one comes to the swiftly developed argument intended to show this, one finds that the epithet ‘slightest philosophy’ may be thought appropriate for more than one reason:

...the slightest philosophy... teaches us, that nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception, and that the senses are only the inlets, through which these images are conveyed, without being able to produce any immediate intercourse between the mind and the object. The table, which we see, seems to diminish, as we remove farther from it: but the real table, which exists independent of us, suffers no alteration: it was, therefore, nothing but its image, which was present to the mind. These are the obvious dictates of reason; and no man, who reflects, ever doubted, that the existences, which we consider, when we say, *this house* and *that tree*, are nothing but perceptions in the mind, and fleeting copies or representations of other existences, which remain uniform and independent.<sup>18</sup>

Clearly there are problems here both with the example Hume uses, and with how Hume uses the example in order to extract his conclusion.

From what he says it is clear that Hume wishes to treat the viewing of the table as an example of illusory perception, one in which the table appears to be changing in size when commonsensically we would judge it to be stable in size. But although he treats it as fairly evident that this is a case of illusion, as Reid was ready to point out, that assumption actually falsifies the character of our experience.<sup>19</sup> While Hume is right to think that there is an alteration in how one sees the table, and indeed in how the table looks, it is not obvious that this alteration is in any way illusory. The alteration in the look of the table is now commonly called its apparent size, and it is a well-documented fact that the apparent size of objects alters relative to one’s viewing position. But it is also as commonly documented that they appear to have a constant size when one moves away from

18. *Loc. cit.*

19. (Reid 1983), Essay Two, Ch. 14, pp.175-80.

them: so that in such experience we both have the size the table appears to have, and its apparent size, the former remains constant, the latter alters. We have been given no reason to suppose that it is the latter feature which is the appearance of the size of the table rather than the former. And hence, we have not yet been given reason to suppose that this counts genuinely as an illusory aspect of the experience.

There is much to be said about the relation between apparent size and the size that something can appear to have, and different emphases will be given depending on whether one has a treatise for painters interested in perspective, or works on the psychology of shape and size perception. The question of most concern to us is why Hume should so readily be prepared to take the example as one of obvious illusion or conflicting appearance, when it is not at all evident that it is such an illusion. In part, the answer may simply reside in the context in which he wrote. One can find other authors, both philosophers and non-philosophers, who are prepared to describe the case in just this way. For the examples of visual perception of size and shape were often taken to be the locus of an issue concerning the relation between retinal stimulation, the occurrence of visual sensation and the role of judgement in discerning either the shape or size of an object.<sup>20</sup> Hume's anticipated reader might be expected already to have a theoretically sensitive attitude towards what he or she could introspect. But that thought should already raise the suspicion that we should not suppose that Hume's argument simply relies on some evident, or supposedly evident, truths concerning perception from which he will go on to draw surprising conclusions. On the other hand, at this point we can extract nothing further from his text which might explain why he could expect us to accept his description of the situation. This should make us suspicious of treating the passage at face value as presenting a genuine piece of straight forward reasoning.

Nevertheless, while this failing in Hume's reasoning is worthy of comment, it is not the most serious problem with the argument. For there are genuine illusions which parallel Hume's example. Viewing with one eye through an aperture into an Ames room can lead to distorted judgements of size: with the table positioned in one corner of the room, it may appear much, much larger than it really is; while, when placed in the other corner, it may seem much, much smaller. In this case we have an example in which the table will seem

20. See for example, (Malebranche 1992), (Locke 1975); for a review of seventeenth and eighteenth century theories see (Morgan 1977).

to have a size other than it has, in addition to having an apparent size. Even though Hume's own example may not be convincing, we can easily substitute a case of visual illusion which will provide the needed premisses. For the moment we can bracket the puzzle of why Hume should be confident in his choice of example, and instead see how his argument is intended to develop from a similar case of undisputed illusion.

Having described the case in terms of illusion, Hume immediately draws his conclusion, 'it was, therefore, nothing but [the table's] image, which was present to the mind.' This conclusion includes both a positive and a negative claim. The positive claim is that an image of the table, whatever that is to amount to, is present to the observer's mind. The negative claim is that the table itself is not present to the mind. Although we have the appearance here of argument, an indicated premiss concerning a case of illusion, and a conclusion drawn as such, in fact we lack the argument proper itself. No additional reasons are offered to support the conclusions drawn, apart from the supposition that how the table looks is not how it is.

This failing is what is liable to prompt the charge that, strictly speaking, there is no *argument* from illusion. An author may indicate an example of illusion as relevant to the claims he or she wishes to make about the nature of perception, but he or she offers no explicit means for us to move reasonably to that claim from the observations with which he or she starts. Of course, that is not to say that we cannot interpret the implicit argument lying behind what is given explicitly as reasoning. It is common to think that in such a case there has been a move from a claim about how to the perceiver things appear to be, to a claim about how things are in so appearing. Commonly, such a move is interpreted as either involving a piece of fallacious reasoning, or as relying on some further assumption which is less than obvious. The argument is then treated as simply fallacious or question begging.

If we are simply to ask whether we should accept as a piece of persuasive reasoning Hume's argument or some such similar arguments to be found in Russell, or Ayer, or Price, then such criticisms seem apt. The arguments do not seem to be good arguments to us now, nor ought they to be treated as good. On the other hand, as a matter of intellectual history, the argument poses us the deep problem that Burnyeat notes. Given that the argument seems so patently inadequate to us, the question becomes one of understanding why anyone should have put it forward as a good one. With this question of interpretation in mind, neither of the common accounts of the argument is at all satisfactory. For neither is adequate to explain why

what is obvious to us should not be obvious to past thinkers, nor why what they thought should be obvious is so obscure to us now.

### 3. The Intentional Fallacy

The charge that there is a fallacy of reasoning here is to be found most commonly in expositions of what I have labelled the intentional theory of perception. When we look to cases of belief or thought in general, we find it fairly evident that our beliefs or thoughts can be true or false. A child may believe that there are sweets in the *Smarties* tube, even though there are only pencils there. If the child is more than four years old, she should herself be able to recognise the possibility of error here. Few of us are inclined to respond to this situation by denying that error is really possible.<sup>21</sup> It is entirely implausible to suppose that when someone falsely believes there to be sweets in the tube when there are pencils, then the belief in question is really about something other than the tube before the believer, or about something other than sweets as they may be found in the eager palms of infants. We take it that it is simply in the nature of beliefs, and thoughts in general, that they can be correct or incorrect concerning how things are in the world.

This assumption about the nature of belief is reflected in our ascriptions of belief. In ascribing a belief we often wish to indicate how a person takes the world to be, without committing ourselves to the world being so. Given that, we want to accept that

(B<sub>1</sub>) Mary believes that there are sweets in the tube before her may be true without it also being true that there are in fact sweets in the tube before Mary. So in some circumstances, we wish to accept (B<sub>1</sub>) as true without,

(B<sub>2</sub>) There are sweets believed by Mary to be in the tube before her

also being true. Hence, we consider it a mistake of reasoning, if anyone is inclined to accept (B<sub>2</sub>) simply on the basis of (B<sub>1</sub>). There are parallels here with certain other kinds of statement, for example, acceptance of (P<sub>1</sub>) need not lead one to accept (P<sub>2</sub>):

(P<sub>1</sub>) It is probable that there are fifteen people in the next room.

