On the Argument from Illusion

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Abstract

The argument from illusion attempts to establish that we are never perceptually aware of ordinary objects. We advance a new criticism of the argument: it is invalid, and a natural way to fix it is not obviously correct or easy to justify. Thus, even *granting* its standardly invoked and highly contentious premises, the argument can still be rejected.

1 Introduction

Many philosophers have argued that if illusions are possible, then perception as we intuitively think of it is not possible; in particular, perceptual experience never affords us awareness of ordinary mind-independent material objects. But since a commitment to the possibility of illusions is a part of our ordinary thought about perception, the situation we find ourselves in, if the argument is sound, is that our ordinary thought is not just mistaken, but incoherent (Smith (2002, p. 22)). In §2 we outline the argument from illusion, and in §3 we show that it is invalid. We then consider a way to repair the argument by adding a further premise (§4). But this further premise is not obviously true. We consider strategies for supporting it and argue that they are problematic.

The arguer from illusion, then, has a more serious argumentative burden than is commonly recognized. The premises of the argument which are usually invoked are highly contentious, but *even if we grant them* the argument can still be rejected. In §5 we consider the implications of this for our common sense picture of perception.

2 The Argument from Illusion

Expositions of the argument from illusion typically focus on the visual perception of ordinary objects. And the usual target of the argument is a common

sense view about seeing such objects: that we are sometimes visually perceptually aware of ordinary objects like lemons, books, chairs, etc (see, e.g., Robinson (1994, p. 58) and Crane (2011)). Rejecting this *common sense realism* is a revisionary conclusion in the sense that it amounts to a rejection of an aspect of our common sense understanding of perceptual situations. We call this the *Negative Claim* of the argument from illusion.

In some presentations of the argument, however, we find a distinction between direct and indirect perceptual awareness. The common sense target in such presentations is thus *direct realism*, the claim that we are sometimes *directly* aware of ordinary objects. (Smith (2002, p. 26)). Since our common sense conception of perception, on such presentations, is supposed to involve a commitment to direct realism, this too is supposed to be a revisionary conclusion.

It is by no means obvious, however, that there is an innocuous contrast between direct and indirect perception which can be appealed to in framing our common sense conception of perception.[1] But no matter, since our aims here do not require us to consider the putative direct/indirect distinction. Our primary focus will be on the more straightforward version of the argument from illusion which targets the simple view that we are sometimes visually perceptually aware of ordinary objects. What we say applies *mutatis mutandis* to the other version of the argument.

How, then, does the argument go? Its canonical form usually gets construed as follows (drawing on Robinson (1994), Smith (2002), and Crane (2011)):

(i) In an illusion, it sensibly appears to one that something has a sensible quality, F, which the ordinary object supposedly being perceived does not have.

(ii) When it sensibly appears to one that something has a sensible quality, F, then there is something of which one is aware which is F.

(iii) Since the ordinary object in question is not-F, then it follows that in cases of illusion, one is not aware of the ordinary object. (Interim Negative Claim)

(iv) There is such continuity between illusions and veridical experience that the same analysis of experience must apply to both.

Therefore,

[1] For scepticism about philosophers' employment of the distinction between direct and indirect perception see Austin (1962).

(v) One is not aware of ordinary objects in cases of veridical experience.

(vi) If one is aware of an ordinary object it is either through veridical or illusory experience.

Therefore,

(vii) We are never aware of ordinary objects. (Negative Claim)

The argument has two stages (Snowdon (1992)). A "Base Case" (i-iii) attempts to establish the *Interim Negative Claim*. The "Spreading Step" (iv-vii) attempts to generalize this to establish the *Negative Claim*. Our primary focus is the Base Case. This pivots on premise (ii), Robinson's (1994, p. 32) 'Phenomenal Principle'. This Principle reflects the sense-datum theory of experience. On this view, an experience in which something sensibly appears some way to one, consists, at least in part, in one's being perceptually aware of a sense-datum which is that way. As Martin (2003) notes

> Moore, Russell, Broad, and Price all assume that whenever one has a sensory experience – when one perceives an object or when at least it appears to one as if something is there – then there must actually be something which one stands in the relation of sensing to; indeed they assume there must be something which actually has the qualities which it seems to one the object sensed has. So if it now looks to me as if there is a brown expanse before me as I stare at the table, then an actual brown expanse must exist and be sensed by me. This is so even if we consider a case in which I am misperceiving a white object as brown, or even suffering an hallucination or delusion of the presence of brown tables when none are in the vicinity (p. 521).[2]

