

object that it is seen or touched or otherwise perceived entails saying that it really exists and that something really has the character that the object appears to have, we shall be obliged either to deny that any perceptions are delusive or else to admit that it is a mistake to speak as if the objects that we perceived were always material things'. But in fact we do not have to use words in this way. 'If I say that I am seeing a stick which looks crooked, I do not imply that anything really is crooked . . . or if, being subject to an illusion of double vision, I say that I am perceiving two pieces of paper, I need not be implying that there really are two pieces of paper there. But surely, it may be said, if the two pieces of paper really are perceived they must both exist in some sense, even if not as material things. The answer to this objection is that it is based on a misunderstanding of the way in which I am using the word "perceive". I am using it here in such a way that to say of an object that it is perceived does not entail saying that it exists in any sense at all. And this is a perfectly correct and familiar usage of the word.'

But, Ayer continues, 'there is also a correct and familiar usage of the word "perceive", in which to say of an object that it is perceived does carry the implication that it exists'. And if I use the word 'in this sense' in my case of double vision, I must say, 'I thought I perceived two pieces of paper but I was really perceiving only one.' 'If the word is used in one familiar sense, it can be said that I really did perceive two pieces of paper. If it is used in another sense, which is also sanctioned by convention,

## IX

ALL THIS LENGTHY DISCUSSION OF THE Nature of Reality arose, you may remember, out of the passage in which Ayer 'evaluates' the argument from illusion, arriving at the conclusion that the issue it raises is really not factual but linguistic. I argued earlier that his way of arriving at this conclusion actually shows that he does not believe it; for it relies on the doctrine that real 'empirical facts' are *in fact* always about 'sensible appearances', and that remarks ostensibly about 'material things' are to be *construed* as just a way of speaking—the facts to which these expressions are intended to refer' are facts about 'phenomena', the only real facts there are. But however that may be, the official state of play at this point is that we are confronted with a linguistic question: are we to say that the objects we directly perceive are sense-data?—and that the argument from illusion has given us no compelling reason for choosing to say this. So Ayer next goes on himself to give the reasons why we should say this; and this section,<sup>1</sup> which is called 'The Introduction of Sense-data', must now be considered.

It is indeed true, Ayer says, that 'if we restrict ourselves to using words in such a way that to say of an

<sup>1</sup> Ayer, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-28.

then it must be said that I perceived only one.' 'There is no problem so long as one keeps the two usages distinct.'<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, a man may say 'that he sees a distant star which has an extension greater than that of the earth'; he may also say that he is 'actually seeing . . . a silvery speck no bigger than a sixpence'. And these remarks, Ayer says, are not inconsistent. For in *one sense* of 'see', 'it is necessary that what is seen should really exist, but not necessary that it should have the qualities that it appears to have'—in *this sense* the man sees an enormous star; but in *another sense*, 'it is not possible that anything should seem to have qualities that it does not really have, but also not necessary that what is seen should really exist'—in *this sense* the man 'can say truly that what he sees is no bigger than a sixpence'.

But what about sense-data? They are now brought in, in the following way. Some philosophers may decide, Ayer says, *both* 'to apply the word "see" or any other words that designate modes of perception to delusive as well as veridical experiences', and *also* (rather misguidedly, one might think) to use these words 'in such a way that what is seen or otherwise sensibly experienced must really exist and must really have the properties that it appears to have'. But then, naturally enough, they find that they can't say that 'what is experienced' is always a

<sup>1</sup> Price also thinks that 'perceive' is *ambiguous*, that it has *two senses*. Cp. *Perception*, p. 23. 'It is possible to perceive what does not exist . . . But in another sense of 'perceive', and one that comes closer to ordinary speech, it is not possible to perceive what does not exist.'

material thing; for in 'delusive' situations, either the thing doesn't 'really exist' or doesn't 'really have the properties that it appears to have'. And then, it seems—instead of having second thoughts about their use of 'see'—they decide to say that 'what is experienced' in 'delusive' situations is a *sense-datum*. Next, they find it 'convenient', Ayer says, 'to extend this usage to all cases', on the old, familiar ground that 'delusive and veridical perceptions' don't differ in 'quality'. This, Ayer says, 'can reasonably be accepted as a rule of language. And thus one arrives at the conclusion that in all cases of perception the objects of which one is directly aware are sense-data and not material things.' This procedure, Ayer says, does not embody 'any factual discovery'; it amounts to the recommendation of 'a new verbal usage'. And he for his part is disposed to adopt this recommendation; 'it does not in itself add to our knowledge of empirical facts, or even make it possible for us to express anything that we could not have expressed without it. At the best it enables us only to refer to familiar facts *in a clearer and more convenient way*.' My italics.

