

Moore's Dilemma

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ABSTRACT

In 1918 GE Moore questioned the assumptions behind traditional sense-datum theories and offered the Multiple Relational Theory of Appearing, which he said could not be ruled out as a possible alternative. In 1953, Moore eventually came to reject the alternative and recommend endorsement of the traditional sense-datum theory again. This paper explores what Moore's reservations in 1918 were, what the correct interpretation of the Multiple Relation Theory should be, and why it made sense for him ultimately to reject it. Moore's paper throws light both on the nature of the argument from illusion as used in the sense-datum tradition, but also as it has been appealed to in more recent discussions of intentional theories of perception.

KEYWORDS

Sense-data, GE Moore, Bertrand Russell, Intentionality, Content, Consciousness, Sensible Quality, Argument from Illusion, Appearance, Theory of Appearing

I want to consider here a curious turn in the development of the original sense-datum tradition, presented in GE Moore's Presidential Address of 1918, 'Some Judgments of Perception' (hereafter, 'Some Judgments') (Moore, 1918) (Moore, 1918) (Moore, 1918). This announced a fundamental alteration in his views about what philosophy could establish concerning the nature of sense perception, and it is a position that he officially held from 1918 all the way to 1953, only repudiating the new option he introduced in 'Some Judgments' in his final piece of writing on perception, 'Visual Sense-data' (Moore, 1957) (Moore, 1957) (Moore, 1957). Although Moore's shift in this paper has been cited as a source of the theory of appearing, and in its own right has had some commentary on it, what is really puzzling about the official position advanced in the paper, and the significance of Moore's stance, has been rather overlooked. The point is of interest in making sense of early analytic philosophy, but it also offers morals for us to learn concerning moves made in discussion of sense experience in recent debate too.

Moore introduced the term 'sense-datum' in 1910–11 in a set of lectures at Morley College only published in 1953 as *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (Moore, 1953). The term itself was popularized by Russell in *The Problems of Philosophy* (Russell, 1912) (Russell, 1912) (Russell, 1912), and it is from that publication that most contemporary critics came to focus on the new-fangled sense-datum theories of perception. As Moore introduced the term, and continued to guide his readers about it, it is to stand for 'whatever is given as the object of sensory awareness'. This makes explicit that Moore does not define 'sense-datum' to mean something non-physical, or even mental, which is to act as an intermediary between us and the ordinary objects we suppose ourselves to perceive. Rather, Moore takes it as the task of philosophers once they have identified their targets, the ultimate objects of sensory awareness, to go on to ascertain the nature of sense-data. Of course, that is not to say that framing matters in this way does not bring with it other questionable assumptions: notably that all cases of sensory awareness or sense experience involve an actually existing object of awareness; and also, and less obviously, that objects that one picks out purely relationally, as that which one stands in the relation awareness to, might nonetheless have something interesting in common such that we should talk about the nature of these things together. (Compare: suppose we collect all the things that a toddler has managed to put into his or her mouth and then ask about their common nature, the nature of the stomachum datum.) So it is no part of the definition of 'sense-datum' that the object of awareness should be mental or should be non-physical.

But the common idea that sense-datum theorists suppose that we are only ever aware of non-physical entities is a deserved reputation. Already in the Morley College lectures, Moore makes clear that he thinks ‘the accepted view’, that sense-data exist only as long as are aware of them (and hence are not identical with any environmental objects), is probably correct. In 1914, in ‘The Status of Sense-Data’ he appeals to considerations about varying appearances in support of the non-identity of sense-data with anything environmental (pp.371-3) (Moore, 1914) (Moore, 1914) (Moore, 1914). His elaboration of these concerns is more ponderous and careful than Russell’s breezy introduction in *The Problems of Philosophy*, but it works in much the same way. Let us call this approach ‘the Traditional Sense-datum Theory’, TSD for short. It combines two key assumptions: i.) Moore’s commitment in the very definition of the term ‘sense-datum’ to the idea that there always is an object of sensory awareness whenever one has sense experience; and ii.) the denial that any such objects of awareness are identical with the ordinary medium sized objects, or even parts of those objects, that we encounter in the environment around us.

‘Some Judgments of Perception’ turns away from this doctrine. Moore introduces a new theory of sense perception in this paper, what Broad came to christen, ‘the Multiple Relation Theory of Appearing’, hereafter MRTA.¹ But Moore does not endorse this theory (or at least does not wholeheartedly endorse it), either at this point, or explicitly at any time after this. The advertised point of introducing MRTA in ‘Some Judgments’ is not to recommend it over TSD. It is not the theory to be preferred, to be thought correct, or more likely correct, nor as one better supported by argument or the evidence at hand. Moore’s point is more modest and restricting than that: he thinks that MRTA is both the alternative to TSD, and one which philosophers lack the evidence to rule out as false. Rather than offering us a definitive view of sense perception, ‘Some Judgments of Perception’ offers us a dilemma: we are allegedly entitled to conclude that either TSD or MRTA is correct, but we cannot rationally choose between them.² And this position of indecision is repeated by Moore six years later in ‘A Defence of Common Sense’, and the same moral is drawn there (Moore, 1925). Moore repudiates the idea that MRTA is coherent only in his last writings on sense perception, ‘Visual Sense-data’, written in 1953, although only published in 1957. (Moore, 1925) (Moore, 1925)

Some discussions of Moore’s second thoughts in 1918 suggest that Moore is re-thinking the appeal of the argument from illusion, and is in some way endorsing, at least partially, MRTA. From this perspective, his later repudiation of this option is seen as a falling back from the insights he had partially gained some thirty five years before. On the other hand, other readers have suggested that this alternative theory is introduced only in a half-hearted way, and that Moore’s real commitment is to the traditional theory, which he returns to as swiftly as he can.³ Both readings reflect aspects of things that Moore says in this paper, and in other places. But while they are tempting as strategies to clean up Moore’s discussion, both go beyond the strict letter of his texts. He is careful to offer MRTA simply as a possibility, one which the evidence cannot rule out. In none of his writings does he ever seek to argue from the truth of MRTA to any other claim. In common between ‘Some Judgments of Perception’ and ‘A Defence of Common Sense’ is the idea that we can be certain that we make perceptually grounded judgements about the humdrum environmental objects around us, even though we cannot be

¹ See (CD Broad, 1923), pp. 237ff. See also (Broad, 1925) pp.178-208 for further discussion.

² Moore had already canvassed the contrast between ‘seems’ and ‘is’ as early as the Morley College lectures, see p.39, where he considers the idea that regions of space might only seem to be filled with a given colour without actually being so, as a possible way of defending the idea that we perceive sense-data as located in public space. The idea is also raised in passing in ‘The Status of Sense-data’ and offered as a reason to be less than fully confident of the traditional view. Nonetheless 1918 is the first time Moore both sets out in some detail the alternative and also underlines the dilemma.

³ See (Tom Baldwin, 1990), pp. 238, 240, 243-4. Contrast (H. Robinson, 1994) who presents a Moore who is all along committed to the traditional sense-datum view but cannot see how to refute the ‘seems’ analysis, see pp. 37-40. (PF Snowdon, 2007), on the other hand, avoids attributing to Moore a preferred side in his discussion of ‘Some Judgments’.

certain of the correct philosophical analysis of these judgements. Without strong reason to the contrary, then, it is best to stick with Moore's explicitly expressed intent and to take him to have established a dilemma: we know that either TSD is correct or MRTA is correct, but we cannot know which.⁴

It is this dilemma which forms the central concern of our discussion here. What form does it take? As we shall see, Moore offers positive characterizations of both horns of the dilemma, so it should be a substantive question why our options are limited only to these two. In addition, as we will see in more detail shortly, the salient contrast between TSD and MRTA is that of a sense-datum *being* blue versus a sense-datum *seeming* blue, where it is granted that something may seem some way without being so. Commentators have applauded Moore's recognition of the 'seems'/'is' contrast, but the outline they then go on to offer of MRTA is typically somewhat murky. For some, Moore should be read as an advocate of the theory of appearing, associated with Dawes Hicks's criticisms of sense-data.⁵ On the other hand, in a context where some claim that merely to recognize a significant contrast between appearance and reality is to commit to the presence of intentional contents in experience, one might try to interpret Moore as offering an early sketch of a representational or intentional theory of perception.⁶

If we leave our current preconceptions to one side, and look instead at the bundle of commitments Moore carries round with him during this period, we can see his concern with the contrast between appearance and reality in a different light. The concern is not quite the same as that which obsesses many proponents of intentionalism: the need to give a general explanation of how things can appear a certain way while failing to be so. Rather, we'll see, one makes better sense of Moore's stance when one considers it in terms of what one can know about things considered independently of one's experience. For Moore, I'll suggest, the key contrast is between two modes of uniting terms in a proposition: treating *seeming* as a mode of copulation and one which contrasts with *being* allows Moore to acknowledge the possibility that an object of awareness might be united with blue only relative to my current experience. It is Moore's scrupulous concern with what we can know simply on the basis of our experience, together with his commitment to thinking of sensing as a form of knowing which generates the dilemma. Or so I will argue below.

This offers us a solution to our dual puzzles about the vagaries of early analytic philosophy: what did Moore's change of heart consist in in 1918, and how should we make

⁴ In addition to 'Some Judgments' and 'A Defence', consider Moore's contribution to a symposium discussing Broad's views of perception in 1926, 'The Nature of Sensible Appearances'. Moore reiterates here again that we cannot be certain what is the correct view, but indicates that he finds probability in favour of the traditional view that Broad is inclined to, for which Broad's label is 'the sensum theory'.

⁵ The assimilation of Moore to Dawes Hicks here is originally proposed by Broad see above cited page from *Scientific Thought*. Roderick Chisholm, (Roderick M. Chisholm, 1950), also identifies what Broad discusses under the heading 'Multiple Relation Theory of Appearing', as what he labels 'the theory of appearing' and otherwise associates with Dawes Hicks and other critics of sense-datum theories. Baldwin suggests that Moore has taken over Dawes Hicks's analysis of perception, in his discussion of 'Some Judgments'. Harold Langsam, (Harold Langsam, 1997), refers us back to Moore, as well as Chisholm in his defence of the theory of appearing.