This sense-datum theory and the Phenomenal Principle are widely rejected (notable examples: Anscombe (1965), Harman (1990), Tye (1992)). But our first point is this: even *with* the Phenomenal Principle, the argument is not compelling. For the Base Case is invalid: *even granting its highly contentious premise*, the Interim Negative Claim does not follow. What actually follows from (i) and (ii) is not (iii) but a crucially different conclusion, namely:

(iii*) Since the ordinary object in question is not-F, then in illusions, one is aware of something else which is F.

[2]G. E. Moore (1953) and George Edward Moore (1913–14, 1957), Russell (1912, 1913, 1917), Broad (1923, 1925, 1952).

But (iii*) *doesn't entail* that in illusions we are not aware of the ordinary object in question. Since although *the F-thing* of which one is aware is not the ordinary object, this is consistent with one also being aware of the ordinary object. We need to distinguish between being aware of something which is *not the ordinary object* and *not being aware of* the ordinary object. The argument is invalid in conflating these.

Thus consider Smith's presentation: First, take the Wall Case: S sees a purely white wall in peculiar illumination conditions such that it looks yellow to her. Second, by the Phenomenal Principle, S is aware of something which is yellow (a yellow sense-datum). And finally (for the Base Case), 'what [S is] immediately aware of cannot be the wall', where '[t]his third step is but an application of Leibniz's Law to illusory situations' (Smith (2002, p. 25)). But what actually follows from Leibniz's Law is that the yellow thing of which S is immediately aware is not the wall. This is quite different from saying that S is not immediately aware of the wall, since S might be immediately aware of both the wall and the yellow sense-datum.[3]

As others do in this context, we have introduced 'sense-data' into the discussion. The term 'sense-datum' here is a *functional* term. It picks out *whatever it is* that one is aware of in an experience which bears the qualities which characterize the way things appear to one in that experience. From the Base Case of the argument from illusion we know that the sense-data present in such cases must be entities which are (a), objects of awareness, (b) entities which can instantiate sensible qualities, and (c) non-identical to the putative ordinary objects of awareness. But these conditions don't individuate a specific and unified ontological category or kind (Austin (1962)). So insofar as the Base Case of the argument from illusion commits us to sense-data, it is to a *thin*, as opposed to a thick, metaphysically substantive, conception. (So we are not entitled to the usual claims about sense-data, e.g., that they are mental, private, non-physical etc; such claims require further argument).

3 The Exclusion Assumption

To render the argument valid the arguer from illusion can add the following *Exclusion Assumption:*

(EA) If in an illusion S is aware of a sense-datum which is non-

[3]The invalid step shows up not just in Robinson, Smith and Crane but Coates (2007) and Fish (2010), as well as older formulations (e.g., George Edward Moore (1913–14), Broad (1923), and Ayer (1940)).

> identical to the ordinary object S is putatively perceiving in an illusory way, then S is not aware of the ordinary object.

Thus, a valid version of the Base Case, concerning the Wall Case, is as follows:

(a) It sensibly appears to S as if something is yellow, yet the wall is not yellow

(b) S is aware of a yellow sense-datum (from (a) and the Phenomenal Principle)

(c) The yellow sense-datum S is aware of is non-identical to the wall

Therefore,

(d) In the Wall Case, S is not aware of the wall (from (b), (c), and (EA)).

And here (d) is an instance of the Interim Negative Claim; exactly what the arguer from illusion is after.

Note we are being careful here to distinguish what we have in (EA) from a more general claim in the vicinity, the Uniqueness Assumption:

> (UA) If in an illusion S is aware of a sense-datum, y then for all x not identical to y, S is not aware of x.

To see what's wrong with (UA) suppose that in the Wall Case a black horse is standing next to the wall. Given the Phenomenal Principle, our subject is therefore aware of a yellow sense-datum (which, given Leibniz's Law, is neither the wall nor the horse). According to (UA), this means that our subject is not aware of the *horse*. We can stipulate that the horse appears as it is to the subject. So why should the fact that our subject is aware of a yellow sense-datum (and, let us grant temporarily, not the wall) mean that our subject is not also aware, in a perfectly veridical way, of the horse? There seems to be no reason, independent of the conclusion of the full argument from illusion (that is, the Negative Claim), why one could not be aware of sense-data in one area of a visual scene and material objects in another.