Now an important, or at any rate prominent, part of the argumentation which leads to this conclusion is the allegation that there are *different senses*, all (or is it only *some*?) 'correct and familiar', of 'perceive' and other verbs designating modes of perception.<sup>1</sup> Just what this

<sup>1</sup> Justice, I think, demands that I should reiterate here that a lot of water has flowed under the bridges since Ayer wrote his book. Doctrines

allegation has to do with the argument we shall have to consider in due course; but first, I want to look into the grounds on which it is made, and to ask whether it is well founded.

Let us look, then, at the examples in which these different senses are supposed to be exhibited. First, the familiar old case of the stick in water. Ayer says: 'If I say that I am seeing a stick which looks crooked, I do not imply that anything really is crooked.' Now this is quite true; but what does it show? It is evidently *meant* to show that there is a *sense* of 'see' in which to say that something is seen does not entail saying 'that it exists and that something really has the character that the object appears to have'. But the example surely does not show this at all. All that it *shows* is that the complete utterance 'I see a stick which looks crooked' does not entail that anything really is crooked. That this is so *in virtue of the sense in which 'see' is here used* is an additional step, for which no justification is given. And in fact, when one comes to think of it, this step is not only undefended, but pretty certainly wrong. For if one *had* to pick on some *part* of the utterance as that in virtue of which it doesn't entail that anything really is crooked, surely the phrase 'which looks crooked' would be the likeliest candidate. For whatever views we may or may not have about senses of 'see', we all know that what looks crooked may not really *be* crooked.

about supposed different senses of verbs of perception had been widely current in the decade or two before he was writing, and it is not very surprising that he should have taken them on as part of the stock-in-trade. No doubt he would not take exactly the same line today.

The second example is ineffective, off-target, in a rather similar way. Ayer says: 'If I say that someone is feeling pressure on his leg, I do not necessarily exclude the possibility that his leg has been amputated.' But again, why explain this by invoking a *sense* of 'feel'? Why not say instead, for instance, that the expression 'pressure on his leg' can sometimes be used to specify what someone feels, even if his leg has actually been amputated? It seems to me very doubtful whether we should say that there is exemplified here a special *sense* even of the words 'pressure on his leg'; but at any rate the case for saying this would be just as good as for saying we have here a special sense of 'feel'—in fact a good deal better.

The third example, of double vision, is less easily dealt with. Here Ayer says: 'If I say that I am perceiving two pieces of paper, I need not be implying that there really are two pieces of paper there.' Now this, I think, is true only with some qualification. It is, I suppose, true that if I know that I am suffering from double vision, I may say 'I am perceiving two pieces of paper' and, in saying this, *not mean* that there really are two pieces of paper there; but for all that, I think, my utterance does imply that there are, in the sense that anyone not apprised of the special circumstances of the case would naturally and properly, in view of my utterance, suppose that I thought there were two pieces of paper. However, we may agree that in saying 'I am perceiving two pieces of paper', I may not *mean*—since I may know it to be untrue—that there really are two pieces of paper before me. So far, so good.

But in the next sentence Ayer changes the form of words; 'if two pieces of paper *really are perceived*', he says, it need not be true that there are two pieces of paper. And this is surely just wrong. In fact, that 'two pieces of paper *really are perceived*' is just what we should *not* say in a case of double vision—just for the reason that there must be two, if two 'really are perceived'.

But, it may be said, have we not conceded enough to justify the main point that Ayer is making here? For whatever the case may be with 'really are perceived', we have agreed that I may properly say, 'I am perceiving two pieces of paper', in the full knowledge that there are not really two pieces before me. And since it is undeniable that these words may *also* be so used as to imply that there *really are* two pieces of paper, do we not have to agree that there are two different senses of 'perceive'?