(P<sub>2</sub>) There are fifteen people of whom it is probable that they are in the next room.

And it is somewhat controversial whether the following inference is

21. 'Few' should be used advisedly here—among exceptions we might include Parmenides who seems to have denied that false thought is possible and one can find in Plato's *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* a concern with challenges to the claim that one's sayings or thoughts can really be false. For an illuminating discussion of these matters see (Denyer 1991).

valid:<sup>22</sup>

(M<sub>1</sub>) It is possible that Mary could own a donkey

(M<sub>2</sub>) There is a donkey which Mary could own

So in general, we have learned to be highly suspicious of any such move. No philosopher now is liable to think that such a transition is simply obviously correct without further comment. Although it is a more controversial matter whether in each of these cases we can find a common form and hence in the cases where the inference fails, one kind of fallacy in accepting the second of the pair on the basis of the first.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore one might interpret Hume so. He attempts to reach his positive conclusion by moving from

(A<sub>1</sub>) It appears to David as if there is a small rhomboid before him.

to

(A<sub>2</sub>) There is a small rhomboid which appears to David to be before him.

(A<sub>2</sub>) is not yet the conclusion that Hume wishes to arrive at: that an image, impression or some other mind-dependent entity is present to the mind. But we can see how ancillary reasoning might make one accept that further claim, once one has arrived at (A<sub>2</sub>). *Ex hypothesi*, the table in the room is not a small rhomboid, and furthermore the case can be set up so that there is no other public object which is an appropriate candidate to be apparent to David. If some small rhomboid is apparent to him, it is something other than a public object. The suggestion that it is an image which must be present to him, may then be taken as the best explanation of why (A<sub>2</sub>) should be true in this case.

Whatever one thinks of the latter move, it is fairly evident that the move from (A<sub>1</sub>) to (A<sub>2</sub>) is suspect. Moreover, if one thinks that perceptual states, that is states of being appeared to, just are examples of intentional states of mind, then one may well think that the error in moving from (A<sub>1</sub>) to (A<sub>2</sub>) just is that from moving from (B<sub>1</sub>) to (B<sub>2</sub>). Indeed, when we look to proponents of intentional theories of perception, we can find them diagnosing the errors of the

22. The validity of this inference normally holds in systems containing the Converse Barcan Formula, but whether that principle reflects our common conception of modality is a matter of some controversy.

23. It might be tempting to treat all these examples as presenting problems of the same form. We could see each as involving what Russell would call a scope fallacy: we have a simpler sentence embedded within an operator: the move is then from *OaSomeF* to *SomeFOa*; such a move is not valid even for many truth-functional operators, and in none of these cases is the operator a truth-function. However, there are no agreed uniform diagnoses of these different contexts, and different accounts have been offered of modal and epistemic contexts.

sense-datum tradition as involving just such misconceptions about intentionality.

For example, we have G.E.M. Anscombe writing shortly after Austin's lectures:

...both [sides of the debate] misunderstand verbs of perception, because these verbs are intentional or essentially have an intentional aspect. The first position misconstrues intentional objects as material objects of sensation; the other allows only *material* objects of sensation...<sup>24</sup>

While a slightly different diagnosis is offered some twenty years later in Searle's defence of his own rather different version of the intentional theory of perception:

I want to argue that the traditional sense data theorists were correct in recognizing that we have experiences, visual or otherwise, but they mislocated the Intentionality of perception in supposing that experiences were the objects of perception...<sup>25</sup>

The accusation that sense-datum theorists and others who take the argument seriously must be confused about the intentionality of experience can be found also in Gilbert Harman, Michael Tye and Ruth Millikan, among others.<sup>26</sup>

I do not want here to criticise either the various accounts of perception that these authors wish to promote in their criticisms of the argument from illusion or the sense-datum theory of perception. Nor do I want to promote Hume's argument, or any variants of it. However, it should be fairly clear that these criticisms of the argument, if aimed partly at understanding past uses of the argument from illusion as well as simply repudiating it, are plainly inadequate. For the errors of reasoning that these authors impute to past proponents of the argument are very obvious ones. If we simply reflect on the parallel examples for cases other than perception, we can see that we have little inclination to accept the move as valid. Either we are inclined straight off to reject it, or at least to see it as questionable. If there is no more to the argument than asking us to make a move we find so mistaken in the other cases, then the suggestion is simply that the argument's proponents are making an obviously fallacious move.

The claim here is not the pessimistic one that there is never progress in philosophical thought; nor is it the optimistic one that human powers of reasoning are such that we are never in the sway of

24. (Anscombe 1962), p.11 in reprint *Collected Papers*, vol.2 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980).

25. (Searle 1983), p.61.

26. (Harman 1990); (Tye 1992); (Millikan 1991).



illusions of thought or false pictures which take time and perseverance to overcome. It is no doubt true that in the past and in the present, there has been much philosophical reasoning about thought, representation and perception which comes to exhibit the kind of mistake suggested above. The problem is not so much with the imputation of error, but with the imputation of what is now, for us at least, so obvious an error, or at the very least so obviously a questionable move. The story as told so far identifies an error, but does not have the resources with which to explain why past thinkers should have been liable to fall subject to it in a way that such authors clearly expect their current reader not to.

Moreover, the problem here is not merely that this diagnosis leaves work undone, it is also that it misses something in the thought of past thinkers which ought to warrant more pause for thought. It fails to notice a certain systematic element in the use of the argument from illusion: that it is consistently used in relation to sensory states and the context of perceiving properties, even where no parallel argument is applied in relation to other mental states. This point may have been obscured for some given a certain interpretation of the views of certain past philosophers concerning the nature of intentionality: that it required the introduction of intermediaries for all cases of intentionality. On this view, the argument from illusion as employed by Hume is simply an example of a special case of this general attitude to thought and mental representation as applied to the case of perception. So, we find in some accounts of early modern philosophy the thought that a wide variety of philosophers, including Descartes, Arnauld, Malebranche, Locke, Berkeley and Hume all exemplify the 'theory of ideas' which supposes that objects before the mind represent the world beyond it.<sup>27</sup> What could be a better expression of the view than the following notorious passage from Malebranche:

I think everyone agrees that we do not perceive objects external to us by themselves. We see the sun, stars, and an infinity of objects external to us; and it is not likely that the soul should leave the body and stroll about the heavens, as it were, in order to behold all these objects. Thus, it does not see them by themselves, and our mind's immediate object when it sees the sun, for example, is not the sun, but something that is intimately joined to our soul, and this is what I call an *idea*. Thus by the word *idea*, I mean here nothing other than the immediate object, or the object closest to the mind, when it perceives