What the arguer from illusion seeks to establish in *the Base Case* is not that we are not aware of any ordinary objects but that we are not aware of *the ordinary objects we are purportedly perceiving in an illusory way*; in our example, the

wall. So (EA) is closer to the spirit of the Base Case, and is also not obviously objectionable in the way in which (UA) is.[4]

But is (EA) true? S is aware of a yellow sense-datum, but why should that mean that she is not *also* aware of the white wall? (EA) is not *obviously* true. We now consider and reject three strategies for grounding the idea that the sense-data posited in illusions exclude direct awareness of the putative objects of awareness in those cases.

3.1 The Spatial Exclusion Strategy

Consider a case of perceptual exclusion grounded in spatial exclusion:

> **Apple and Orange Case**
>
> S sees an apple in region of space R. Because S sees the apple in R, S doesn't also see an orange in R. S doesn't see the orange in R because the apple being in R prevents the orange from being in R, and thus from being seen in R.

Applying this to the Wall Case yields:

> **The Spatial Exclusion Strategy**
>
> S sees a non-ordinary yellow sense-datum, D, in R.[5] S doesn't also see the wall in R because D's being in R prevents the wall from being in R, and thus from being seen in R.

Suppose that R is a region within S's field of view which is the region which the wall seems to occupy, defined in terms of its apparent shape, extent and boundaries. With this background, the arguer can offer the *Spatial Exclusion Argument (SEA)*, concerning the Wall Case:

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[4]Although Snowdon (1992) doesn't discuss the reasoning involved in the Base Case in the way we have here, he does identify a similar sort of assumption that might rescue the reasoning we have been critical of:

> If the Base Case argument is sound it shows, as we might put it, that *that* (a [perceivable] item, whatever it is) is not an external object [better: not the ordinary object we are purportedly perceiving]. But this conclusion only implies that the external object is not [perceivable]… on the assumption that it, the external item, would have to be identical to that in order to be [perceivable]. We can label this the Uniqueness Assumption, because it amounts, in effect, to the claim that there is, in a particular direction of attention, as it were, a unique, single, [perceivable] thing…(p. 74)

[5]By "non-ordinary sense-datum" we mean: the sense-datum introduced in an illusion which is non-identical to the ordinary object putatively being perceived.

(SEA1) If S is aware of the wall, then S is aware of the wall in R

(SEA2) S is aware of the non-ordinary yellow sense-datum D in R

(SEA3) D spatially excludes the wall from R

Therefore,

(d) In the Wall Case, S is not aware of the wall (since the wall is not in R by SEA3, and so not seen there, and so by SEA1 is not seen at all).

This promises to deliver (d), an instance of the conclusion that the arguer from illusion is after in the Base Case. What are we to make of it? (SEA1) seems secure. But even if we grant (SEA2) the argument is problematic because (SEA3) is not obvious. First, (SEA3) requires a substantive metaphysics of sense-data which the arguer is not entitled to invoke on the basis of the argument from illusion. And second, it leaves the arguer from illusion with an awkward question about where the wall is. The alternative, which denies the Exclusion Assumption, doesn't face these issues. Together these points highlight that the Spatial Exclusion Strategy, is *dialectically very weak*. Let's take each point in turn.

The Spatial Exclusion Strategy requires us to conceive of D as being able to displace an ordinary object like a wall. This is an obvious consequence of (SEA3), but what exactly does it require the arguer from illusion to commit to? Consider again the Apple and Orange Case. The apple excludes the orange from R because the apple is located in the R, *and the apple and the orange are not constitutionally linked to one another*. So, whilst the apple excludes the orange from R by being located there, it doesn't exclude from R entities to which it is constitutionally linked such as its own surface and other spatial parts, the matter from which it is constituted, etc. Given this, if D is constitutionally linked to the wall, then we have no explanation of why it excludes the wall from R along the lines of familiar cases of spatial exclusion.

Thus it looks like the arguer from illusion employing the Spatial Exclusion Strategy will need to hold either that D is not constitutionally linked to the wall, or else provide some other reason for thinking that it spatially excludes the wall. So the Spatial Exclusion Strategy involves appeal to substantive metaphysical claims about non-ordinary sense-data, and thus constitutes a radical departure from the *thin* conception of sense-data justified by the Phenomenal Principle. But we have been given no reasons for thinking of sense-data in this thicker way.