Well, no, we don't. The linguistic facts here adduced are not enough to prove anything like so much as this. For one thing, if there really were two *senses* of 'perceive', one would naturally expect that 'perceive' might occur in either of these senses in any of its constructions. But in fact, even if 'I perceive two pieces' needn't mean that there *are* two pieces, it seems that 'Two pieces really are perceived' is *not* compatible with there being really only one. So it looks as though it might be better to say that the implications of 'perceive' may differ in different *constructions* than just that there are two *senses* of 'perceive'. But more important than this is the fact that double vision is a quite *exceptional* case, so that we may have to

stretch our ordinary usage to accommodate it. Since, in this exceptional situation, though there is only one piece of paper I seem to see two, I may want to say, 'I am perceiving two pieces of paper' *faute de mieux*, knowing quite well that the situation isn't really that in which these words are perfectly appropriate. But the fact that an exceptional situation may thus induce me to use words primarily appropriate for a different, normal situation is nothing like enough to establish that there are, in general, two different, normal ('correct and familiar') *senses* of the words I use, or of any one of them. To produce a rather baffling abnormality like double vision could establish only, at most, that ordinary usage sometimes has to be stretched to accommodate exceptional situations. It is not, as Ayer says, that 'there is no problem so long as one keeps the two usages distinct'; there is no reason to say that there *are* two usages; there is 'no problem' so long as one is aware of the *special circumstances*.

I might say, while visiting the zoo, 'That is a lion', pointing to one of the animals. I might also say, pointing to a photograph in my album, 'That is a lion.' Does this show that the word 'lion' has *two senses*—one meaning an animal, the other a picture of an animal? Plainly not. In order (in this case) to cut down verbiage, I may use in one situation words primarily appropriate to the other; and no problem arises provided the circumstances are known.

As a matter of fact, in the case of double vision, it is not true that my only resource is to stretch in the way envisaged the ordinary use of 'I am perceiving two pieces

of paper.' Certainly I might do this; but in fact there is a special idiom, which Ayer might usefully have mentioned, for use in this special case—'I see the piece of paper double.' I might also say that I 'see it as two'.

Now let us consider the case of the man who sees a star, a case of which Ayer's account is particularly puzzling. The man is supposed, you remember, to say two things: (a) 'I see a distant star which has an extension greater than that of the earth'; and (b)—on being asked to describe what it is that he is actually seeing—'I see a silvery speck no bigger than a sixpence.' Ayer's first observation is that 'one is tempted to conclude that one at least of these assertions is false'. But *is* one? Why should one be? One might of course feel this temptation if one were in a state of extreme astronomical ignorance—if, that is, one thought that those silvery specks in the sky couldn't really be stars larger than the earth, or if, conversely, one thought that something larger than the earth, even though distant, couldn't really be seen as a silvery speck. But most of us know that stars are very, very big, and that they are a very, very long way away; we know what they *look* like to the naked and earthbound eye, and we know a bit at any rate about what they *are* like. Thus, I can't see any reason at all why we should be tempted to think that 'seeing an enormous star' is incompatible with 'seeing a silvery speck'. Wouldn't we be quite prepared to say, and quite correct in saying, that the silvery speck *is* a star?

Perhaps, though, this is not very important, since,

although Ayer surprisingly thinks we should feel this temptation, he also thinks that we ought to resist it; the man's two statements, he agrees, aren't really incompatible. And he goes on to explain this by saying 'that the word "see", like the word "perceive", is commonly used in a variety of senses'. There is one 'sense' in which it is true that the man sees a star, and another 'sense' in which it is true that he sees a silvery speck. Well, what are these senses?

'In one sense', Ayer says, 'the sense in which the man can say truly that he sees the star, it is necessary that what is seen should really exist, but not necessary that it should have the qualities that it appears to have.' This is probably all right, though in the context a bit obscure. We may accept that 'it is necessary that what is seen should really exist'; the difficulty with the other condition—'not necessary that it should have the qualities that it appears to have'—is that it is not made clear what, in the example, 'the qualities that it appears to have' are supposed to be. The general trend of the discussion suggests that *size* is meant. But if so there is the difficulty that the question 'What size does it appear to be?', asked of a star, is a question to which no sensible man would attempt to give an answer. He might indeed say that it 'looks tiny'; but it would be absurd to take this as meaning that it looks as if it *is* tiny, that it appears to *be* tiny. In the case of an object so immensely distant as a star, there is really no such thing as 'the size that it appears to be' when one looks at it, since there is no question of making that sort

of estimate of its size. One couldn't sensibly say 'To judge from appearances, it's  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{smaller} \\ \text{bigger} \end{array} \right\}$  than the earth', because appearances in fact provide no basis whatever even for so rough a judgement as this. However, we can perhaps patch things up by changing the example. Stars notoriously twinkle; and one could, I think, reasonably say in virtue of this that they *appear* to be intermittently, irregularly, or discontinuously luminous. Thus, if we take it that stars are not really discontinuously luminous, and we are prepared to say that we see stars, it can be concluded that we evidently do not require that what is seen should have 'the qualities that it appears to have'.