⁶ Note that the theory of appearing is commonly identified as an alternative to representational or intentional theories, however. Frank Jackson (Frank Jackson, 1977) discusses the multiple relation theory of appearing (distinguishing between Broad's account and Chisholm's) as a competitor to a sense-datum theory, but does not identify it as a form of representationalism.

Langsam introduces the theory of appearing as a way of trying to block the argument against direct realism. William Alston (William Alston, 1999) takes the theory of appearing to be an alternative to the representational theory of mind. Alex Byrne (Alex Byrne, 2009) treats both as offering a theory which is intended as a rival to intentionalism. Byrne concludes (appealing to concerns Broad expressed many decades before) that the theory will either be inadequate or a simply an alternative formulation of intentionalism.

sense of his recantation in 1953. But the ultimate terms of this debate ought to have a wider echo. Moore's principal focus in all of these debates is what he can know about seeing just from reflection on his own case, when he stares at the inkstand, or his hand, or a tree in mid-distance. Moore wants to spell out the nature of sensory experience through relying to a greater or lesser extent on introspective reflection. The resurgence of interest in debates about sense perception and phenomenal consciousness has brought with it a concern with introspective knowledge of our experience no less intense than Moore's. Lessons from Moore are lessons for this enterprise more generally. Moreover, Moore's theories raise questions both about how to understand experience as being intentional and what it might be for experience to be subjective or objective in character.

In the first section of the paper, I lay out a little more the context and argument of 'Some Judgments of Perception', how it first leads up to Moore's dilemma. The second section raises three interpretative puzzles about the way Moore introduces the dilemma. The most common readings of that dilemma to be found in the small literature on Moore and sense-data, that Moore is inclined towards endorsing some form of the theory of appearing, is tackled in the third section. In the fourth, I explore the extent to which Moore can be understood as offering a form of intentionalism about perception. Although there is some merit in this reading and it avoids some of the problems associated with the theory of appearing, I argue in the fifth section that we do better to place this discussion in a wider context of Moore's commitments concerning on the one hand the nature of sensory awareness, and on the other the nature of universals and predication. This offers an understanding of the paper which avoids the problems of the standard reading and also makes sense in part of his later rejection of the position. I explain in the sixth section why this ultimately tells against treating Moore as offering a form of the intentional theory, and in the concluding section I draw connections between Moore's discussion and some more recent debates about the objectivity of sense experience.

1. Moore's focal concerns in 'Some Judgments of Perception' are on what are now often called perceptual demonstrative judgements, or thoughts. He begins with some examples of sentences which can be used to express such judgements, 'That is an inkstand', 'That is a tablecloth', 'This is a finger', 'This is a coin'. But the lexical form does not on its own indicate the kind of judgement had in mind. As Moore makes clear, we should narrow our concern to those judgements that are judgements about what one currently sees or feels, and 'based upon' something which one perceives about the object in question (6). But he notes that these conditions alone will not single out narrowly the class of judgements on which he intends to focus.

Clearly demonstrative expressions such as 'this' and 'that' used either on their own or as part of a complex phrase, 'this overbearing supreme court justice', 'that ski slope', have both a deictic and an anaphoric use, as do most pronouns and indexical expressions. Why is Moore unsatisfied with the restriction to uses prompted and based upon what one currently sees? He doesn't offer any further elaboration, but one possible thought is that one's judgement may be prompted by what one sees, but nonetheless not be solely grounded in one's perceptual experience. For example, Moore himself takes judgements such as 'that clock has stopped' to be more complex than a judgement of perception. That is, he accepts that one makes the judgement because it has been prompted by perception, but thinks we should understand it as a complex judgement which contains a judgement of perception as a proper part, namely that which we might express with the sentence, 'that is a clock'.

In fact all of Moore's examples of judgements of perception are identification judgements: containing a bare demonstrative, the copula and then an indefinite noun phrase;

‘that is a clock’, ‘that is an inkstand’, ‘this is a finger’ and so on.⁷ In taking such examples as instances of judgements of perception, Moore is already putting himself at odds with Russell’s discussion of these matters: in *The Problems of Philosophy*, Russell uses the label of ‘judgement of perception’ for judgements which are strictly about sense-data: ‘there is such a such a patch of red’ for a simple such judgement or ‘that patch of red is round’ and ‘this is to the right of that’ all made about the current sense-datum or sense-data seen, and the sensible qualities or relations among them apprehended (p. 114).

One element of this implicit disagreement between them is Moore’s attraction to a kind of common sense realism. This stance is further elaborated in ‘A Defence of Common sense’ and ‘Proof of an External World’, and somewhat later in the paper ‘Certainty’ ((Moore, 1939), (Moore, 1959)). He is at pains to point out that it is natural to suppose such judgements as he is concerned with involve a commitment to realism, the existence of ordinary objects in a world independent of us. This realism is to be contrasted with the idea that the world might be no more than the permanent possibility of sensations. And it leads Moore to draw a contrast between what our ordinary commitments are, and what the correct philosophical analysis of them should be. While common sense commitment to ordinary objects should remain a fixed point across philosophical theories, theories may nonetheless disagree about what the correct logical analysis of these judgements may amount to.

Moore carefully distinguishes between seeing an object and being in a position to make one of these identificatory judgements about it: one may see too little of an object to be in a position to single it out, he suggests. At the same time, Moore is certain that when it comes to opaque, medium-sized, visible objects such as inkstands, coins or hands, one can be said strictly speaking to see at best only the facing surface of the object and not the object itself. Given this, Moore takes there to be a certain indirection in judgements of perception, such that, although their topic is some suitable environmental object, one makes a judgement about the environmental object through singling out something distinct from it: there is a *this* or a *that* to which the object in question is related such that we should understand the form of these identificatory judgements along these lines:

(1) This is an inkstand

(1A) $\exists x \forall y [[R(\textit{this}, y) \leftrightarrow y = x] \wedge x \text{ is an inkstand}]$

The *this* in question will be what Moore defined as a ‘sense-datum’, whatever it is that is given in one’s current sensory awareness, and which one has singled out in making the identificatory judgement. Variously this will be what one strictly speaking sees, or the ultimate object of sight, or the ultimate object of judgement. For Moore, the fundamental question about such judgements of perception, the question of their philosophical analysis, turns on specifying what the relevant relation *R* is, and concurrent with that determining the nature of the *this* or *that* which is to be *R*-related to the ordinary object of perception: in the case of vision, is it a part of the surface of the object, or is it something wholly distinct from the object, but somehow perceptually standing in for it?⁸ This provides context in which Moore first goes on to discuss the argument from illusion and then introduce his new alternative to it.

Moore offers no explicit argument or rationale for the claim that we see hands only by seeing their surfaces. And Moore’s contention here has led to some debate. Perhaps the deepest

⁷ We might be tempted to extend the class to include such examples as, ‘That is John’, ‘This must be the book John was talking about’, involving proper names or definite descriptions.

⁸ Note that Moore’s discussion makes clear that the identified topic of the judgement is uniquely related to the ultimate object of perception, as this logical form indicates. If one adopts with Frank Jackson a recursive definition of what it is not to be the indirect object of perception, then there will be no guarantee of uniqueness here (suppose TSA correct, both the surface of the hand and the hand itself might count as *R*-related to the sense-datum). That suggests Moore would need to consider a sequence of relations $R_1, R_2 \dots R_n$ in which indirect objects of perception are related to the ultimate object, rather than their ancestral *R*.

and most intriguing commentary on this is Thompson Clarke's 'Seeing Surfaces and Physical Objects'.⁹ But because our concern is with the argument from illusion, and so mainly with aspects of predication, I'll refrain from any comment on this first move in Moore's paper; although it involves many interesting features, they can for the most part be set aside for the interpretative concerns we have here. It is interesting to note, though, that the kinds of identificatory judgements that Moore singles out do seem to combine the introduction of some environmental object with a certain indirection. This is highlighted (without reference to Moore) in a recent paper by Friederike Moltmann who notes the singular status of the bare demonstrative in such judgements. It is perfectly proper to say, 'That's John', on hearing the front door open, or 'This is a beautiful woman', pointing to the cover of this week's *Elle*. In contrast one cannot say, 'Mary is going to the opera with that', pointing to John (rather than 'Mary is going to the opera with that man') or 'Esther used to live with this' (rather than, 'Esther used to live with this woman').¹⁰ Moltmann suggests that we should understand the bare demonstrative as singling out a trope, where the identified person or perceptual object is intimately related to that demonstratum. Even if one does not accept Moore's general approach to perception, then, there may be something about the judgements he happened upon which invites us to think of them as involving indirection.

If we leave these questions aside, Moore offers us the following framework for his debate: in all cases of visual or tactual awareness, there is some object which is strictly seen or felt and is the *ultimate object* of judgement. In the case of vision this object is never to be identified with an opaque, three-dimensional solid, but only ever at best a proper part of such an object: its facing surface. So it is to be taken as certain that judgements of perception concern ordinary environmental objects, but that this topic of concern is introduced somewhat indirectly or through deference via the ultimate object of judgement. A full discussion of the nature of such judgements therefore needs to settle what the ultimate objects are, and together with that what the relation *R* might be that ultimate objects stand in to those things that we are certain the judgements concern, such as inkstands, fingers or trees.

Moore starts out with the presumption that the ultimate object of judgements of perception is a part of the surface of the inkstand or tree, and hence that the relevant relation *R* should be thought of as a part-whole relation (though Moore does not think that any part-whole relation will lead to the transmission of judgement – recall that Moore takes some seeings of parts to involve parts too small for those seeings to count as seeing the whole; the availability of the judgement of perception and our counting as seeing the object go hand in hand for him). But at this point Moore introduces a form of the argument from illusion as the most serious consideration against this presumption.

Moore is clearly at some pains to state this argument as explicitly and carefully as he can. Again we have here a contrast with the cavalier way in which Russell first formulates matters in *The Problems of Philosophy*. That said, as careful as Moore intends to be, the argument is less perspicuous than one might hope. Moore is focused on the questions when can we identify things in perception which have been perceived on different occasions, and when can we tell them apart. As he puts it, he is concerned with perceptible difference. So he notes that commonly we do keep track of objects and judge that one thing is identical with that which has been perceived before. Moreover such an identification is consistent with acknowledging change in the object – his examples concern a child's balloon altering in size as it is blown up, and a rubber doll changing in shape as it is stretched between one's fingers. But this is to build up to a case in which he wishes to suggest that we can judge of perceptible difference even though we have perceived no change in an object.