Second, even if we grant (SEA3), and this thicker conception of sense-data, the arguer from illusion will be left with a rather awkward question about the

wall: *where is it?* Where is it located, if not in R? And if the wall is not in R, but in R*, what prevents S from being aware of it in R*? If the wall is not in R but R*, why should we accept (SEA1)?

Compare how things stand with the alternative which rejects (EA). The alternative says that in illusions we are aware of sense-data *and the* ordinary things, the presence of which together constitutes the way things appear to S. On this alternative we don't have to claim that D excludes the wall from R, and we don't face the awkward question of where the wall is. We may think of the case as analogous to seeing a white wall through a piece of transparent yellow film – where the qualities of the wall (e.g., location, size, shape), and the film (e.g., colour) *together* constitute the way things appear to one.

3.2 The Occlusion Strategy

The difficulties above are traceable to the idea that non-ordinary sense-data spatially exclude ordinary objects. However, there are cases of perceptual exclusion which are grounded not in spatial exclusion, but rather in *occlusion*, thus:

> **The Glass/Apple Case**
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> S sees a pane of opaque glass in V (the field of view). Because S sees the glass in V, S doesn't also see the apple in V. What grounds this perceptual exclusion fact? The fact that the glass occludes the apple.

Applying this yields:

> **The Occlusion Strategy**
>
> S sees D in V. S doesn't also see the wall in V because D occludes the wall.

This won't quite be enough to ground the application of (EA) in the Wall Case. To get that, we need to add that if S sees the wall at all, she sees it in V. But we can grant that.

How should we cash out the Occlusion Strategy? In the Glass/Apple Case there are two important features which mean that the glass occludes the apple: the *opacity* of the glass, and its *position*. If the glass were transparent or behind the apple we wouldn't have a case of occlusion. The Occlusion Strategy might thus run from the idea that the yellow sense-datum of which S is aware is opaque and in front of the wall, and it therefore blocks the wall from view. But although some cases of occlusion will involve the occluding entity being in front of the

occluded entity, it is not obvious that this is a necessary condition for occlusion. Take the following case of Mark Johnston's (1992):

> Consider a transparent object whose surface is green but never looks and almost never would look surface green because the object's interior radiates orange light in such an intensity that the greenness is masked or obscured (pp. 231-232).

We can understand this case in such a way that the intense orange light not only occludes the greenness, but occludes the object itself. But where is the light? The light emanates from the object, but it is not at all clear that it is or spreads *in front of* the object. We can imagine the case as one in which the orange light is *co-located* with the object. Yet it still occludes the object.

Fortunately, we don't need to say anything too specific about the positional dimension of occluding. Let's just note that it is a requirement of occlusion that *there is a* positional dimension to it. That is:

> **Positional Requirement**
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> y will occlude x for a viewer S who is aware of y, only if y and x are both in S's field of view V, and y occupies an occluding position relative to x and S.

We can thus formulate the Occlusion Strategy in terms of the following *Occlusion Argument (OA):*

(OA1) D is opaque

(OA2) S is aware of D in V at occluding position p (relative to the wall and S)

Therefore,

(OA3) D occludes the wall from S's view

(OA4) If S sees the wall at all, she sees it in V

Therefore,

(d) In the Wall Case, S is not aware of the wall.

This certainly *seems* like a legitimate argument. Compare: the pane of glass is opaque. Because of this and the fact that it is in an occluding position relative to the apple and S, it occludes the apple from S's view. And so awareness of the

pane of glass excludes awareness of the apple (given that S doesn't see the apple anywhere else).

Unlike the Spatial Exclusion Argument, the Occlusion Argument involves no commitment to the dubious idea that non-ordinary sense-data can spatially exclude ordinary objects. Still, the Occlusion Strategy is problematic. We will grant (OA2) and (OA4). And, as we'll show, (OA1) is well motivated in the arguer from illusion's framework. But what about the transition from (OA1) and (OA2) to (OA3)? Call this the *occlusion move*. We'll target this for rejection.