So now let us turn to Ayer's other 'sense'. 'In another sense', he says, 'which is that in which the man can truly say that what he sees is no bigger than a sixpence, it is not possible that anything should seem to have qualities that it does not really have, but also not necessary that what is seen should really exist.' Now perhaps this *would* be 'another sense' of 'see', if there were any such sense; but in fact there is *no* such 'sense' as this. If a man says 'I see a silvery speck', of course he 'implies' that the speck exists, that there is a speck; and if there is *no* speck in the region of the night sky at which he is looking, if that part of the sky is perfectly blank, then of course he does *not* see a silvery speck there. It is no use his saying, 'Well, that region of the sky may be perfectly blank, but it is still true that I see a silvery speck; for I am using "see" in such a sense that what is seen need not exist.' It might

be thought, perhaps, that I am being unfair here; in saying that the speck the man sees need not 'really exist', it might be said, Ayer can't mean that there may be simply no speck to be seen—he just means that it needn't 'really exist' as the occupant of a definite region of physical space, as the star does. But no—Ayer certainly *does* mean just what I have taken him to mean; for you may remember that he said earlier, as explicitly as could be, that there is a 'correct and familiar' usage of 'perceive' which is such that 'to say of an object that it is perceived does not entail saying that it exists *in any sense at all*'. On this there is no possible comment except that there *isn't*.<sup>1</sup>

The other feature of this alleged sense of 'see' is hardly less peculiar. It is suggested that, in the 'sense' of 'see' in which the man sees a silvery speck, it is 'not possible that anything should seem to have qualities that it does not really have'. Here again it is not perfectly clear what qualities are meant; but it looks as if Ayer has in mind the 'quality' of *being no bigger than a sixpence*. But surely there is something rather absurd about this. Remember that we are talking here about the *speck*, not the star. And can the question whether the speck really *is* no bigger than a sixpence, or whether perhaps it just *seems* to be no

<sup>1</sup> What about seeing ghosts? Well, if I say that cousin Josephine once saw a ghost, even if I go on to say I don't 'believe in' ghosts, whatever that means, I can't say that ghosts don't exist *in any sense at all*. For there was, in *some* sense, this ghost that Josephine saw. If I do want to insist that ghosts don't exist *in any sense at all*, I can't afford to admit that people ever see them—I shall have to say that they think they do, that they seem to see them, or what not.

bigger than a sixpence, be seriously raised? What difference could there be between the supposed alternatives? To say 'It's no bigger than a sixpence' is itself nothing more, after all, than a rough-and-ready way of saying how it looks. But then, if we think instead of something that might *seriously* be taken to be a 'quality' of the speak—for instance, the quality of being pinkish in colour—we get the conclusion, once again, that there is no such sense of 'see' as Ayer is saying there is. For of course, when someone sees a speck in the night sky, it might, through some abnormality in the state of his eyes for instance, look greyish to him though it's really pinkish. The only way in which one can make it appear that something seen can't seem to have a quality that it really has not *is* to pick on something like 'being no bigger than a sixpence'—but in that case the impossibility is due, *not* to the 'sense' in which 'see' is being used, but to the absurdity of treating 'being no bigger than a sixpence' as if (in this context) it were a *quality* with respect to which it could make any sense at all to *distinguish* between really having it and only seeming to. The fact is that, just as there is *no* sense of 'see' which is such that what is seen need 'not exist in any sense at all', there is *no* sense of 'see', neither the same sense nor any other,<sup>1</sup> in which it is impossible that what is seen 'should

<sup>1</sup> It is in fact very hard to understand how Ayer could ever have thought he was characterizing a *single* sense of 'see' by this conjunction of conditions. For how could one possibly say, in the same breath, 'It must really have the qualities it seems to have', and 'It may not exist'? *What* must have the qualities it seems to have?

seem to have qualities that it does not really have'. I am not denying, of course, that we could arbitrarily invent such uses of 'see', though I don't know why we should want to; but it must be remembered that Ayer is purporting here to describe 'senses' of 'see' which are already 'correct', and even 'familiar'.