⁹ In addition to the (Thompson Clarke, 1965) see (R. Chisholm, 1959) p. 156, where he discusses Moore's first introduction of this idea in *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*.

¹⁰ (Friederike Moltmann, 2013).

Moore offers familiar examples of conflicting appearances: one sees a tree in the near distance and then views the tree again much further off; one sees a coin face on, and then looks again at an oblique angle to it; one views the surface a wall without and then with blue-tinted spectacles; I now feel a coin through touch and without looking, whereas earlier I looked and did not touch. And Moore takes the following to be true, or seemingly to be true:

It seems, therefore, to be absolutely impossible that the surface seen at the later time should be identical with the object presented then, and the surface seen at the earlier identical with the object presented then, for the simple reason that, whereas with regard to the later seen surface I am not prepared to judge that it is in any way perceptibly different from that seen earlier, it seems that with regard to the later sense-datum I cannot fail to judge that it is perceptibly different from the earlier one: the fact that they are perceptibly different simply stares me in the face. (22)

The form of argument here is somewhat complicated to unpack because Moore's discussion moves back and forth between questions of numerical identity and questions of qualitative difference. In the circumstance, the subject is supposed to know, though not, or not solely, on the basis of perception, that the facing surface tree at time t_1 is identical with the facing surface of the tree at time t_0 . Two things which are identical are not different from each other. But, of course, in a circumstance of change, the surface as it is at t_1 might differ from the surface at t_0 without failing to be identical, just through having changed: being qualitatively different over time without being numerically different. In the circumstances with which are concerned, though, we have both identity of the surfaces, and knowledge that there has been no change in them. Nonetheless Moore emphasises that with respect to the sense-data seen at t_0 and t_1 the fact of variation stares one in the face. Here the relevant perceived difference is not, initially at least, one of non-identity, but difference in quality.

Moreover, the terms that Moore uses might mislead one into thinking that the subject's concern is solely with the question whether there are differences, without necessarily focusing on the specific differences. Compare this to the kind of competition once popular in certain newspapers, 'Spot the Difference'. Starting out on this nugatory exercise confronting two very similar photographs, one might notice that there is something different about the left image with respect to the right, but as yet have no sense of what that difference is. This would be a case of perceiving difference, but nothing more than difference. Given the context of his discussion, it should be clear that Moore does not have this merely general knowledge in mind. Taking the lead from his use of the adverb 'perceptibly', we might rather focus on the question what one can know on the basis of vision in this situation. We might then represent Moore's claim as that there is some way the later presentation is of which one knows that it differs from the earlier presentation in that respect. Using ' e ' as a term for the object present at t_0 and ' l ' the term for the object present at t_1 , Moore's claim is that in respect of some quality or other, one knows that e has it, and l lacks it; or *vice versa*; and we might symbolize it so:

$$(2) \exists F \exists G [K [F(e) \wedge \neg F(l)] \vee K[\neg G(e) \wedge G(l)]]$$

That gets us the starting point of Moore's argument, but it still doesn't help us get to his intended conclusion. At this stage of the argument, Moore is attempting to offer a compelling argument for TSD's commitment that we are always aware of non-physical sense-data, and hence that *neither* sense-datum is identical with the surface of the tree. But it is really unclear how he can get there just on the basis of (2). One route might go as follows. *Ex hypothesi* the surface has not changed between t_0 and t_1 , so consider the supposition that the surface is identical with e . Either the surface is F at t_0 in which case, since it has not changed, it is also F at t_1 , and so we conclude that the surface is not identical with l ; or the surface is not G at t_0 , but then, since it has not changed, it is also not G at t_1 and hence, again, given our supposition, is not identical with l . Now run the reverse supposition that the surface is identical with l , by parallel reasoning we get the conditional conclusion that it is not identical with e . Discharging our assumptions, gets us to the conclusion that the surface is either not identical with e or it is not identical with l . So, for at least one of the presentations, the 'ultimate object of perception' is not identical with the surface. This gets us the ontologically inflationary conclusion that there must be non-physical

objects of awareness in addition to the surfaces of objects, but it doesn't get us the negative conclusion that in our example the surface of an object is *never* the object of awareness. To get to the stronger conclusion, Moore requires the non-identity for both occasions.¹¹ And he doesn't make explicit any reasons to make that further move.¹²

Nevertheless, even if one cannot reconstruct the argument validly to get to the conclusion that one never directly or strictly sees the surface of any opaque object – that surfaces are never the ultimate objects of sight – that is the conclusion that Moore takes the argument to set out to show. And in the remainder of his discussion in this paper, and in his later discussions, the assumption is made that TSD would be the correct position to endorse but for the assumption that he now questions. This does not flow from the *aporia* that we have just indicated, but rather engages with questions about the move from 'seems' to 'is', and it is this which first offers the dilemma.

So we have now surveyed the context in 'Some Judgments' in which Moore first introduces MRTA and the dilemma. Having set up TSD, and offered an argument in its favour he suggests the argument rests on an assumption which can be rejected and an alternative theory offered in its place. Although many commentators have taken it to be obvious what assumption is in play and what alternative is on offer, as we'll see below, this turns out to be more elusive than one might have supposed.

2. Moore's discussion of perceptual identification judgements, and his survey of the argument from illusion have set the context in which he presents the dilemma which forms the centrepiece of his presidential address. Having presented the argument for TSD in as strong a form as he can (and leaving our worries to one side), Moore confesses that while he finds this an argument with 'considerable force', it is nonetheless not conclusive. According to Moore, the argument rests on an assumption which, however plausible, can be challenged, and once challenged, an alternative option opens up:

...it rests on an assumption, which, though it seems to me to have great force, does not seem to me to be quite certain. The assumption I mean is the assumption that, in such cases as those I have spoken of, the later presented object really is perceptibly different from the earlier. This assumption has, if I am not mistaken, seemed to many philosophers to be unquestionable; and I own that it used to be so with me... What now seems to me to be possible is that the sense-datum which corresponds to a tree, which I am seeing, when I am mile off, may not really be perceived to *be* smaller than the one, which corresponds to the same tree, when I see it from a distance of only a hundred yards, but that it is only perceived to *seem* smaller; that the sense-datum which corresponded to the penny, when I was straight in front of it, but is only perceived to *seem* different – that all that is perceived is that the one *seems* elliptical and the other circular... the kind of experience which I have expressed by saying one *seems* different from the other... involves an ultimate, not further analysable, kind of psychological relation, not to be identified either with

¹¹ Sticking closer to the terms in the text, one might rather try to reconstruct the argument in terms of reasoning about pairs: on the one hand we have the pair of the sense-data, [e , l], and on the other the pair of the surface of the tree at t_0 and the surface of the tree at t_1 , [s_0 , s_1]. The former pair exhibits difference, the latter pair does not – 'difference' can be interpreted either in terms of the pair instantiating the relation of non-identity or in terms of variation in quality between the pair. So there is a property which the former pair exhibits lacked by the second. Hence the pairs are non-identical. But again, this won't get us further than the non-identity of the surface with one of e and l , for it is surely sufficient for pairs to be non-identical that one member of a pair be non-identical with some member of the other.

¹² A familiar move made by those tempted by TSD is to appeal to an indistinguishability thesis at this point, particularly in the context of a spectrum argument. (See, for example, (AJ Ayer, 1940), (J. Foster, 1986) and (Robinson, 1994)); a similar such argument, though not for sense-data is surprisingly to be found in (Mark Johnston, 2006).) Typically proponents of such arguments do not take them to be demonstrative – they are intended, at best, to offer a plausibility ground for the general conclusion. This clearly would not suit Moore's purpose at this stage, since he is concerned to show that modulo the assumption disputed by MRTA, TSD would be the philosophical theory of which we could be certain.

that involved in being “perceived” to be so and so, or with that involved in being “judged” to be so and so; since a presented object might in this sense *seem* to be elliptical, *seem* to be blue etc., when it is neither perceived to be so, nor judged to be so. (23-24 in PAS)

I think one’s first impression on reading this passage is that it is fairly clear what Moore is concerned with: the gap between things *seeming* a certain way, and their *being* that way. The problem with the traditional sense-datum theory is just that it thinks that it can close that gap. If we question that assumption, then we end up with a view on which we recognize visual experience as a matter of pure seeming. And commentators have typically understood Moore in just this way, ascribing to him a provisional rejection of the sense-datum theory together with an endorsement of some alternative which emphasises appearances over private objects.

But Moore is no clearer here than in his initial discussion of the argument from illusion, despite his best intentions. There are a number of problems. First, the assumption Moore ascribes to TSD does indeed seem to be the principal premiss of the argument he has been discussing over the few pages before. To that extent, at least, he does not change the subject. But precisely because it is the key premiss of the argument, it should leave us puzzled what position we are in once the assumption is questioned. For TSD used just this description of the situation to fix for us the particular case we are to be considering. If the assumption is false, then having rejected the TSD description of the case, we have as yet offered nothing in its place which provides common ground among the parties.

This issue ought to be particularly pressing for Moore, given that his conclusion is supposed to be that we have to remain strictly undecided between TSD and MRTA, both of which remain possibly correct as accounts of sense experience. What characterization can we offer of our evidential position in being undecided between the two? The disjunction of the assumption and its negation will simply give us a tautology, and so fail to indicate anything specific about the situation one is in when regarding the tree, and then, along with Moore, taking five steps back.

The most obvious way to address this concern is to appeal to something we can do in any situation in which our perceptually prompted judgements are challenged. If, looking across the lawn I surmise, ‘That is a redwood, and you question the propriety of my opinion, for example by questioning whether there are any redwood in this part of California, I can retreat to the judgement, ‘Well, it looks like a redwood’. And, more generally, we can offer a judgement about how things seem, or appear, or that things are just as if, and then go on to give the description we were originally inclined to offer. Whatever the correct analysis of judgements of seeming or appearing turns out to be, pragmatically they weaken one’s conversational commitments to truth of a perceptually based description and even one’s commitment to the existence of what otherwise one would be talking about. Moreover, such judgements seem expressive of aspects of our sensory or perceptual reaction to the world. And, at the limit, may be taken as no more than a report of such a sensory state. And typically philosophical discussions of sense perception liberally use such sentences as ‘It seems/appears/looks to Moore as if...’ as reports of a perceptual state.