27. This kind of interpretation has its origins in Reid, but for recent proponents see in particular (Bennett 1970).

something, i.e., that which affects and modifies the mind with the perception it has of an object.<sup>28</sup>

But one should resist imposing this conception of intentionality on the early moderns in general. While there is common purpose among these philosophers in talk of ideas (at least to distance them from their scholastic predecessors), it is difficult to discern any common theory of ideas across the tradition from Descartes to Hume. Apart from Malebranche, one cannot easily locate a commitment to a representative theory of ideas among the early moderns.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, in contrast to those philosophers who now take the paramount concern of philosophy to deliver an appropriately naturalistic account of intentionality, it is worth comment that in those times there seemed to be so little concern with explaining the powers of the mind to think about objects distinct from it.<sup>30,31</sup>

If we suspend judgement about the presence of a common theory of ideas, one can still find used in different authors to different effect, a fairly common usage of either the argument from illusion or the argument from conflicting appearances. While it is difficult to discover a systematic confusion about the nature of thought and representation, it is fairly easy to discern a repeated use of the argument from conflicting sensory appearances or from illusion across the centuries in different intellectual contexts and put to different purposes.<sup>32</sup>

This suggests a separation of concern between thought and sense

28. (Malebranche 1992), *The Search after Truth*, Bk. 3, Pt. 2, Ch.1, p.27. (I am not here endorsing or rejecting this interpretation of Malebranche.)

29. One can find such proponents in the pages of hostile critics: Berkeley represents the materialist as endorsing a representative theory of ideas, and Hume presents matters in much the same terms. But the picture presented by Berkeley and Hume do not really fit Locke's explicit pronouncements, so the relation between criticism and target is more complex than is often presented in introductory accounts of British Empiricism. A more detailed discussion of the relations here belongs elsewhere.

30. It is interesting to contrast (Fodor 1987), Ch.4 or (Fodor 1990) with Descartes's discussion of the objective reality of thought in the third meditation and Locke's discussion of the origin ideas in 'An Examination of P. Malebranche's Opinion of Seeing all things in God'. Where Fodor takes *the* problem of intentionality to be the question of how to locate it within a natural, physical world, there is no apparent concern in either Descartes or Locke with the need to explain powers of thought in terms of other aspects of the world—that there are ideas is something which is simply beyond serious question. (Although in Locke's case, there is in addition a scepticism about the possibility of explaining why the ideas that are occasioned by external causes are so.)

31. The most concerted assault on this picture of early modern philosophy is in the work of John Yolton, see in particular, (Yolton 1984); for more recent work in this tradition see (Nadler 1989). One may accept much of what Yolton says without endorsing his interpretation of Locke as a 'direct realist', however. For more on this, see (Ayers 1991), Chs. 5-7, and (Ayers 1998); for a defence of a more traditional interpretation see (Chappell 1994).

perception, and a specific cluster of assumptions or ideas associated with the latter. That impression is surely reinforced when one reflects on the debate about sense-data in the early part of the twentieth century. For example, when one looks at the work of Russell and Moore, one finds both a concern with sense-data and a concern with the nature of judgement and the possibility of true and false judgement. If the inclination to take the argument from illusion seriously was simply a symptom of confusion about intentionality, then one should expect parallel arguments and confusions in both sets of debate. But for all the oddity of Russell's and Moore's various different theories of judgement at different times, it is notable how far their discussions of these matters are from the way in which they treat the issues of the objects of perception.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, in the case of C.D. Broad, we find a distinction drawn between the material and epistemological objects of perception, which suggests some sensitivity to the special properties of thoughts and intentional states of mind.<sup>34</sup> And the point is made clearest in the work of H.H. Price: he not only endorses the argument from illusion in a modified form, but also emphasises the intentionality of perceptual experience, which he calls perceptual acceptance—explicitly indicating that this is a belief-like state of mind, in the process alluding to the work of Reid and of Husserl.<sup>35</sup>

In none of these cases can we be content with the supposition that the authors suffer from a general confusion about the notion of intentionality which explains their endorsement of the argument from illusion in the particular case of sensory states. In each case, we have a contrast between the author's treatment of thoughts and their treatment of sensory states. In the final example, we have someone who accepts that experience has intentionality, but still supposes that the argument from illusion generates a problem—for him, at least, an intentional approach could not be thought adequate to dis-

32. Indeed, this is one of the points stressed most strongly in (Burnyeat 1979). Burnyeat also offers evidence for seeing Plato's discussion of perception and knowledge in the *Theaetetus* in terms amenable to the thrust of argument in the text: when Socrates finally rejects Theaetetus's identification of knowledge and perception, part of the concern is to allow for the possibility of false thought; but the separation of the two leaves intact the thought that it is impossible for perceptions themselves to be false.

However, for a contrasting interpretation of ancient attitudes to intentionality, see (Caston 1998), which links the problem of sensory error and error in thought in the interpretation of Aristotle much more closely than I have suggested should be done in general here.

33. For useful discussions of various of Moore's and Russell's views on the nature of judgement see, (Cartwright 1987), (Hylton 1990), (Baldwin 1990).

34. See (Broad 1925), Ch. IV.

35. (Price 1932), Ch.V, esp. pp. 150-6.

solve the problems of perception.

If we relied on the thought that the past attractions of the argument from illusion resided solely in a form of fallacious reasoning or a general mistaken conception of intentionality, we would fail in our understanding of past philosophy of perception in two ways. On the one hand, we would simply be attributing a near self-evident mistake to past thinkers, without any explanation of why they should have made such a mistake. The ancillary suggestion that past thinkers are just confused about intentionality in general is not borne out by the actual record. On the other hand, such a blanket interpretation ignores the systematic exploitation of the argument from illusion in relation to sensory states, in contrast to the variety of treatments of thought. An explanation of the past tradition needs to find more systematic structure in the viewpoint which takes the argument from illusion to present a genuine difficulty, we need therefore to look beyond the intentional fallacy to find the relevant assumptions peculiar to the sensory case.<sup>36</sup>

#### 4. The Hidden Assumption

Burnyeat in his survey of the arguments from conflicting appearances and illusion claims that philosophers who use such an argument are in the grip of an 'undeclared picture or model of what perception is or ought to be like. It is an inappropriate picture...and for that reason is not something a philosopher will readily acknowledge, even to himself.'<sup>37</sup> If correct, this would explain why Hume offers us no explicit argument, and why many should have doubted that any such explicit argument could be formulated: once the premisses of such an argument are made explicit, they lose all attraction.

There is certainly some reason for thinking that this must be so. It is one thing for the argument from illusion to impose on us the positive claim that we perceive images along with external objects. As surprising as this conclusion would be, we have learnt in other areas that there is more to the world than we had previously anticipated. But as Hume is well aware, the negative half of the conclusion does seem to conflict directly with a belief that is commonsensical and that acts as one of Hume's premisses, namely that we do perceive such mind-independent objects as tables.

So the argument from illusion in Hume's hands appears to have

36. Cf. here also Snowdon's suggestion that we need an explanation of the psychological attractions of Hume's and Price's positions, (Snowdon 1992).