Why think that D is opaque? Here the arguer from illusion can appeal to the Phenomenal Principle and reflections on experience. For in the Wall Case, not only does S seem to see something yellow, but something yellow *and opaque*. It follows from the Phenomenal Principle that there is a thing of which S is aware, which is both yellow *and opaque*. Since the wall is not yellow, it is not yellow and opaque, and so, by the Phenomenal Principle and Leibniz's Law, S is aware of a yellow and opaque sense-datum which is not the wall.

Having thus established that D is yellow and opaque, and thus non-identical to the wall, the arguer from illusion will make the occlusion move. For given the meaning of 'opaque', if S is aware of something opaque that is not the wall, then, given that this entity is in an occluding position, S is not also aware of the wall. D blocks the wall from S's view.

But compelling as this line of thought is, it is invalid. Let's call objects which account for the illusory aspects of experience 'elementary sense-data'. For all the argument from illusion says, in the Wall Case, the yellow and opaque sense-datum, D, of which S is aware, is a *composite object* comprised of the wall *and* some yellow elementary sense-datum. We know that D is yellow and opaque, and non-identical to the wall. But for all that, D may in part be constituted by the wall, and in part constituted by an elementary sense-datum. For all that has been said, D could be opaque in virtue of having an opaque part (the wall), and yellow in virtue of having a yellow elementary sense-datum part, just as a white-wall-covered-with-yellow-film is yellow and opaque in virtue of its yellow and opaque parts. If so, it could be that the elementary sense-datum part is responsible for our experience of yellow and the wall part is responsible for our experience of opacity.

Although being aware of a composite object *does not entail* being aware of all of its parts, being aware of a composite is *consistent* with being aware of some of its parts. Moreover, when we see a whole, we often do see some of its parts. So if we are aware of a composite sense-datum consisting of an elementary sense-datum and an ordinary object, this does not preclude us from being aware of the ordinary object, just as when we see a wall covered with yellow film this does not preclude us from seeing the wall.

We are *not claiming* that in the Wall Case S *is* aware of some composite sense-datum D. Rather, the dialectical situation is as follows. We are supposed to be moved to think that S is not aware of the wall because D, a sense-datum S is aware of, is opaque and appropriately situated, and thus occludes the wall. What we've shown is that D may well be opaque and appropriately situated, and yet *still not occlude the wall*. This will be the case if D is a composite composed of an elementary sense-datum and an opaque wall. Thus we have shown the occlusion move to be invalid. The Occlusion Argument, then, cannot be used to establish (EA), and so cannot be used to fix the Base Case of the argument from illusion.

Now given the above Positional Requirement, if the yellow sense-datum is to occlude the wall, the sense-datum must be in S's field of view. The arguer from illusion may be keen to reject this (if, for example, they think of sense-data as mental and the field of view as a region of physical space). They may suggest that what is relevant for occlusion is not position in the field of view, but position in *the structure of experience*. Take again the Wall Case. In purportedly seeing the wall, there is a position p in the structure of S's experience, where yellowness shows up. We can remain non-committal on how to spell out this idea about the structure of experience and positions in it. But the idea is that since an opaque yellow sense-datum shows up at position p in the structure of experience, the wall cannot also be perceived, or cannot also show up in *that* position. We have now relaxed the Positional Requirement so that the yellow sense-datum may still occlude even if we refuse to build into this a commitment to it being in the field of view. But does this help the arguer from illusion? No. All it does it bring out how nothing in our discussion hangs on the way we have understood the Positional Requirement. Since even with the non-committal Positional Requirement, we still need the occlusion move, and that is what we have targeted.

What we have argued also gives us the resources to reply to something which comes up in Smith's discussion of illusion. Smith writes:

> suppose that we see a red tomato that looks black as a result of unusual lighting. We conclude, by the second and third steps of the Argument [(ii) and (iii) above], that we are aware of a black sense-datum distinct from any physical tomato. Now although in this situation the shape of the tomato is not, we may suppose, subject to illusion, we cannot maintain that we are aware visually of the tomato's shape, because, simply in virtue of one of the visible features of the tomato being subject to illusion, a sense-datum has *replaced* the tomato as the object of visual awareness as such. *For*

> *the shape you see is the shape of something black, and the tomato is not black*. I shall refer to this as the "sense-datum infection". (p. 26, our emphasis)

What follows from the case above and the Phenomenal Principle is that S is aware of a black and tomato-shaped sense-datum which is not the tomato, call this T. Given that S is aware of T, is S not aware of the tomato? We might insist that S can still be aware of the tomato since she is aware of its shape. But this won't work, Smith claims, as there is a sense-datum infection. That is, (I) the tomato shape S is aware of is the shape of a black thing, T, and so (II) not the shape of the tomato.