Typically such revision and withdrawal occurs in relation to discussion of some environmental feature and one’s perception of that. But we might extend the manoeuvre so as to employ it in debate with the sense-datum theorist, and the description they wish to give of the situation. After all, the proponent of TSD supposes that his audience finds intelligible the description of the course of experience in which one first stands close to the tree trunk, and then carefully stepping backwards from it, considers how the tree is now. The least committal description here presumably would be in terms of how things seem or look at the earlier time, and how they seem or look at the later time. So the description in terms of looking or seeming we might then take as a neutral description of the situation which both the proponent of TSD and his sceptical audience can agree on as fixing the subject matter of their disagreement. If we

agree with Moore at the end that we are rationally unable to decide between theories, then we can stick with this subjective description of the situation.¹³

Describing matters in this way does not directly conflict with Moore's own explicit description of the situation. That we can retreat to a judgement about how things seem when our description of the world is challenged does not by itself show that we were relying on a judgement about how things seem all along. Just as a sceptical challenge about your current perceptual judgements is not enough to show that all such judgements rest on judgements about one's own perceptual experience, so too conceding the possibility that one can challenge the sense-datum theorist's description of the situation, does not commit one to supposing that the sense-datum theorist always argues first from a claim about the nature of sense experience.

But if we make explicit the dialectical position in this way, namely by retreating to a position in which we describe the situation just in terms of how things seem, then we face another interpretative puzzle. For now the description of the situation which is, strictly speaking, neutral between the sense-datum theorist and his opponent actually sounds a lot like the view that Moore ascribes to the opponent. For, in characterizing the common ground with the opposition, the sense-datum theorist points out that we agree that it seems as if the tree is smaller, or that the coin is elliptical. But this just sounds like the terms in which Moore goes on to characterize the opposing view, as opposed to what both sides can agree on.

So, what then is Moore's dilemma? Understood one way, it simply takes us back to the question whether the traditional sense-datum view is correct. Suppose we grant for some case that the sense-datum theorist's description of how things seem in that situation is correct. What, then, follows from this? The choice we face is that of either endorsing TSD, or refusing to. But that is not the only way of understanding Moore here, nor yet the most natural way of taking what he says after this and beyond. The alternative to the sense-datum theory does seem, in Moore's hands, itself to be some kind of theory, and not merely the philosophical Bartleby, refusing to join in the affirmations of the under-cautious sense-datum enthusiast. In that case we face the interpretative task of explaining what is added in Moore's discussion of seeming beyond the merely neutral starting point, and then raising the question what would warrant Moore in smuggling in the extra material in the first place.

3. In effect, Thomas Baldwin's account of the evolution of Moore's approach to perception treats Moore's dilemma as involving the first of these options: as sticking with the subjective judgement. He suggests that in allowing sense-data just to seem smaller or elliptical without being so, Moore is articulating a view of perception to be found in Dawes Hicks and others, 'the theory of appearing'. And Chisholm in his influential paper 'The Theory of Appearing' glosses the key move involved here as follows:

One fundamental question, then, concerns the inference from statements such as A [There exists something which appears diamond-shaped], in the language of appearing, to statements such as S [There exists something which *is* diamond-shaped], in the sense-datum language. We may call this the *sense-datum inference*. And we may say that the *sense-datum theory* is the view which countenances this inference, whereas the *theory of appearing* is the view which does not. (Chisholm, p. 173 in Swartz)

¹³ To be fair, one might well wish to reject even the description in terms of how things seem or look. After all, Moore seems insensitive to the facts of size and shape constancy in vision. As Reid (Thomas Reid, 1997 (1785)) had already complained in relation to Hume (D. Hume, 1975), it is just not true that as you step back from the tree it seems to get smaller. One has the visual sense (and not just the background knowledge) that there is no alteration in size. While there is something about the visual experience which answers to the description seeming small, or seeming elliptical, there is equally an aspect which reflects the constancy. This indicates, yet again, how for all Moore's care, he barely advances the cause of offering a rigorous statement of the argument from illusion.

There are two notable difficulties with this interpretation of Moore's discussion. The first concerns Moore's attitude to the objects of sensory awareness. Once we introduce the language of seeming or appearing, then we can talk about our sense experience without committing to anything being small or being elliptical. But likewise, it appears, we can avoid commitment even to the existence of something which appears small or elliptical. There is no reason why the bracketing device of indicating this was how things struck me perceptually should not go ahead of any of the statements one uses to characterize the situation, and just as one has avoided the need for the statements to be strictly true, so too one can avoid the commitment to the existence of those entities needed to make them true. As Chisholm summarizes the theory of appearing, it seeks to avoid the ontological inflation of objects of awareness. Yet Moore steadfastly insists that for all acts of sensory awareness, there must actually be some object of which one is aware. So if Moore in 1918 is recognizing the force of Dawes Hicks's position, then he is only dimly aware of its potential consequences. Note that this problematic aspect of his position is recognized by most commentators who see Moore as taking this path; clearly they do not see this as decisive ground against the interpretation.

The second concern connects with Moore's eventual repudiation of this option in 'Visual Sense-data'. Moore's point at that stage revolves round after-images, and other sensible objects which, he assumes, must be the way that they appear. This, he suggests, shows that MRTA as he introduced it in 'Some Judgments' is unworkable. Baldwin and Snowdon both think that Moore simply begs the question against his imagined opponent at this point. But that is to miss what is really puzzling in Moore's position. The fact that things seem a certain way is typically not inconsistent with them being so. The mistake in the sense-datum inference is to suppose that things must always be the way that they appear. Why should it be a problem for the rejection of this inference if sometimes the way things are is just the way that they appear?

Taking Moore to endorse the theory of appearing, at least as that is later understood by Chisholm and some recent writers, doesn't make enough sense of Moore's position. It doesn't explain how he can recognize the epistemic limits of our knowledge of seeming and yet insist that there always is an object of awareness; and it doesn't explain why he comes to think that supposing some objects must just be as they appear is inconsistent with the theory in the first place. Of course, Moore's thoughts some thirty five years later may have been confused, so seeking consistency across the two papers may not be a requirement of an adequate interpretation. Nonetheless, this puzzle does offer some evidence that Moore finds more content in the alternative approach than Chisholm's gloss on the theory of appearing provides. How then might we interpret it, and how might that help with the puzzle?

4. Before offering an account which meets these desiderata, I want first to turn to the second interpretative strategy: making sense of MRTA as offering a positive account of the perceptual situation in terms of seeming. What could such an account amount to? One potentially attractive option here is to see Moore as offering an intentional theory of sense experience, one that treats our sensory states as possessing a representational content. Take our neutral description of the visual experience, say of the back of Moore's hand. Moore might report this as 'it seems to me as if there is a pinkish expanse with five segments extended from it'. According to TSD, this report is made true by the existence of an object which actually is pinkish, and it is this object's being pinkish which determines the correctness of Moore's subjective report. By contrast, an intentional theory of sense experience, one which supposes that the experience possesses a representational content, will insist that the subjective report is made true by the representational properties of the sense experience: it is the hand's being represented by the experience to be pinkish, or one's experientially taking the hand to be pinkish which make it correct for Moore to report his experience in the way he does. And in that case, the experience possessing such a content does not entail that the hand, or anything else, actually is pinkish.

Now one line of thought which recommends this interpretative strategy rests entirely on general considerations. Given the kind of first-personal enquiry Moore is engaged in in ‘Some Judgments’ and at the end of ‘A Defence of Common Sense’, it is reasonable to interpret his concerns as being about the nature of sense experience and TSD and MRTA as presenting contrasting accounts of this. Recent discussions of the grounds for endorsing intentional or representational theories of perception have suggested that once we recognize the possibility that things can appear ways that they are not, we thereby have to recognize the role of intentional content in sense experience. Moore’s challenge to TSD is naturally read, on this line of thought, as just his recognition of the intentionality of visual awareness.¹⁴

Consider Moore’s inspecting his hand in the context of a suitable visual illusion. Perhaps the lighting has been altered or Moore has been drugged, and now that he stares intently at the back of his hand, it seems to him as if there is a somewhat greenish expanse before him, even though his hand has not altered in colour at all. On the sense-datum interpretation of this situation, there is actually something green which Moore is aware of, and since the surface of his hand is not green, we can conclude that the ultimate object of awareness is something other than the surface, albeit something in virtue of which he counts as seeing the hand. If we reject TSD, and suppose that the object merely seems green without being green (as in Moore’s initial characterization of MRTA), how else might we describe the situation? Well Moore is presented with the sensible quality greenness, so the colour green is ‘before his mind’. But since nothing is green in the situation, neither his hand nor any putative non-physical sense-datum, this must also be a case of the absence of green. How can we make sense of the seemingly contradictory state of affairs: of green as both ‘present’ and ‘absent’? A long line of thought takes this combination not to be a contradiction but simply the mark of the intentional. To think of the experience, with respect to greenness, as an instance of presence in absence, is to think of experience as an intentional phenomenon. The experience simply exemplifies the formal conditions of intentionality: the mind is directed on some suitable intentional object, some specific shade of green, without there being any actual material object which coincides with this. Our recognition that experience can present qualities without these being instantiated by any object of awareness is a recognition that sense experience is thereby intentional in nature.

If we leave these general considerations about appearance and reality, presence and absence, to one side, there is still further evidence in favour of this line of interpretation. For Moore’s own texts offer support for an intentionalist interpretation. The further things Moore says about MRTA in ‘Some Judgments’ are strongly reminiscent of his earlier discussion of belief and judgement in *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*. There Moore rejects the idea that belief or judgement is directed on a distinctive kind of entity, propositions. And Russell, in joining Moore in this negative verdict sought to provide a contextual elimination of propositions as entities, and instead to treat the relation of judging as a ‘multi-grade’ relation which relates the subject who makes the judgement with a variable number of other entities which together comprise the terms of the judgement together with an ordering. On this view, to judge that this hand is green is to stand in the judging relation to: i.) this hand; and ii.) the property of being green. The distinctive unity that propositions manifest which contrasts with mere lists is here explained in terms of distinctive relation of judging which binds terms together in a manner that can correspond to facts.