We have now come to the end of the examples which Ayer produces; and it appears that none of them gives any support to the idea that there are different 'senses' of 'perceive', 'see', and the rest. One of the examples—the one about double vision—does suggest, what in any case is only to be expected, that in exceptional situations ordinary forms of words may be used without being *meant* in quite the ordinary way; our saying of the D.T.'s sufferer that he 'sees pink rats' is a further instance of this, since we don't mean here (as would be meant in a normal situation) that there are real, live pink rats which he sees; but such stretchings of ordinary words in exceptional situations certainly do not constitute special *senses*, still less 'correct and familiar' senses, of the words in question. And the other examples either fail to be relevant to the question about different senses of these words, or, as in the star case as described by Ayer, bring in alleged 'senses' which quite certainly don't exist.

What has gone wrong, then? I think that part of what has gone wrong is this: observing, perfectly correctly, that the question 'What does X perceive?' can be given—normally at least—many different answers, and that these different answers may all be correct and therefore

compatible, Ayer has jumped to the conclusion that 'perceive' must have different 'senses'—for if not, how could different answers to the question all be *correct*? But the proper explanation of the linguistic facts is not this at all; it is simply that what we 'perceive' can be described, identified, classified, characterized, named in many different ways. If I am asked 'What did you kick?', I might answer 'I kicked a piece of painted wood', or I might say 'I kicked Jones's front door'; both of these answers might well be correct; but should we say for that reason that 'kick' is used in them in different senses? Obviously not. What I kicked—in just one 'sense', the ordinary one—could be described as a piece of painted wood, or identified as Jones's front door; the piece of wood in question *was* Jones's front door. Similarly, I may say 'I see a silvery speck' or 'I see a huge star'; what I see—in the single, ordinary 'sense' this word has—can be described as a silvery speck, or identified as a very large star; for the speck in question *is* a very large star.<sup>1</sup>

Suppose you ask me 'What did you see this morning?' I might answer, 'I saw a man shaved in Oxford.' Or again I might say, no less correctly and referring to the same occasion, 'I saw a man born in Jerusalem.' Does it follow that I must be using 'see' in different senses? Of course not. The plain fact is that two things are true of the man that I saw—(a) that he was being shaved in Oxford, and

<sup>1</sup> It doesn't follow, of course, that we could properly say, 'That very large star is a speck.' I might say, 'That white dot on the horizon is my house', but this would not license the conclusion that I live in a white dot.

(b) that he had been born some years earlier in Jerusalem. And certainly I can allude to either of these facts about him in saying—in *no* way ambiguously—that I saw him. Or if there *is* ambiguity here, it is not the word 'saw' that is ambiguous.

Suppose that I look through a telescope and you ask me, 'What do you see?'. I may answer (1) 'A bright speck'; (2) 'A star'; (3) 'Sirius'; (4) 'The image in the fourteenth mirror of the telescope.' All these answers may be perfectly correct. Have we then different senses of 'see'? *Four* different senses? Of course not. The image in the fourteenth mirror of the telescope *is* a bright speck, this bright speck *is* a star, and the star *is* Sirius; I can say, quite correctly and with no ambiguity whatever, that I see any of these. Which way of saying what I see I actually choose will depend on the particular circumstances of the case—for instance, on what sort of answer I expect you to be interested in, on how much I know, or on how far I am prepared to stick my neck out. (Nor is it a question of elongating my neck in a single dimension; it may be a planet, not a star, or Betelgeuse, not Sirius—but also, there may be only twelve mirrors in the telescope.)

'I saw an insignificant-looking man in black trousers.'  
'I saw Hitler.' Two different senses of 'saw'? Of course not.

This fact—that we can normally describe, identify, or classify what we see in lots of different ways, sometimes differing in degree of adventurousness—not only makes it unnecessary and misguided to hunt up different senses

of 'see'; it also shows incidentally that those philosophers are wrong who have held that the question, 'What do you see?' has only *one* right answer, for example, 'part of the surface of' whatever it may be. For if I can see part of the surface, for instance part of the top, of a table, of course I can also see, and can say that I see if in a position to do so, a table (a dining-table, a mahogany table, my bank-manager's table, &c.). This particular proposal has the further demerit that it would mean ruining the perfectly good word 'surface'; for not only is it wantonly wrong to say that what we see of a thing is always its *surface*; it is also wrong to imply that everything *has* a surface. Where and what exactly is the surface of a cat? Also, why 'part of'? If a piece of paper is laid before me in full view, it would be a wanton misuse to say that I see 'only part' of it, on the ground that I see (of course) only one side.