37. (Burnyeat 1979), p.75.

the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*. But such a form of argument can have suasive force, only if we find its premisses more compelling than the rejection of its conclusion. Since the relevant premisses Hume must be employing are left unstated, there is no reason for us to think such an assumption better grounded or more unshakeable than the common sense thought that we perceive mind-independent objects. To make his assumptions explicit rather than implicit would seem to dissolve the force of the argument entirely.

Burnyeat himself actually seems to go further than this. Starting with an observation from Austin that no one seriously believes that a straight stick has to look straight on all occasions it is viewed, Burnyeat claims that proponents of the argument are indeed committed to that strange view. He takes the relevant added principle to be the following:

(1) If something appears *F* to some observers and not-*F* to others, then it is not inherently/really/in itself *F*.

As he then points out, this is equivalent to its contraposition:

(2) If something is inherently/really/in itself *F*, then it appears *F* to all observers or it appears not-*F* to all.<sup>38</sup>

Ignoring the second disjunct of the consequent, this amounts to the claim that Austin insists no one seriously believes. On the other hand, Burnyeat notes that one can find the principle stated in the form of (2) only very rarely. This he takes to indicate that those attracted to it are also wary of taking seriously its consequences. He then takes the explanatory task to be one of showing the way in which someone might come under the sway of certain metaphors or models which would make the otherwise unappealing assumption seem correct. In this case, the relevant model is what he calls the 'window model' of vision, which he characterises variously so:

...that we look through our eyes as through a window... (83) The window-pane should be transparent, without spot or blemish. Or better, since Greek windows were unglazed, the eye should be an aperture with no pane at all. There is as it were nothing between the perceiver and the thing he perceives... (85) at the core of the perceptual experience there will be an unmediated knowing, like Moore's diaphanous awareness of blue, and when a suitable story has been told about the objects of this knowing, the problem of conflicting appearances is solved.(95)

We could then see the window model of perception as providing the hidden premiss of Hume's argument. The table cannot be the object of awareness in a case of illusion, for given the model, the object of

38. Both *op. cit.* p.74.

awareness must be as it appears to be, and *ex hypothesi* the table is not as it appears; the image or impression must be the object of awareness. On this model whatever one is aware of must be as it appears and only such an object is guaranteed to be as it appears.

At the heart of Burnyeat's account is the thought that there can be no rational explanation of why the argument has been found so compelling. He criticises Austin (and no doubt would criticise the authors cited in the last section) for attacking past philosophers without according them due respect or trying to understand them. But Burnyeat's suggestion is that we understand them not by finding appropriate grounds for the assumptions they make, but rather by seeing how they may have been seduced by various errors, and by recognising the same impulses in our own breasts:

Whether it is the flawless close-up vision or the prehensive grasp, whether it secures a whole object or only some part of the surface of one or just a non-physical substitute for these, such pictures have their origin in our earliest and deepest experience. If they elicited a smile, it should have been a smile of recognition and not contempt. For if, as Heraclitus advised, we remember our dreams, we will recognize that there was a time in our own lives when the problem of conflicting appearances engaged our strongest feelings...<sup>39</sup>

Burnyeat's aim here seems to be a form of philosophical pathology. We are to recognise that it is part of the human philosophical condition to be swayed by a conception of perceiving which is simply inappropriate. Our respect for past thinkers is to be instilled in us by our recognising the fact that we share a failing with them.

In fact, Burnyeat's case here is somewhat overstated. While it is true that we can find no explicit statement of the required assumption in Hume, in the twentieth century discussion of the immediate objects of perception, authors have been less coy about explicitly stating the assumption. Such explicit statement is often conjoined with the admission that they lack any independent grounds for it. Such candour is evidenced by H.H. Price when he writes:

When I say 'This table appears brown to me' it is quite plain that I am acquainted with an actual instance of brownness (or equally plainly with a pair of instances when I see double). This cannot indeed be proved, but it is absolutely evident and indubitable.<sup>40</sup>

And Howard Robinson, one of the few recent defenders of a sense-datum conception of experience, happily identifies the key premiss of the argument from illusion as what he calls the *Phenomenal Prin-*

39. *Op. cit.* p.108.

40. (Price 1932), p.63.

*ciple:*

If there sensibly appears to a subject to be something which possesses a particular sensible quality then there is something of which the subject is aware which does possess that sensible quality.<sup>41</sup>

Robinson sees it as the great advance of early twentieth century philosophy of perception that the role of this assumption was made explicit in discussions of perception. Like Price, Robinson offers no direct argument for the principle, he takes it to be intuitively plausible, and defends it only by criticising what he takes to be rival accounts of the nature of sensory experience.

How does Burnyeat's strategy apply to Price and Robinson? Not well, I suggest, and for two reasons. First, it is an important element of Burnyeat's strategy that we should suppose the relevant assumptions or model of perception are hidden or at least half-hidden. For the problem, as he poses it, is that rational reflection will show that the principle has unacceptable consequences and hence cannot be endorsed. The only way the principle can retain its grip, on his interpretation, is by not being revealed in rational light for what it is. This ill-fits Price, and indeed his contemporaries Moore and Broad, all of whom are explicit that the argument from illusion relies on just such an assumption for which they can provide no further justification, but which seems to them indubitable.<sup>42</sup> So in relation to such writers, Burnyeat's strategy shows no greater respect than does Austin's: the targets of criticism must be so confused that we cannot find them readily intelligible.

Second, the cogency of Burnyeat's strategy depends on the problem being one of historical interpretation of past figures with whom we cannot conceive ourselves to be engaged in active debate. While we can try to be engaged by their problems and their arguments, we can also allow that there is a point at which we find their assumptions or reasoning unintelligible or unsupportable by our lights. There is no further task of debate, but simply one of understanding. The latter, Burnyeat suggests, can be engaged in by seeing ourselves as equally subject to philosophical illusion as our forebears, even if we come to recognise it as illusion in a way that they failed. But when we consider Robinson, and indeed other philosophers who still explicitly endorse the traditional problem and forms of the argument from illusion, Burnyeat's strategy is bound to seem inadequate.<sup>43</sup> For we cannot pretend that we are not in debate with our contemporaries. To say of them that they are simply in the grip of a

41. (Robinson 1994), p.32.

42. See, Moore (Moore 1922) and Broad (Broad 1923).

false image expresses no more than our disagreement with them.

This is not to say that there is no problem here. Burnyeat is surely right to highlight the deep disagreement involved. The question is rather one of how to respond to the problem. One could simply adopt the view of the past inherited from Austin, and from some followers of Wittgenstein, which simply sees philosophical debate as so immersed in confusion that there is no intellectually respectable project of understanding to be undertaken here. All that one can do is express one's disagreement and distaste with past discussion of the matter and those of one's contemporaries who insist on pursuing the matter. But here again, Burnyeat must be correct to insist that we owe the past the respect of attempting to understand past views and that it is a proper and genuine project for philosophers to understand the reasoning and concerns of other times. The acute problem for gaining such an understanding is simply that the shift has been so immense: from a perspective in which the argument from illusion frames the whole debate, to one in which the argument must be rejected from the outset as evidently bad. At the same time, the time scale for that shift has been so short: although the argument from illusion has had a long history, it is only within the last thirty to forty years that its place at centre stage of philosophical discussion of perception has been overthrown. From our current perspective, it seems near impossible to place us in a position where these arguments could hold the same authority over our deliberations.