Now the passage makes clear that Moore rejects any reduction of seeing, or any other sensory state, to judging. He offers the familiar observation that one may distrust one’s senses, and so see things a certain way but not judge them to be that way. But that does not rule out interpreting Moore here as exploiting an analogy with what the judging relation does. Just as the act of judging should be thought of as bringing together terms so that subjects may judge the world to be now this way and now that, so too seeming may be thought to bring together terms, so that sensory episodes can present to the subject ways the world may be judged to be.

¹⁴ See, for example, (Susanna Siegel, 2010) and (Byrne, 2009).

We might, then, think of each visual experience as determined by a suitable sensory proposition which exhibits the object of sensory awareness and predicates of it the sensible qualities it seems to have. Moore eliminates the proposition as an entity in favour of the multi-grade relation of seeming between perceiver and terms, but this complex will occupy perfectly the functional role of propositions and propositional attitudes. Hence, the account of seeming would appear to do no other than treat sensory experience as a kind of propositional attitude. To the extent that we think of propositional attitudes such as belief, or mental acts such as judgement, as paradigms of intentionality, then that will reinforce the impression that Moore is offering here an equivalent intentional or representational gloss on acts of sensory awareness.

Note that it in no way undermines this interpretation to point out that Moore remains committed to the actual existence of objects of awareness. It is true that the majority of writers who seek to establish the intentionality of sensory experience do so in order to finesse away the need for the actual or material existence of objects of awareness: Anscombe, for example, talks of the intentionality of sensation in order to contrast 'intentional objects' of sensation, which are not a kind of entity according to her, with material objects of sensation.¹⁵ It is one thing to exploit aspects of intentionality in seeking to explain away apparent commitment to entities, and another to make a criterion of intentionality the avoidance of any such commitment. Russell's and Moore's conception of propositions and then judgements make such entities and such acts dependent on the terms of the proposition in question: if some entity really is the subject of one's judgement (and not merely the witness to the truth of some quantified proposition), then one can judge in that manner only given the existence of that entity. By parity, even if Moore insists that the content of perceptual states is available only given the existence of the object of awareness, that still leaves open the thought that these states should be thought of as representing the objects to be some way, given that the tree's seeming small is consistent with it either being small or not.

So there is quite a compelling case to be made for attributing to Moore a nascent form of the intentional theory of perception, when he offers MRTA as one half of his dilemma. And this better fits what he has to say than assimilating him too closely to Dawes Hicks, or what Chisholm and others go on to make of the theory of appearing, since it is entirely consistent with his commitment (however puzzling we may find it) to the actual existence of objects of awareness. Be that as it may, the intentional gloss on Moore fares no better than the theory of appearing interpretation in making sense of Moore's final rejection of MRTA. Why should the assumption that after-images exist and really are coloured or shaped pose a fatal problem for MRTA?

On an intentional construal of sense experience, we take our visual states to represent the objects of awareness to be some way. In Moore's version of this, this is for us to stand in the relation of seeming both to the object of awareness, in this case an after-image, and some sensible quality, bluish-white or circularity. The intentionalist insists that one's experience can present an entity as being blue or circular without it having to be the case that the object is either blue or circular. Now clearly the existence of round, blue after-images would be quite consistent with this constraint. That experience admits of the possibility that objects be presented as ways they are not is not equivalent to saying that no experience can present things as they are. Why shouldn't our after-image experiences be guaranteed always to be veridical?¹⁶

So neither the interpretation of Moore which emphasizes appearances without ontological extravagance nor that interpretation which sees him recognizing the appeal of the intentionality of sensation can really make sense of why Moore's obsession with after-images leads him back to the traditional sense-datum account. This might be taken just to show that despite their striving for clarity, early twentieth century theories of perception and knowledge

¹⁵ (G.E.M. Anscombe, 1965).

¹⁶ Note that in stressing just this point, in one of his discussions of intentionalism, Byrne argues that we should think of sense-datum theories as consistent with intentional accounts, see (Alex Byrne, 2001).

are much less coherent than we might wish. Such a conclusion is too pessimistic, though. Once we leave aside our current preoccupations with the nature of perception, we can make better sense of the movement in Moore's thought. While Moore isn't very explicit in 'Visual Sense-data', I think we can reconstruct the line of reasoning which rules out MRTA. Once we do so, however, we'll see that the way Moore construes seeming is inconsistent with the way of thinking of experience common among many proponents of intentionalism.

5. The key issue for Moore, I suggest, concerns our sensory knowledge of after-images. That is, the key shift in his opinions in last writings is that in 'Visual Sense-data' he accepts not only that after-images have certain sensible qualities, but that we are aware of the sensible qualities of after-images through the sense experiences we have of them.

To see the significance of this concession, we need to look at the original motivation for MRTA in a different light. We have to start back well before 'Some Judgments', with one of the fundamental threads that runs through Moore's discussions of sensory awareness, at least from 'Refutation of Idealism' in 1903, (Moore, 1903). Moore insists that sensory awareness is a mode of knowledge, and that knowledge must always be a relation to something entirely independent of that knowledge, and hence that idealism is false. In effect, for Moore, the refutation consists in drawing his opponent's attention to the example of sensory awareness, and then drawing from that example the general morals he wishes us to learn: that sensing adds nothing to its objects, and that its objects exist and have the qualities they do independently of that sensing.

Note that Moore is well aware that it is more common to think of acts of sensation as being subjective, and as having a content which is internal to the act of awareness, and so internal to the mind. But he rejects that view of experience as mistaken, and continues to insist that we need to think of sensory awareness as a form of knowledge. (Critics, in turn, complain that since sensation so obviously is subjective, it is a mistake to assimilate sensory awareness to knowledge – this is what HA Prichard called 'the sense-datum fallacy' (Prichard, 1938).) So even if the argument from illusion succeeds in showing that we are never aware of environmental objects such as the surfaces of trees or hands, it does not lead us to the point of positing mental objects, or entities which exist within our minds or experiences. For Moore and Russell (prior to his flirtation with neutral monism), sense-data are non-environmental, and non-physical, but *not* mental.

This is not to say that Moore or Russell deny that sense-data are private to each perceiver: they are happy to accept that whichever sense-data I come to be aware of when I step back from the tree, these are entirely disjoint from the sense-data that you enjoy. Nor is there any commitment to the persistence of these entities across occasions of sense experience. Moore does not believe that pains, for example, exist waiting for us to discover them, even though he would insist that in pain experience we are aware of a sense-datum which exists independently of that awareness. Both Moore and Russell concede that sense-data may be dependent for their existence and for their character on the operation of each subject's nervous system. This concession is nonetheless entirely consistent with the hypothesis that the entities exist independently of the act of sensing, even if their existence is maintained by a causal process which coincides with that awareness.¹⁷

¹⁷ Baldwin suggests that Moore is not unwavering in this commitment, since in the discussion of sense-data in *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* he concedes that the accepted view that sense-data are dependent and private is probably correct (see pp.40-43). But this, I think is not decisive. In that discussion, Moore is eager to emphasise that such dependence is not equivalent to being 'in the mind' or having the kind of status that our own thoughts or acts of awareness do. We might then think that the key change between 1910-11 and 1914 is the way in which Moore comes to characterize the dependence he does not wish to question: in 1914, he emphasizes that this need be no more than dependence on our nervous system, a way of putting things Russell adopts in 1912, but that this is not sufficient to show that there is any psychological dependence, i.e. that awareness itself has any object which is dependent on it.

In the context of this conception of experience, the traditional sense-datum theory brings with it a certain commitment concerning the information that sense experience provides us with. In having the visual experience of the sense-datum *R*-related to the surface of the tree, the subject is acquainted with the sense-datum and thereby knows it to be brown or small, or whichever sensible qualities characterize the visual experience in relation to this sense-datum. What one knows, in knowing 'This is brown' or 'This is small', is that the object in question is that way independently of one's current act of sensing. Of course, if we acknowledge the privacy of these objects, and concede that their existence is dependent on suitable activity of the nervous system, then the item of knowledge is limited in scope to the interval during which one has the awareness. We cannot assume that the datum in question is going to carry on existing with that same character beyond our momentary awareness. But that does not undermine the claim that the object of knowledge is utterly objective: what we know, given their utter independence of our awareness, is that either they remain so or there is some genuine change in the world.

Against this background consider the question how sense experience can really provide us with evidence of a world independent of it, and hence be properly objective. This concern is often associated with Hume and Kant, though the most developed discussion of these issues is to be found in PF Strawson and his students.¹⁸ Ironically, Strawson targets 'the earlier sense-datum theorists' (99), as people who think of sense experience as purely subjective in its import: presenting simple sensible qualities whose instantiation could be exhausted in the occurrence of experience itself.¹⁹ Were such sense experience really possible, Strawson hypothesises, then the judgements that such experience would warrant could concern no state of affairs beyond the occasion of the experience itself. Strawson's concern at this point is with the idea that unless experience can provide grounds for self-ascription of such experiences by the subject, then such experience cannot be conscious. Now, experience, according to Strawson, can ground such judgements only if it provides the materials for drawing the distinction between how things seem to the subject and how they are. In turn, for it to do that, experience needs an objective import which takes us beyond what is solely given in an experience by itself. The problem with the sense-datum theory as conceived by Strawson, then, is that its conception of experience fails to have any such objective import: the information that a subject can derive from the experience does not suffice to distinguish between the experience itself and the object of that experience. At various points, Strawson suggests that the problem can be addressed if we recognize that our experience presents objects as located in a space independent of us: we draw the contrast between objects of experience and experience by recognizing the possibility that an object may be present but unperceived because we are not in a suitable relation to it to have an experience. Evans supplements Strawson's various discussions with the idea that our conception of body and shape play a distinctive role in this understanding of how the objects of experience can exist independently of our awareness of them.