Another point which should at least be mentioned briefly is this. Although there is no good reason to say that 'perceive' ('see', &c.) have different *senses*, the fact that we can give different descriptions of what we perceive is certainly not the whole story. When something is seen, there may not only be different ways of *saying* what is seen; it may also be seen *in different ways*, seen *differently*. This possibility, which brings in the important formula 'see . . . as . . .', has been taken very seriously by psychologists, and also by Wittgenstein, but most philosophers who write about perception have scarcely noticed it. The clearest cases, no doubt, are those in which (as for instance with Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit)

a picture or diagram is specially so devised as to be capable of being seen in different ways—as a duck or as a rabbit, as convex or concave, or whatever it may be. But the phenomenon also occurs, as one might say, naturally.

A soldier will see the complex evolutions of men on a parade-ground differently from someone who knows nothing about drill; a painter, or at any rate a certain kind of painter, may well see a scene differently from someone unversed in the techniques of pictorial representation. Thus, different ways of saying what is seen will quite often be due, not just to differences in knowledge, in fineness of discrimination, in readiness to stick the neck out, or in interest in this aspect or that of the total situation; they may be due to the fact that what is seen is seen differently, seen in a different way, seen *as* this rather than that. And there will sometimes be no *one right* way of saying what is seen, for the additional reason that there may be no one right way of seeing it.<sup>1</sup> It is worth noticing that several of the examples we have come across in other contexts provide occasions for the use of the 'see . . . as' formula. Instead of saying that, to the naked eye, a distant star looks like a tiny speck, or appears as a tiny speck, we could say that it is *seen as* a tiny speck; instead

<sup>1</sup> Do we *normally* see things *as they really are*? Is this a fortunate fact, something that a psychologist might set about explaining? I should be inclined to resist the temptation to fall in with this way of speaking: 'seeing as' is for *special* cases. We sometimes say that we see a *person* 'as he really is'—in his true colours'; but this is (a) an extended if not metaphorical use of 'see', (b) pretty well *confined* to the case of persons, and (c) a special case even within that limited field. Could it be said that we see, say, match-boxes in their true colours?

of saying that, from the auditorium, the woman with her head in a black bag appears to be headless, or looks like a headless woman, we could say that she is *seen as* a headless woman.

But now we must turn back to the course of the philosophical argument. Ayer's section on 'the introduction of sense-data' consisted largely, you may remember, in attempts to establish the thesis that there are different 'senses'—two or perhaps more—of 'perceive' and other verbs of perception. I have argued that there is no reason at all to suppose that there are such different senses. Now it might be expected that this would be a serious matter for Ayer's argument; but curiously enough, I don't think it is. For though his argument is certainly presented *as if* it turned on this doctrine about different 'senses' of verbs of perception, it doesn't really turn on this doctrine at all.

The way in which sense-data are finally 'introduced', you remember, is this. Philosophers, it is said, decide to use 'perceive' ('see', &c.) in such a way 'that what is seen or otherwise sensibly experienced must really exist and must really have the properties that it appears to have'. This, of course, is not in fact the way in which 'perceive' ('see', &c.) is ordinarily used; nor, incidentally, is it any one of the ways of using these words which Ayer himself labels 'correct and familiar'; it is a *special* way of using these words, invented by philosophers. Well, having decided to use the words in this way, they naturally discover that, as candidates for what is perceived, 'material things'

won't fill the bill; for material things don't always really have the properties they appear to have, and it may even seem that they exist when really they don't. Thus, though few philosophers if any are so brazen as to deny that material things are ever perceived in any 'sense' at all, at least something else has to be nominated as what is perceived in this special, philosophical sense. What is it that *does* fill the bill? And the answer is: sense-data.

Now the doctrine that there *already are*, in philosophical currency, different 'senses' of 'perceive' has as yet played no part in these manoeuvres, which have consisted essentially in the invention of a quite *new* 'sense'. So what is its role? Well, according to Ayer (and Price), its role is that it provides the philosophers with the motive for inventing their own special sense.<sup>1</sup> Their own special sense is invented, according to Ayer, 'in order to avoid these ambiguities'. Now, the reason why it does not matter that no such ambiguities actually exist is that the avoidance of ambiguities is not in fact their motive. Their real motive—and this lies right at the heart of the whole matter—is that they wish to produce a species of statement that will be *incorrigible*; and the real virtue of this invented sense of 'perceive' is that, since what is perceived in this sense *has* to exist and *has* to be as it appears, in saying what I perceive in this sense I *can't be wrong*. All this must be looked into.

<sup>1</sup> To be quite accurate, Price regards the existence of these different 'senses' as a motive for inventing a special *terminology*. See *Perception*, p. 24: 'In this situation, the only safe course is to avoid the word "perceive" altogether.'