However, I suggest that the root of the problem is not quite where Burnyeat suggests that it is. It is not that we have here people under the sway of a philosophical illusion which needs uncovering, but rather that we have a dispute which centres on the nature of appearances. The intractability of the debate simply reflects the paradoxical nature of this type of problem. We have difficulty in making sense of past philosophers here because the assumptions they make about appearances are so different from the ones that we are inclined to. The parties to the dispute disagree about the nature of appearances, while yet supposing that this nature is somehow obvious to us, and hence beyond dispute. Since the parties do dispute the question, it is difficult to find any common ground among them. If we are to make the debate tractable, we need to try and make sense of how there can be dispute about the nature of appearances.

43. Cf. (Perkins 1983), (Foster 1986), (Maund 1995). One might also include (Jackson 1977): Jackson explicitly disavows the argument from illusion, but not because of the principle here under debate, but rather for independent issues concerning the role of subjective indistinguishability in the argument.



## 5. Grounding the Obvious

Our first move is to show how we can make better sense of the debate by seeing it strictly in terms of a dispute about how things appear to us. From that point we can move to the question of how there can be such a dispute, and why we might end up with the different positions of sense-datum views and intentional theories. That, in turn, raises an urgent question about the status of appearances.

We can solve Burnyeat's initial problem once we ask how Price and Robinson could think that a controversial principle, which is clearly not a self-evident truth, is still somehow intuitively correct, or obviously right. The best explanation of their attitude is to see them as supposing that while the principle is not self-evident, it is nonetheless evident in the light of experience. If all one has to go on is reflection on the proposition itself, then one cannot determine whether it is true or not. But the proposition in question concerns appearances, how things appear to one, and that one can test just by reflection on how things *do* appear to one. Hence, simple reflection on one's own case should show one whether the principle in question is true. So we might interpret Price and Robinson as supposing that one's self-conscious knowledge of sensory consciousness is sufficient to reveal to one the truth of the principle. Although not self-evident, the principle is taken to be an obvious and indubitable truth given how experience presents itself to us to be. Or so they are convinced.

Certainly this line of interpretation helps to make sense of Hume, and why the key premisses are missing from his argument. If a relevant claim just seems so obviously true to one, then one will be unlikely to bother to make it explicit or to attempt the fruitless task of justifying it. Indeed, where a principle is so obvious, it is often extremely difficult to consciously articulate it, and make explicit its role in one's reasoning. Rather than taking the lacunae in Hume's reasoning to be evidence of argumentative incompetence, we can rather see it as evidence of how deeply embedded the relevant principle is in his reflection on appearances.

Now, if the principle is thought to be evident in the light of experience, then the problem about justification in the light of its unpalatable consequences is not so pressing. For even when faced with a counter-intuitive conclusion, one cannot help but endorse the principle (by 'the natural light of reason', so to speak), if one is convinced that it is correct simply by reflection on what experience is like. The option of *modus tollens* in the light of such an argument will not arise. Suppose that introspection of experience gives con-

clusive grounds for the problematic principle. Simply coming to recognise unpleasant consequences of the principle needn't by itself alter the kind of experience one has, and hence won't alter the support that the principle rests on.

But this, of course, does not solve the wider problem of interpretation which Burnyeat raises. We may now understand how proponents of the argument from illusion could take Robinson's Phenomenal Principle to be beyond justification because they thought it obvious in the light of reflection on experience. But this moves the problem one stage back. We now need to understand how they could have taken it to be obvious in just this manner. For, of course, the mere fact that Anscombe, Searle, Harman and others have thought that the principle is false, and have failed to find any justification for it apart from the seductions of a certain fallacious form of reasoning indicates that the principle cannot be obvious, even were it true. So, why should those who take the argument from illusion seriously think that experience shows the principle to be obviously true?

If we leave that question on one side for a moment, and stand back from the whole debate, we can see a suggestive parallel between traditional sense-datum theories and some proponents of the intentional theory. Both approaches appeal to what one can know about appearances from introspection in support of their positions. We have just noted how the sense-datum tradition makes such an appeal. In the case of intentional theories of perception, the appeal is in support of the link between experience and the mind-independent objects of perception. For example, Gilbert Harman thinks that introspection supports his case in defending a form of the intentional theory and at the same time creates a problem for the sense-datum theory:

Look at a tree and try to turn your attention to intrinsic features of your visual experience. I predict that you will find that the only features there to turn your attention to will be features of the presented tree, including relational features of the tree "from here".<sup>44</sup>

Harman is confident that his readers will agree with him that initial reflection on one's visual experience will support the thought that one encounters only mind-independent objects and their features and how they relate to one when one introspects. There is a positive and a negative side to the claim here: that one does encounter the mind-independent world in experience; and that one encounters nothing else. We might call the positive thesis *Transparency*: that the

44. (Harman 1990), p. 39.

character of one's experience involves in some sense, or is directed on or of the mind-independent objects and their features which we take to be around us in our environment.

While Harman thinks this evident, sense-datum theorists such as Moore and Jackson, and their predecessors such as Hume, think it wrong. So they do not suppose that the principle of Transparency is obvious, given reflection on one's experience. However, that it is not to say that they think that experience obviously involves only mind-dependent objects or features; rather, they suppose that experience is neutral about these matters. As Hume puts it:

[the senses] give us no notion of continu'd existence, because they cannot operate beyond the extent, in which they really operate. They as little produce the opinion of a distinct existence, because they neither can offer it to the mind as represented, nor as original... We may, therefore, conclude with certainty, that the opinion of a continu'd and of a distinct existence never arises from the senses.<sup>45</sup>

And while Hume would agree with Harman that Harman's view is the view of common sense, since 'the universal and primary opinion of all men' is that this table which we see is independent of the mind, Hume is careful not to ground this belief in how appearances strike us. The only explanation of the belief is that it is natural in us.

In this way, therefore, we can see the sharp discontinuity between the older debate about sense-data and the objects of perception and more recent discussions of the intentionality of experience as reflecting a deep disagreement about the nature of appearances. Since there is a tendency on both sides to appeal to introspection to support their claims, there is a consequent difficulty in making sense from either side of the view of the other, and equally a difficulty in stepping back from the whole debate and finding some common ground from which the disputants then move to their opposed positions. But we can make progress here, I suggest, by seeing how the principles each side ground in introspection of experience can be combined to reveal a possible position against which both of the traditions will be united in opposition.