The view that Strawson associated with the earlier sense-datum theorists looks very much like the kind of subjectivism which Moore repeatedly criticises. Moore would agree with Strawson that subjective experience, were it to occur, could not issue in knowledge. But Moore does not explicitly address the kind of general concern that Strawson raises: how could sense experience, just in presenting us with objects and sensible qualities, provide us with information about a world which exists independently of that presentation? Indeed, where Strawson and Evans seem to assume that sense experience would be subjective in character were it to lack the

Likewise, while in recent discussion it is natural to associate the privacy of sense-data with their mind-dependence (for on the assumption that an object's existence is constituted by one's awareness of it is a straightforward explanation of why only one person could be aware of it), in much of the early twentieth century discussion, privacy is separated from and treated as a further matter on top of the question whether objects are mind-dependent.

¹⁸ See, particularly (PF Strawson, 1966), pp.89-112; but also (P. F. Strawson, 1959) Ch. 2. For further discussion of these concerns, see also (Gareth Evans, 1985) and (Quassim Cassam, 1997)

¹⁹ Strawson most likely has in mind Ayer as his target, compare his explicit discussion of Ayer and sense-datum language in (PF Strawson, 1979).

kind of spatial and causal content they insist on, Moore instead seems to suppose that our recognition that sensory awareness is knowledge is sufficient ground to establish the objectivity of sensory awareness.

Nonetheless, I suggest, Moore's introduction of MRTA involves some recognition of these issues, albeit put in rather different terms from those that Strawson and Evans use many years later. For, the best way to understand Moore at this point is to see him as acknowledging the force of the question whether we should simply assume that experience can provide us with information that goes beyond the experiential situation itself. And in his reconstruction of the argument from illusion, the assumption that we know the objects of awareness in themselves plays a key role. So this offers us a slightly different understanding of the dilemma posed in 'Some Judgments'.

The argument to show that the object of awareness cannot be the surface of the tree assumes that the sensible quality, e.g. the size of the sense-datum, conflicts with the objective size of the surface of the tree. This would be the correct assumption if our sense experience reveals to us the way things are in themselves, independently of how we experience them. But there is an alternative understanding: that our sense experience simply present objects united with sensible qualities relative to our sense experiences. So to propose that perception reveals only how an object *seems* and not how it *is* is to propose that sense experience only provides us with knowledge of objects relative to the occasion of our sense experience, and not independently of that.

In effect, Moore's version of MRTA provides for the same restriction on our knowledge of the world that would be a consequence of a pure subjectivist understanding of the contents of sensory consciousness, without thereby endorsing a subjectivist construal. In recent discussions of sense perception and the argument from illusion, the key lack of modesty is an ontological one: the sense-datum theorist seems to posit a whole new realm of objects for us to be related to in having experience. There is no evidence that Moore is ever worried by such profligacy. But there is another immodesty here: an epistemological one. TSD supposes that sensory acts themselves give us knowledge of how these sense-data are. MRTA claims instead that we only ever perceive how sense-data seem, and one cannot infer from this how they are. The key virtue of MRTA can then be seen as its being epistemologically more modest.²⁰

Clearly there is more to be said about this way of understanding MRTA, and the bearing it has on the proper interpretation of Moore's original dilemma. But our urgent purpose is to make sense of Moore's ultimate repudiation of MRTA in 'Visual Sense-data', and, more specifically, to make sense of why after-images should be thought such a problem for the view. Note from Strawson's perspective, after-images are not likely candidates for creating a problem about a view which limits the objective import of our sense experience, as MRTA does. After-image experience is often taken as a paradigm of subjective sense experience: if after-images really are entities, then they are entities which depend on our awareness of them. So much more of a reason, many critics of sense-datum theories suppose, to insist solely on the existence of after-image experiences, and not in addition the after-images as objects of sensory awareness in such experience. But in fact, TSD can acknowledge the privacy and lack of independence of after-images as long as this is understood in terms of their dependence on our nervous systems, and not that sensory awareness brings them into existence. On Moore's conception of such

²⁰ One should add one further rider on the points made here. The discussion here requires that we think of how acts of awareness relate to their objects as involving predication, or variations on predication: and hence as involving both particulars and universals. Moore himself emphasises this element in his disagreements with Stout over universals and tropes. Moore's position would not be available if one supposed that sense experience was of particularized qualities, or tropes, as Stout supposes, and Moore left open as a possibility in his earliest writings; or if experience contained just colours as universals, without these being predicated of anything, as Moore concedes the possibility of in some passages in *The Commonplace Book*.

experience, then, we are aware of how the after-image is in itself, that is bluish-white and vaguely circular, even if what we know about will cease to obtain when we no longer have the experience.

In denying that after-images are strictly speaking in the mind, TSD can affirm that our ordinary sensory awareness of such items provides us with knowledge of the ways that sense-data are. And, one might think, there is indeed some plausibility to this thought in just common sense terms, if one has already granted the thought that after-images exist, and not just that experiences of after-images happen. And this provides the ultimate stumbling block for MRTA: according to Moore it cannot acknowledge that we have an awareness of after-images which provides us with the knowledge that such images possess the sensible qualities that we ordinarily attribute to them.

That, at least, I suggest, is the best gloss we can offer on Moore's brief summary of the nonsensical position:

Until very recently I had thought that, though some of the arguments that purported to show that it cannot were strong, yet they were not conclusive, because I thought that, e.g. in the case where you directly see an 'after-image' with closed eyes, it was just possible that the after-image only looked to have certain colours and shape and size, and did not really have them... (Moore, 1957)

MRTA is not committed on any construal to deny that after-images have particular colours, or shape, or size. Moore's concern here is rather that the *only* grounds that we have for attributing some specific shade of bluish-white to a given after-image, or a squashed circular shape to it is that that is how the after-image appears to us. Yet, according to MRTA, appearing in itself only indicates how the object is relative to our sense experience, not how it is in itself.

This concern is not specifically one about reliability or certainty. When Moore embraces his dilemma, he is still prepared to insist that he is certain that he has a hand, or that he is standing up, even though he admits that he cannot give a philosophical account of how he comes to be certain of these matters. Neither TSD nor MRTA would explain Moore's knowledge of his handedness or his posture through direct experiential encounter. So Moore is never inclined to suppose that the only route to knowing about things in the world is through some form of direct awareness. It is no accident, then, that Moore chooses the example of after-images to press his concern in 'Visual Sense-Data'. For after-images are private entities, each of us encounters his or her own after-images. Hands, bodies, mountains and stars may all have a larger role within the world which we may come to track and so come to be certain of, even if we cannot directly encounter them in experience. Among the phenomenal ephemera of life, the only reason we have to credit after-images with specific colours or shapes are the visual experiences we have of them.

As Moore construes it, MRTA gives us no reason to suppose that the after-images really do have these sensible qualities. The experience itself is explained by the objects seeming to have certain sensible qualities. And seeming to be bluish-white is consistent with not being bluish-white. According to Moore, MRTA does not take the colour that the after-image actually is to play any role in explaining the visual experience one has of the after-image. And so it should be possible that after-images have entirely different sensible qualities from those they appear to have, or lack sensible qualities at all. Moore takes that to be absurd. Once we grant that after-images exist, it is implausible to ascribe to them any qualities other than the ones we experience them as having. And so some visual experience at least must provide us with knowledge of the way some things *are* and not just the way they *seem*.²¹

²¹ Note a certain ambiguity here. One might hold that sense experience acquaints us with sensible qualities. That sense experience might have such a distinctive role has been canvassed by Johnston (Johnston, 2006) and Pautz (Adam Pautz, 2010). Moore's MRTA could endorse this proposal, if the kind of acquaintance required did not involve the seeming predicative unity of the quality with some object. But the empiricist thought that sense experience is special in providing us with acquaintance has typically been expressed in

Note that, as Moore reports matters in ‘Visual Sense-data’, what he changes his mind about is the question whether we can live with the opinion that after-images merely seem bluish-white or round without us thereby having sensory awareness of them as actually being this colour or shape.²² There is no reason to suppose Moore is concerned in 1918 with how we justify going beyond subjective reports, as Chisholm’s gloss on the theory of appearing would suggest, nor yet that he has convinced himself in 1953, that he now can make that move. Despite the various narratives on offer from commentators, Moore does not shift fundamentally in his views about the nature of sense experience between 1918 and 1953. He simply revises his attitude towards the evidence on offer.²³

6. Seeing MRTA in this light not only explains the rationale for Moore’s final change of heart. It also puts us in a better position to evaluate the traditional interpretation that Moore here endorses a form of the theory of appearing, and the alternative suggestion we made above, that Moore here offers a kind of intentional theory of perception. Moreover, as I’ll argue below, the contrast that we need to draw between Moore’s dilemma, given this understanding of it, and how it has commonly been presented before underlines some morals for us more generally about the aims of philosophical theories of sense experience, and reliance on introspective reflection offered in support or against some account of perception.

Above I raised the puzzle of how we should characterize the epistemic position of the subject caught in Moore’s dilemma. If we stick simply with the observation that the subject is to question the assumption made by the traditional sense-datum theorist, we do not have any material to specify what is distinctive of being in the situation in which one confronts the bark of a tree from middle distance, or the back of one’s hand close up, or some suspicious patch of colour on the wall opposite. In discussing the theory of appearing, we suggested that Moore could retreat simply to the subjective report about his experience, ‘That this seems small’, or ‘It looks to me as if there is a bluish-white expanse’. And the idea that the debate about sense experience concerns moving beyond the report just of the mental state itself is part of how Chisholm initially characterizes the theory of appearing.

But in fact, in the end, this is not how Moore himself presents the dilemma. As we stressed above, the claims made by the sense-datum theorist are substantive claims, but so too are the claims made by MRTA. So the disjunction of these two claims is not a tautology. Moore takes the neutral position to be one in which one is presented with an object of awareness, and one is thereby aware of some sensible quality which relates in some manner or other to that object. In the course of his discussion, what he assumes is that there are exactly two ways in which the qualities can relate to this object. On the one hand, the object may simply instantiate the quality and in having the experience one thereby can come to know that the object is that way. On the other hand, sense experience may provide one with no knowledge of what is the case independently of this experience occurring, and in that situation one thereby can come to know that the object seems that way. Hence Moore’s slightly awkward phrasing when he talks of us perceiving the object to seem small.²⁴ So, against his background assumptions, Moore has managed to characterize the uncertainty one has in terms of a disjunctive claim concerning the

terms of the idea that we are acquainted with a quality in its being exemplified by sensible object of awareness, and it is this combination which MRTA as Moore conceives of it is ruling out.

²² One might, of course, question whether this plausibility really meets the standard of certainty that Moore is clearly so keen on in 1918 and 1924. It does not seem inconsistent to suppose that we know after-images only as they appear to us, and not as they are in themselves.

²³ In fact the various discussions of sensory awareness, sense-data and after images throughout *The Commonplace Book* (GE Moore, 1962) suggest at various points that Moore concedes for some objects that we can draw no distinction between how they seem and how they are. The earliest such example is in relation to sounds.

²⁴ An awkwardness noted in Alan White’s discussion of Moore’s views of perception, see (Alan R. White, 1969) p.173.

objects of awareness. The dilemma concerns quite how much knowledge one has of these objects. And in turn, Moore has no need to step back further and just consider the knowledge one has of one's psychological state. From Moore's perspective knowledge of how things seem is not the same as simply knowledge of what psychological state one is in.

We have already noted that from the perspective of the theory of appearing, Moore's failure to recognize that the commitment to an actually existing object of awareness is problematic. Now we can also see that the conception of what the subject ought to be in a position to know is different between the two approaches too. How then, does the intentionalist theory fare, as a gloss on Moore's MRTA?

In one way, there may be no determinate answer to this. Although it has been common in recent discussion to talk of *the* intentional theory of perception, or representationalism, or *the* content view, there is little consensus on what the essential commitments of an intentional approach to perception should amount to. Understood in at least one minimal way, the analogy we have already pointed to between the multiple relation theory of judgement and the multiple relation theory of sensing is sufficient to treat MRTA as an intentional theory of perception. Moore's multi-grade relations of judging and seeming occupy the functional role needed for treating psychological acts as relations to propositions, or proposition like entities. On such a view there is no more interesting condition which needs to be met for sense experience to count or fail to count as an example of an intentional state or even a propositional attitude.

Typically, however, writers have advertised the intentional theory of perception as providing a key advantage over sense-datum theories as being consistent with the thought that sense experience provides us with a direct or immediate contact with the perceived environment. And so one can ask whether Moore's MRTA meets this additional desideratum of an intentional account. Our reconstruction of Moore's objection to his own view involves the assumption that, given MRTA, being aware of the way an object seems is never tantamount to being aware of the way an object is. Even in situations where how an object is coincides with how the object seems, being aware of how it seems does not amount to being aware of how it is. Only given this assumption can Moore be justified in claiming that MRTA is inconsistent with our awareness of the after-image being bluish-white. And, in the interpretation we have offered this assumption is closely connected with the idea that even if sense experience relates one to an object independent of one's awareness, it cannot really provide one with knowledge of anything that goes beyond the experience itself.

This way of interpreting Moore's thought fits well with the account he offers of judgement. Moore insists that in matters of contingent fact, what one judges could have been false even if true, but one's act of judgement would have in that situation been the same. So Moore takes the plurality of terms one is related to in judgement to be distinct from the facts which make the judgement true, when the judgement is true. This commitment of Moore's has come under scrutiny and some criticism among 'identity' theorists of truth.²⁵ Its consequence in the case of perceptual experience takes Moore's account in a direction away from what many writers find attractive about the prospect of intentionalism.

The attractive case for intentionalism focuses on what we say about the illusory case: the sense-datum theorist supposes that there must be a suitable bearer of the sensible quality at hand. This demand leads to the ontological inflation, positing suitable non-environmental objects of sensory awareness. If instead we claim that the quality is before the mind without having to be instantiated, then we can avoid that inflation. Consistent with this, one may well insist that in the case of veridical perception, one is not only aware of the object of perception but also of the way that it is. That is to say, it is an attractive doctrine to suppose that one can both hold that an object can be represented to be some way that it is not, and that when it is represented to be some way it is, such representation can count as being aware of the object's

²⁵ See (Richard Cartwright, 1987), (Jennifer Hornsby, 1997) and also (J. McDowell, 1994).

being that way. One sees the patch and it looks green when it is not: green enters in the experience as represented, but nothing in fact need be green. One sees the patch when it is green: green enters the experience as represented, but also, in this case one thereby counts as being aware of the patch as being green. If Moore's MRTA is a version of intentionalism, then it doesn't allow for this combination of commitments. For Moore, one is forced to choose between a view on which sense experience reveals the way something is and a view on which experience merely reveals a way in which it appears.

This highlights a certain irony in Baldwin's criticisms of Moore. In interpreting Moore as partly endorsing the theory of appearing, Baldwin takes Moore to be returning to a kind of direct realism about sense perception. And, to some extent that must be right, since Moore does take it as a virtue of MRTA that it allows the ultimate objects of perception to be parts of environmental objects; and this is reiterated even at the very end of 'Visual Sense-data' when he has finally rejected it as incoherent. But Baldwin hypothesises that Moore is kept back from a full blown direct realism about perception through the mistaken assumption that there must always be an existing object of awareness. Given the gloss that we have put on MRTA here, however, we can see that Moore's acknowledging that something may merely seem to be *F* in experience without *being F* leads him to consider the possibility that we are never aware of the way things actually. This puts him even further away from the charms of direct realism.

7. I want to close with two morals that we can draw from looking this intensely at Moore in 1918 and trying to make sense of the dilemma he then posed his audience. Both derive from an observation I made at the outset: Moore's dilemma presents us with the choice between two substantive theories of sensory experience. And once we recognize that fact, it becomes unclear on what ground we should be restricted to choosing just between these two options.

The first, and in many ways most obvious, point is that we really don't face Moore's dilemma: we are not restricted just to the choice of accepting TSD or MRTA when we stare at the back of hands and wonder what is involved in us being so aware. And that is underlined for us in the contrast that we drew in the last section between standard intentionalism and Moore's MRTA. If we stick to Moore's assumptions, then what we are at least certain of is this: there is an object of awareness and there is some sensible quality to which the experience unites it. What is uncertain, according to him, is how that object and sensible quality are united.

Now when we think of an example of perceptual illusion, precisely the focus of the argument leading up the dilemma, it is tempting to think that our problem boils down to the question: does the object of awareness have the quality or not? TSD is the theory which claims that it does (and then draws as a consequence the non-identity of the object with the surface), MRTA is the theory which claims it does not. Assuming that we are concerned with a case which is not borderline, that we are concerned, for example, with a determinate shade of very pale blue, a bluish-white, it may well seem that there really are only two possible options. Either the object is bluish-white or it is not. If the choice could turn on just this question, then there really would only be two options.

But in fact we've seen that there are at least two ways in which the illusory experience might fail to involve the object's being bluish-white. On the one hand, the experience might involve representing the object as being bluish-white, relating us to a possible but non-actual state of affairs in which the object is bluish-white. This is the way many intentionalists are inclined to describe the situation. And this is what would lead us to talk of this as a case of presence in absence. Moore's theory, on the other hand, invites a different gloss. The object of awareness is united with bluish-white only relative to the experience, it is bluish-white in experience, but not in itself. On this view of the illusory experience, there is nothing in it which directs us towards the non-actual state of affairs of the object's being bluish-white.

That suggests that Moore's dilemma is not the same as the intentionalist's dilemma. So even if we do find ourselves in the situation Moore is concerned with, aware that we are suffering an illusion but otherwise uncertain of the correct view of the matter, his is not the only option on the table. One could side with what is now the standard form of intentionalism, and suppose that object and quality are united merely representationally.

But this isn't only a point against Moore. Earlier, I highlighted a question about whether and how sense experience can inform us about the world independent of that sense experience. In the most prominent discussions of this question, in Strawson and Evans, for example, the issue becomes one of what properties can be thought to be presented to the subject in experience: typically emphasis is laid on the status of primary qualities such as figure and size, and the role that these play in our understanding of the causal conditions that give rise to sense experience in the first place. Moore's alternative to sense-datum theories offers another way in which sense experience might fail to be fully objective. Even if the sense experience presents a mind-independent object (which, as we have stressed, Moore supposes it always must) and even if it presents a property, such as shape, which an object could have only independently of the mind, still the experience might fail to present the objective state of affairs of that object having the property. For Moore we are to think of the experience as revealing the object as being round only relative to this current experience of it.

It is tempting for the intentionalist to look for evidence in favour of the doctrine just from reflection on our sense experience. In a case of illusion, the object is not bluish-white but still bluish-white is present to the mind. If we are reluctant to join with the sense-datum theorist and affirm that something else is indeed bluish-white, how else are we to explain the experience than in terms of its representing the object to be bluish-white? But the apparent coherence of Moore's conception of MRTA blocks this piece of reasoning, just as this intelligibility of this conception of experience undermines Moore's conception of the dilemma. We might dismiss Moore's conception of what it is for objects to seem bluish-white as ultimately making no sense. Or we might independently, and antecedently, have reason to think of our perceptual experiences as representational states, and so to make best sense of what we can introspect of them as indicative of that representational nature. But if we start out as Moore does just by reflecting on what we can tell from our experience, then we can no more endorse the intentionalist understanding than we can Moore's MRTA. The possibility of illusion on its own doesn't seem to offer us a determinate enough picture to settle anything.

The second moral takes us back to the contrast between the theory of appearing and Moore's MRTA. The conflation of Moore's position with that of Dawes Hicks goes back to CD Broad. In Broad's hands, this means treating Dawes Hicks's position as no different from Moore (in *Mind & its Place in Nature*, Broad considers together the multiple relation theory and the 'multiple inherence theory' as close alternatives to his sensum account – the multiple inherence theory rejects the assumption that the apparent properties conflict, and so objects are taken to possess multiple colours or shapes at the same time; in seeing a close affinity between this view and MRTA, Broad is taking MRTA along the lines we sketched above. No such construal is appropriate for Dawes Hicks, however). In later authors, as we noted, the assimilation goes in the other direction.

One thing this indicates is that it can be hard to distinguish whether in talking of how things seem we are talking about the subject's psychological state, or we are rather talking about something that the subject can know about the world on the basis of his or her experience. It is difficult to hear any real import in the move between, 'It seems to Moore as if the tree is small', and, 'The tree seems small to Moore'. Or rather, it looks as if the key contrast would concern the existential commitment, whether there really must be an object which seems some way whenever Moore has an experience. And given that Moore assumes this, apparently on entirely independent grounds, then the movement and back and forth appears innocuous.