The dispute between traditional sense-datum theories of perception and recent intentional accounts turns on two claims relating to appearances, and not just one. Each side supposes that one such claim is evidently true when one reflects on the character of experience, while the other side insists that reflection on experience neither shows the truth or falsity of that principle—while at the same time, denying the principle in question. So neither side claims that

45. (Hume 1978), pp.191-2.

appearances themselves show the principle put forward by the other side is false. The dispute about appearances is more indirect: whether they can offer positive support for one principle or the other.

Now the two claims in question are not inconsistent with each other. The claim of Transparency requires that experience be of mind-independent objects and their features; while the claim of Hume and the sense-datum theorists, which we might call *Actualism*, requires that whatever qualities one senses, some actual instance of those qualities and the object which bears them must exist and be sensed. In combination they would simply require that when one senses some quality, an appropriate mind-independent object and feature should exist and be sensed by one.

Given the consistency of the two claims, one might hold that introspection of one's experience gives equal support to each of the claims. Indeed, if we combine the two claims together we end up with a position which seems very like the kinds of view the sense-datum theorists labelled *Naïve Realism*, and which they took to be refuted by the argument from illusion. For, if we accept the Transparency of experience, we will suppose that the very mind-independent objects and qualities which we take ourselves to perceive are aspects of what our experiences are like; while if we insist on the Actualism of experience, we will accept that in having such experience, such objects and qualities will actually have to be there before us. If I can see a table, and it looks to me as if there is a table there, then what I sense is a table which exists independently of my mind, and I could not so experience if the table were not there.

When I stare out of the window I can see the lavender bush at the end of the street, the straggling rose on my fence, and I can hear the sound of traffic in nearby roads. When I reflect on what it is like for me so to experience, these very same objects and features remain the focus of attention as aspects of how I experience: this commits me to Transparency with regards to perception, as proponents of intentional theories stress. At the same time, it is evident to me that I am experiencing these things, and not merely thinking about them, or imagining or remembering them. The latter things I can do in the absence of the objects of perception, but it does not seem to me that I can be this way, actually experiencing, without the relevant objects or features present in my environment. This recommends Actualism to me, as defenders of the sense-datum tradition have observed.<sup>46</sup>

So, if we take seriously the hypothesis that reflection on experi-

46. And not just proponents of the sense-datum tradition; compare Sartre's discussion of the phenomenological contrast between perception and imagination in (Sartre 1991).

ence gives equal support to both Transparency and Actualism, then we will think that such reflection ought to compel the acceptance not of sense-datum views or intentional theories of perception but rather of some kind of Naïve Realism. From this perspective, what is notable about each of the main traditions is not what they seek to defend by reference to introspection, but what they are prepared to reject in the face of introspective support. The sense-datum tradition denies the manifest fact that it seems to us as if we are presented in experience with mind-independent objects and states of affairs in the world around us. The intentional tradition denies the introspective evidence that things apparently sensed must actually be before the mind for one to experience so.

From this perspective, the explanatory task is not to explain why the sense-datum tradition thought that Actualism was an evident truth, but rather why both the sense-datum tradition and intentional theories reject one or other aspect of Naïve Realism. In as much as introspection gives support both to Transparency and Actualism, one will find no answer to this question by appealing to how our experiences strike us as being. But one can easily find reasons elsewhere for rejecting this option. For here we find a role for the argument from illusion after all. Rather than thinking of it as a positive argument for the existence of sense-data, or for that matter for the intentionality of experience, it is better to view it as an argument against Naïve Realism.

When I stare at the lavender bush at the end of the street, it certainly seems to me as if I could not be this way without the bush really being there. On the other hand, it also seems quite clear to me that for all I know, it is possible that I should be in a state of mind which just by reflection I cannot distinguish from this state of mind and yet in that case not be perceiving anything in the physical world at all, but only be hallucinating. It is common to take this admission as revealing something about the kind of state of mind, the kind of sensory experience, one has when perceiving: that it is the kind of state which could occur whether one is perceiving or hallucinating.<sup>47</sup> Hence whether an experience counts as a case of perception or hallucination tells us something about its aetiology but does not determine its fundamental kind.

Now in a case of hallucinating a lavender bush just like this one, I would be as inclined on the basis of introspection to assert that both

47. This assumption is rejected by so-called 'disjunctive' accounts of perception. For such approaches see (Hinton 1967), and (Hinton 1973); (Snowdon 1980-81) and (Snowdon 1990); also (McDowell 1982); and (Putnam 1994).

Transparency and Actualism were true of that experience. For, just as in this case, it would seem to me as if I was presented with a piece of flora independent of my awareness, there in my environment regardless of whether I was paying heed to it or not. Likewise, it would strike me that what was distinctive of my situation is that things could not be this way with me and no object be there at all. This is, after all, a case of sensory experience and not thought. Nonetheless, in such a situation there need be no appropriate candidate in one's environment, no lavender bush to catch one's eye. So in such a case of hallucination, it seems clear that at least one of the two principles must be false. Either Transparency must be wrong and one is aware of an object, just not one in one's physical environment; or Actualism must fail, and one's experience does not require that there be an object there.

The line of thought can be developed a bit further. If the same kind of state of mind, the same perceptual experience, can occur whether one is perceiving or having an illusion or suffering an hallucination, then whatever principles hold of the hallucinatory experience must hold of the veridical perceptual experience too. So, if at least one of the principles, Actualism or Transparency, must be false of illusions and hallucinations, then that principle must be false also of the corresponding veridical perception. The possibility of such perfect hallucinations seems to show that Naïve Realism cannot be true of any sensory experience.

More needs to be said here to develop this into a proper argument, but the idea that somehow the existence, or possibility, of perceptual illusions is inconsistent with Naïve Realism is a familiar one. We have already seen in the case of Hume, and adverted to with respect to the sense-datum theorists, an appeal to the argument from illusion to show that something like Naïve Realism is false. As the quotation from Burge earlier indicated, while many philosophers would now repudiate anything with the title 'argument from illusion', they would not reject the bearing that illusions and hallucinations have on giving an account of perceptual experience. So it is not implausible to appeal here to some form of argument concerning illusion to explain why Naïve Realism might be rejected.

In addition, if we assume that, with proper attention, the character of experience is obvious to us, then when one attends appropriately to one's experience one should be able to see that one of these principles is not, after all, supported by introspectible evidence. We should expect, therefore, a theorist who is moved by this line of argument not only to reject one of the principles but also to deny that it is seemingly correct to someone who reflects on their

experience.

But now, one might point out, if in fact introspection supports each principle equally, then there is no introspective evidence to lead one to reject one principle rather than the other. So we are not to explain the disagreement across the traditions of debate by reference to different kinds of experience that the disputants enjoyed, or to their different powers of introspection. The argument from illusion might lead one to the commitment that one of the two principles must be wrong, and if wrong not evidently supported by introspection, but nothing yet will show which to reject. That now leaves the way open for us to explain the disagreement in terms of other aspects of the two traditions' intellectual contexts.

If, in fact, there is nothing about introspected experience *per se* which should lead one to reject or endorse Actualism rather than Transparency, there are plenty of other philosophical concerns which separate typical sense-datum theorists from defenders of intentional theories. Some of these are sufficient to explain why one might antecedently be inclined to repudiate Transparency while upholding Actualism, or alternatively be inclined to excoriate Actualism and embrace Transparency.

Consider first Hume's intellectual context. Notoriously within the early modern tradition, common sense realism is taken to be problematic. In digesting the new science, one comes to question the status of sensible qualities such as colours and tastes, and the true nature of grossly observable elements of the world around us. In some figures, one finds a commitment to realism at odds with common sense—for example, in Descartes we witness the downgrading of the senses as a source of knowledge of the nature of the world, and instead an emphasis on the role of intellect. In Berkeley, on the other hand, we see an attempt to hold onto the most precious aspects of the sensible world, at the cost of rejecting a material and mind-independent world.

Hume's discussion in 'Scepticism with regard to the Senses' is sensitive to the distance these opposing approaches are from the views of the vulgar. For if it can be a matter for serious debate whether the world is as it is presented to us by the senses, then one will not suppose the matter settled simply by introspection. Yet, if Actualism and Transparency can be shown to be true and certain simply by reflection on one's experience, then that would be the outcome. For, were the combination of these two true, then the correctness of common sense realism would simply be obvious to us, and hence beyond dispute. So the rejection of Transparency seems naturally to cohabit with the problematic status of such realism. It is

symptomatic of the thought that the world is properly to be described only through a developing scientific discipline that the senses reveal to us much less about the nature of the world than we are vulgarly inclined to suppose.

If we move forward in time to the early twentieth century discussions of sense-data, we find relevantly similar concerns about realism. While one finds an opposition to the idealism of late nineteenth century, common sense realism is taken to be no less problematic than in early modern times: one of the central concerns is to explain how we place the mind in a world of the form described by then current science. Equally importantly, and again echoing the early modern period, there is no reason to resist the consequences of Actualism which in certain cases of illusion and hallucination will lead to a commitment to non-physical objects of sense. For the idea that the physical world must be causally complete, with purely physical events having sufficient causal explanation in terms of purely physical antecedents, is not a doctrine accepted on faith and without question. Rather the unity of science and the mind's place in nature are taken in many such discussions to be open. For example, at this time we find serious discussion of the para-psychological as a realm governed by psycho-physical laws uninvestigated by then current science.<sup>48</sup>

These intellectual concerns contrast sharply with much of the dominant philosophical ideology of the last forty years. One of the most notable developments since the middle of the last century has been the ascendancy of a commitment to physicalism in some form or another. In particular, in discussions of mind there has been a concern to avoid any commitment to the existence of peculiar, and distinctively mental, entities. An acceptance of Actualism would lead one to accept the existence of non-physical objects of sense in the case of hallucinations and some illusions, and so would apparently lead one to conclusions in conflict with physicalism.<sup>49</sup> If one already has reason to reject Actualism through a prior endorsement of physicalism, then the considerations about illusion and the general unreliability of the senses do not by themselves give one any reason to dispose of Transparency as well. Even if common sense realism is taken to be controversial or to be false, one will simply think that this reflects a way in which our experience of the world is more

48. It is worth noting that both Broad and Price professed a serious interest in the parapsychological.

49. Cf. here (Smart 1962), (Armstrong 1968); (Tye 1984). Some philosophers dispute whether there is a conflict between physicalism and sense-data, cf. (Cornman 1975) and (Perkins 1983) for a discussion of this.



or less accurate. Only the combination of Actualism and Transparency would commit us to the definite truth of common sense realism. Indeed, the more firm one's commitment to Transparency, the more implausible Actualism can be made to seem. One may be more inclined to accept that a non-physical mosaic of colours must exist whenever one has a visual experience than to accept that some non-physical table or rabbit should so exist because one's experience presents such entities. So the more reason one has to insist that experience really is as of tables and rabbits, the more evident it will be that Actualism cannot be true.

Given the implications of the considerations about illusion and hallucination, one finds a conflict between Actualism and Transparency internal to the problem of perception. Other intellectual proclivities, in favour of, or sceptical towards, physicalism and realism about the empirical world, explain one's antecedent inclination towards one of the principles rather than the other. When the focus is on the problematic status of common sense realism, and minimis is not assumed, Actualism can be taken to be secure and to define the options. When some form of physicalism is beyond question, Actualism is highly questionable, and an insistence on the correctness of Transparency reinforces any reasons for thinking of experience as intentional in nature.

These suggestions offer us a strategy by which we can resolve our problem of interpretation. At first sight, the shift between the traditional problems of perception discussed by sense-datum theorists and recent accounts of perception has been so large that it is difficult to see how there can be a common concern here. Equally in looking back from our current perspective it is difficult to make sense of the early tradition as a cogent piece of reasoning about the senses. If we take seriously both the suggestion that the different views seek for support in the character of appearances, and that these different views get equal support from introspection of experience, then the disagreement becomes easier to comprehend. Underneath the apparent differences of approach, there is a common thread and a common problem: first reflection on experience recommends Naïve Realism to one; then, considerations which may loosely be tied together under the heading of 'the argument from illusion' suggest that no such view can be correct. The sense-datum tradition and intentional approaches are just alternative responses to this problem. If experience does support the key principle of each view equally, then we are not to explain the differences between them, the rejection of one principle rather than the other, directly in terms of the evidence that they have available about the introspectible character

of experience. At the same time, by taking a broader perspective and looking at other aspects of the intellectual context, we can see why certain thinkers would be predisposed to the rejection of Transparency or of Actualism.

## 6. Conclusion

Over the past few pages we have focused on three questions. The most specific is that of how we should make sense of the argument from illusion as evidenced in Hume's *First Enquiry*. This reflects the second and more general question of how we are to make sense of past debates about perception which seem to be framed in such different terms from those in play in recent discussion. In answer to these questions I suggested that we should take seriously the hypothesis that introspection recommends to us naïve realism as the proper account of our sensory experience. Rather than seeing the argument from illusion as a positive argument intended to show the existence of certain strange entities, impressions or sense-data, we should see the considerations about illusion or hallucination as intended to show the falsity of the view commended by introspection.

As indicated above, this helps make the argument from illusion more intelligible by inserting further premisses to make the argument valid, while indicating appropriate grounds for accepting the relevant assumptions. Moreover, with the extra premisses in play, we can see an answer to the second question. Far from the argument from illusion being merely an outmoded form of argument belonging to an old tradition of debate about the problems of perception, we can see recent intentional approaches to perception tacitly employing the very same concerns. Both sense-datum theories and intentional approaches reject naïve realism and arguably do so for the same set of reasons concerning illusion and hallucination. This fact is obscured by superficial dissimilarities in terminology and focus.