Once we spell out Moore's version of MRTA, we see that this can't be so. Moore assumes that the sense experience in question, whether TSD or MRTA is eventually shown to be correct, involves a relation to a specific sensible quality. When it seems as if there is a bluish-white patch before one, Moore supposes we know that either you stand in a relation to acquaintance to the colour bluish-white, as instantiated by the sense-datum, or you stand in a relation of seeming to the shade in question. And this is to assume that the character of the experience is just a matter of which sensible quality the subject is related to through that experience. This assumption is surely not in play simply through us granting the subjective fact that it seems to Moore as if he is confronted with a bluish-white patch.

Now Moore seems to have made this kind of assumption about sensible experience from the beginning of his realist period. The famous discussion of the diaphaneity of sensible experience in 'A Refutation of Idealism' introduces the idea that the relation of sensible awareness adds nothing to the discernible character of one's experience:

...the moment we try to fix our attention upon consciousness and to see *what*, distinctly, it is, it seems to vanish: it seems as if we had before us a mere emptiness. When we try to introspect the sensation of blue, all we can see is the blue: the other element is as if it were diaphanous. Yet it *can* be distinguished if we look attentively enough, and if we know that there is something to look for. ((Moore, 1903) p.450.)

I mentioned earlier Moore's intended refutation as a demonstration of how we have knowledge of that which is entirely independent of us. Were consciousness something that added character to the objects of awareness, then one could question whether we could ever know those objects in themselves, independent of the taint that consciousness adds to them. So, although Moore thinks it important that we recognize that consciousness takes the form of a relation to something (and hence can be distinguished in the experiential circumstances), it is also important to emphasise that nothing is added by it. With that commitment in place, the character of acts of sensory awareness is taken always to derive from the objects of awareness. If two acts of consciousness differ in their character, then Moore will assume, they must differ in some respect in their objects, in what he later comes to call the sense-data, or the sensible qualities which those data exhibit.

With this assumption of *diaphaneity* in play, Moore will simply assume that there could be nothing more to an experience than what objects or qualities are given in it. For him, the move from its seeming as if there is a bluish-white patch before one, to bluish-white seeming some way, will indeed be a trivial move. For he has already assumed that if there is a determinate way one's experience is when things seem some way to one, then that in turn must amount to a sensible quality or some sensible qualities together being presented to the subject.

But what possible grounds are there for this assumption? One way of seeing it, I suggest, comes out of the understanding of sense perception as a means we have to acquire knowledge of the world around us, and what the connotations are of the idea of sensible or observational qualities. One might think that, at least in ideal circumstances, our senses can reveal to us ways that objects are. And, moreover, that in such circumstances one can come to know about the sensible qualities of such objects in the best possible way that one can. For example, one might suggest that really the best way to come to know about some determinate shade of colour, say a bluish-white, just is to view a sample under optimal viewing conditions: against a neutral background under strong Northern midday sunlight.

Now even if we think that sense perception can distinctively provide us with knowledge in this way, at least for the sensible aspects of objects, still on its own that will not get as far as Moore's strong assumption about sense experience in general. After all, we not only suppose that we can know about objects through sense perception, but we know that the conditions for coming to know about objects vary, and hence our experiences can vary too. One can see the bluish-white sample under rather less good conditions – under artificial shop lights, or in the fading light of a late afternoon; against one strong background colour, or another. All of these

experiences will be different from each other. And, I would suggest, it is unclear whether they should all have some distinctive qualitative aspect in common which is the presentation of bluish-white.

When we think of the variety of circumstances under which we can confront the colour or the shape of objects, then we are much less likely to assume that there is one distinctive way of experiencing the colour or the shape. Suppose that I see and can recognize roughly the shade of bluish-white both in the ideal viewing conditions and in the shadowy afternoon. Are both experiences to be understood as being presented with the quality in question, either as TSD supposes or as MRTA? Or is only one of these experiences genuinely a visual experience of the bluish-white?

Likewise, even if it seems to me that there is a patch of bluish-white before me, does that show that I am thereby related to bluish-white, rather than to some other colour, which in the circumstances strikes me in relevantly the same way as bluish-white would under ideal circumstances? What would rule out conceiving of the situation in this way? That might suggest that we understand the subjective reports, such as that it seems to Moore as if there is a bluish-white patch there, as indicating a salient similarity between this experience and one in which he confronts an instance of bluish-white.

That this isn't just a trivial matter is reflected in the rather different attitudes that Dawes Hicks evinces on these matters, and Russell's tart response back. In his review essay on *The Problems of Philosophy*, Dawes Hicks complains about Russell's use of the argument from conflicting appearances in the following way:

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that colour *is* inherent in the table, suppose the table has in reality a specific colour. Then, surely, there would be nothing to conflict with this supposition in the fact that such real colour will present a different aspect if another colour be reflected on upon it, or if a blue pair of spectacles intervene between it and the observer, or if it be enveloped in darkness rather than in daylight. The reasoning would only be valid on the assumption that if the table is really coloured, the real colour *must* appear the same in darkness and in daylight... ((Hicks, 1912), p.401)

Russell's response to this is a form of incomprehension (in correspondence he complains of Dawes Hicks being 'muddle-headed'):

This brings me to what Dr Dawes Hicks says on the subject of colour and shape. He suggests that "the real colour will present a different aspect if another colour be reflected upon it" (p. 401) But surely we cannot speak of a colour "presenting an aspect". A colour which presents a different aspect is a different colour, and there is an end of the matter. ((Russell, 1913), p.79)

I suggest that here we find Russell making just the same assumption that is present in Moore's discussion, in respect of colour experience at least: Russell supposes that diaphaneity holds. If one's visual experience is different in character from one occasion to another, then that difference must be a difference in its object. Rather than allowing that colours may appear differently, Russell assumes a difference in the character of colour experience can only be a difference in what colour is experienced.

Whatever the merits of Russell's or Dawes Hicks's views on colour, the disagreement between them can hardly be settled just by fiat. But Moore's presentation of his dilemma seems to presuppose that the matter has been settled, and settled in Russell's favour. This again gives us reason to question the grounds under which he sets the dilemma up initially.

At the outset of *Sense & Sensibilia* JL Austin, in somewhat schoolmasterly tones, lays out an assessment of the two failing pupils in the school of English philosophy, the sense-datum theory of perception and the argument from illusion. Sense-data, he characterizes as a mere phantasm of philosophers' speculation; they are no part of the grit of reality. The argument from illusion on the other hand is argument only in name: a piece of pseudo-reasoning, recognized as spurious even by those most adept at shuffling its cards. Whether the lessons Austin wanted to

impart have really been taken by his readership is a nice question, but there can be no doubt that the negative affect in his scorn did leave a lasting impression. One aspect of his attack that lasts is the sense that somehow the sense-datum theory and the argument from illusion are intertwined in their bad reputation: there is a thought that one of the bad things about the sense-datum theory is the manner in which it rests on the argument from illusion; and that what is problematic with the argument from illusion is that it leads to a commitment to the existence of (non-physical) sense-data.

What our inspection of Moore teaches us, though, is that there is something more problematic in the argument from illusion than just that. In some circumstances at least we are inclined to accept a close association between sense perception, things being apparent to us, and our knowledge of them. But Moore's assumption goes well beyond this: it requires that all sense experiences amount to knowledge of sensible qualities. What could justify this generalizing move? Moore never tells us. And it is difficult to see what could show one that it should be accepted.

Above, I argued that we should not conflate Moore's dilemma with the question that intentionalists about sense experience are inclined to press on us: is this a case of something's genuinely being bluish-white, or is this simply a case of bluish-white being before the mind, without being instantiated? Even if the two sets of question are not the same, they both seem to adopt a questionable framing assumption. That when it comes to sense experience and sensible qualities, we can talk about types of experience in terms of the qualities we experience. And hence that it makes sense for us to ask about a range of experiences, visual experiences of bluish-white, say, what it takes for such an experience to occur. Unless we have made Moore's simplifying assumption, as Russell has, that there is only one way to experience a given shade, then we cannot start out with just that assumption.

What does Moore and his dilemma teach us in the end? On the one hand, from our perspective there are odd and idiosyncratic commitments threaded through Moore's whole discussion. Not least, there is the peculiarity in Moore of assuming that all sensory awareness must involve an actually existing object of awareness. In addition, Moore assumes that sensory awareness is necessarily a form of knowledge, and as a consequence is always awareness of something independent of that awareness. As we have seen repeatedly, this added assumption of Moore's imposes substantive constraints on the form a theory can take. At the same time, one might feel that the terms in which Moore is debating these matters is just too far removed from the concerns of contemporary neuroscience. Moore might be aware that our sensory experience is dependent on the operation of the nervous system, but his whole discourse seems much more distanced and cloudily connected to anything that we now know about how the activation of the visual system leads us to see that tree, or this hand, or that patch of colour. We have added together strange assumptions about what sense perception must involve with an unappealing ignorance of crucial physiological and neurological facts. Is it a wonder if the theory which results should look so strange to us now?

On the other hand, Moore's ambitions are to start with matters that are the most basic and obvious to him, and should be so in turn to his readers. And his strategy then is, from these manifest starting points, to work matters through as carefully as he can, and to avoid any speculation. The key assumption in all of this is that there are questions for us to raise about the nature of sense perception which require us to adopt the first person perspective, the point of view of the person who is staring at the tree, their hand, or the patch on the wall. And that having raised these questions, we should continue to pursue them through such careful, reflective attention. While Moore's specific assumptions about consciousness seem idiosyncratic, the idea that debate about sense experience and phenomenal consciousness should begin from what we all know in reflecting on what it is like to see a hand or taste a pineapple is still very much alive.

At the very least, then, seeing what we can make of Moore's enquiry tells us something about the limits of this kind of first-personal enquiry into the nature of sense experience.²⁶

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²⁶ This paper derives from a discussion initially focused on recent attempts to revive the argument from illusion. That was presented at the original workshop in Hertford in 2011, and at colloquia at Warwick, Irvine and Chicago. I'm grateful to audiences at all these occasions for questions and comments. The idea that Moore might be presenting a form of intentionalism was originally suggested to me by Fraser Macbride, and I'm grateful to him for extended discussion of Moore's metaphysics and epistemology. Thanks also for written comments to Paul Coates and Véronique Munoz-Dardé.

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