There are differences between the two traditions, of course. Proponents of the intentional approach are inclined to assert the transparency of experience and to ridicule the principle Actualism; sense-datum theorists are happy to insist that Actualism is an indubitable truth, while questioning whether there are sufficient grounds for endorsing Transparency. So the two traditions seem to be in direct dispute about what should be most obvious to us. Hence these differences lead us to the third question with which this paper started. How can there be dispute about appearances, if it is right to assume that the nature of appearances is simply obvious to us all? The answer suggested here is that the differences and disputes between the two traditions do not in fact belong to anything that can be in-

trospeted about our experience. Each side should agree that our experience seems to us to be naïve realist in character. When they disagree about the real nature of perceptual consciousness, the stories told above suggest that each party is moved by intellectual concerns beyond those which can be extracted simply from reflecting on the obvious character of experience itself.

That leads us to look to three consequences of the tale just told. It is fairly common now to claim that the mind-body problem has a central role within philosophical debate. More particularly that the central question philosophers face is the difficult one of seeing how minds such as ours could be no more than a part of the physical world around us. The discussion above lends some support to this thesis. If the explanation of the differences in the terms of debate about perception is right, then we can understand recent writing about perceptual experience only in the context of certain broad, if not always explicit, physicalist assumptions. However, it should be noted that these framing assumptions join with a much older set of philosophical problems, the problems of perception, which can and have been posed against a rather different background of metaphysical assumptions. We should be wary, therefore, of supposing that the only philosophical agenda that one should address in relation to the mind is that of the mind-body problem.

Indeed, one will take this moral more seriously if one reflects on some of the ways that the recent debate might be accused of distorting the discussion of perceptual consciousness. Such discussions tend to contrast qualia and phenomenal states of mind with states which have a representational content, and suppose that there can be little in common between phenomenal states on the side and propositional attitudes on the other. Against this background, one cannot but feel sympathy with Richard Rorty's complaint that

The attempt to hitch pains and beliefs together seems ad hoc—they don't seem to have anything in common except our refusal to call them "physical".<sup>50</sup>

And it is no surprise, in the light of an assumption that the phenomenal lacks any representational content and intrinsic structure, that theorists of consciousness have sought to define consciousness principally in terms of accessibility to thought.<sup>51</sup>

It seems to me that such theories are far removed from phenom-

50. R. Rorty, *Philosophy & the Mirror of Nature* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979) p. 22.

51. See in particular, S. Shoemaker, 'Self-Knowledge and "Inner Sense"', *Philosophy & Phenomenological Research*, 64, pp.249-314; D. M. Rosenthal, 'A Theory of Consciousness' (Report no. 40/1990, Centre for Interdisciplinary Research [ZiF], Research Group on Mind and Brain, University of Bielefeld).

enology—perhaps, here I speak only for myself, but I have at least the suspicion that the inner lives of others are as complex, troubling and difficult to articulate as my own. It is no surprise that one may end up with the feeling that the explananda have been lost in the construction of the theory, when confronted with most discussions of the phenomenal and consciousness.

I suggest that we can understand such distortions in the theory of consciousness through a combination of an implicit recognition of the intuitive appeal of Actualism with a wish to avoid any commitment to ‘the theatre of mind’. So, we find philosophers endorsing the feeling that with genuine sensory states, in contrast to mere thoughts, there must actually be some qualities distinctive of the sensory state, qualia, while rejecting the idea that there must be sense-data as inner objects of awareness. The tension is reconciled by an appeal to qualia as mere qualities of a state of mind, which alleviate the pull towards Actualism, without being taken to be objects of awareness. However this advantage is gained at the cost of the theoretical account becoming completely divorced from giving a believable story about the apparent structure of perceptual consciousness, for which the theory is supposed to be an account.

The distortion in how one characterises the phenomenological aspects of the mind arises when one takes physicalism not only as a plausible end point in one’s discussion of the mind, but as a starting point in defining the phenomena with which one will deal. It is only when we pay due attention to the attractions of naïve realism, and face up explicitly to the challenge posed by illusion and hallucination, we shall be in a better position to construct a theory of perceptual consciousness.

This leads to the final moral with which to end. So far, the account offered has been hypothetical. If we make the interpretive leap, and suppose that sense-datum theorists take introspection to support their position, and if we make sense of that in turn by supposing that introspection most directly supports naïve realism, then we have an answer to the three questions above. However, nothing has yet been done to show directly that this latter hypothesis is correct. But suppose that we do have reason to endorse this suggestion, then the way in which we view the problems of perception should alter radically. From the perspective of naïve realism, the problem of perception does not principally concern our knowledge of the external world, so much as our understanding and knowledge of our own sensory states. The sense-datum theory conflicts with how our sensory states seem to us, to the extent that that theory posits non-physical objects as the objects of awareness in the having of experi-

ence, despite the fact that introspection recommends Transparency to us. The conflict here is not so much with the positing of non-physical objects of awareness as the assumption that these objects play the role in awareness that introspection would lead us to suppose that the mind-independent objects of perception play. Likewise, the intentional approach conflicts with naïve realism. According to intentional theories, the manner in which objects are present to the mind in sensory experience is consistent with the non-existence of the putative objects of awareness. If there is introspective support for Actualism, then it seems to us for some aspects of our experience as if we couldn't be so without the objects of which we are aware genuinely being there. So where a sense-datum account of perception conflicts with a naïve view of *what* objects can be given in experience, an intentional view conflicts with a naïve view of *how* those objects are given to us in experience.

Once we recognise that introspection supports naïve realism, rather than directly recommending either a sense-datum view or an intentional account, then we are faced with the consequence that at least some experiences will be misleading about their own nature. Consider an hallucination indistinguishable for me from a veridical perception. If in the case of veridical perception it seems to me that Actualism and Transparency hold, just given reflection on what the experience is like, then in introspecting the matching hallucination, the two principles will seem to hold as well. However, in just such a case at least one of the two principles must be false. So given introspective support for naïve realism, at least some states of being appeared to must be misleading not only about the world, but as paradoxical as this may sound, also about themselves.

Given the assumption that the nature of appearances must really be obvious to one given suitable reflection, this conclusion may well seem absurd. One might think that what it is for something to be an aspect of how one is consciously experiencing things is for it to be open to knowledge simply through reflection on the state. One may insist that unlike one's knowledge of the external world, when it comes to conscious experience there is no room for a distinction between how things seem to one and how they really are.

However, our discussion suggests that despite the prevalence of this assumption, the argument from illusion illustrates that it is not tenable. Sense-datum theorists may seek to hold on to the assumption by insisting that it really does not even seem to us as if Transparency is true of our experiences, and intentional theorists may insist that there is no introspective support for Actualism. In both cases the mirror-image position undermines these protestations.

The only way that we can make proper sense of the development of the debate is to accept that there is at least some *prima facie* support for the opposing position. Once one arrives at that position, then one cannot hope to show on the basis of introspection alone that one's preferred principle is manifestly correct and the other lacks proper support. And that means that in the end we must accept that appearances are not entirely obvious in their nature.

The central problem of perception, therefore, is to address the argument from illusion and the conflict between it and the claims philosophers have been prompted to make about the nature of experience on the basis of introspection of it. The problem of making sense of how there can be debate about appearances has become the problem of making sense of how we can be mistaken about them.<sup>52</sup>

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