But the move from (I) to (II) is invalid. For suppose T is a *composite* composed of the tomato, and an elementary black sense-datum. Well, then T is black, in virtue of its black part, and it is tomato shaped, in virtue of its *tomato part*. So although the tomato shape S is aware of *is* the shape of a black thing, T, it doesn't follow that the tomato shape is *not also* the shape of a non-black thing, the tomato. The tomato shape which S sees is the shape of *both* the tomato, and T, and this is possible if T is part constituted by the tomato. The sense-datum infection seems appealing, but when we bring to bear the open possibility that T is such a composite, it is unwarranted.

In order to circumvent these latest difficulties, the arguer from illusion must establish either that there are no composite sense-data comprised in part by ordinary objects, or that we cannot be perceptually aware of them, or that whenever we are aware of such composites, we are not aware of the ordinary object part. But these claims are not warranted by anything in the argument from illusion, and it is hard to see what reflections on experience could justify them. Moreover, given that we often can see wholes and their parts, the prospects for denying that we see the ordinary object part of these putative composites seem dim.

3.3 The Error Strategy

A final strategy for supporting (EA) says that unless we endorse (EA), intuitive verdicts obtained on the basis of reflection on experience will be in error. Suppose we follow through with the idea that what S is aware of is a composite, D, composed of an elementary yellow sense-datum, and the wall. Intuitively, if asked to say how many wall looking things she sees in the Wall Case, S would say *one*. But D is surely a wall looking thing, the wall is *another* wall looking thing, and S sees, we are supposing, both of them, and so S is in error. We can avoid S's error by endorsing (EA).

But that we can avoid the error by embracing (EA), does not mean that we cannot avoid the error without embracing (EA). More specifically, the objection assumes that S is in error because she is counting by identity: she counts one where there are in fact two. But as we don't always count by identity, especially when dealing with constitutionally linked objects, this assumption need not be granted.[6] For example, many accept that a statue is not identical to the lump of clay from which it is made. Still, when faced with such a statue and asked how many two-metre tall objects are in front you? many would answer 'one', even though there are two. But even if we eschew such a metaphysics, it still seems that we do not always count by identity. As Lewis notes (1976, pp. 63-64), if S asks how many roads they have to cross to reach their destination, we will count not by identity but by 'identity-along-her-path' when two roads overlap, and answer 'one' rather than 'two'. So the fact that we do not count by identity in the present case is no objection to claim that in illusions we are aware of the putative ordinary object of experience as well as the sense-datum.

We've argued that the argument from illusion is invalid, and the natural way to fix it in terms of the Exclusion Assumption is not obviously correct or easy to justify.[7] Perhaps there is a secure way to ground the Exclusion Assumption, or another fix for the argument, but that remains to be seen. What we've uncovered is, in effect, this: the arguer from illusion tries to run the Base Case of the argument with the Phenomenal Principle and a minimal form of the sense-datum theory; one which invokes only a *thin* conception of sense-data. But this is invalid and a natural way to fix it works *only if we invoke some more substantive metaphysics of sense-data*. On this conception sense-data must either *spatially exclude*, or be *wholly distinct from* ordinary objects. But the argument from illusion itself doesn't support these claims, and even if we grant the minimal sense-datum framework, it is not obvious what should lead us to endorse these claims.

4 The Common Sense Conception of Perception

The arguer from illusion might take the above critical remarks on board and react as follows. We have resisted Interim Negative Claim that in illusions we are not aware of ordinary objects. But given that we have *not* challenged the

[6] In fact, Liebesman (2014) argues that we never count by identity.

[7] O'Shaughnessy (2003) argues that awareness of sense-data (which he conceives of as mental) doesn't exclude awareness of other entities (see also O'Shaughnessy (1984, 2000)). In contrast to our discussion, O'Shaughnessy's discussion is not in the context of the argument from illusion and is complicated by the involvement of a mediate/immediate awareness distinction.

Phenomenal Principle, we are granting that the Base Case establishes that in cases of illusion we are (additionally) aware of an elementary sense-datum non-identical to the ordinary object. The arguer from illusion then adds that *even this* requires a revision to our ordinary understanding of such illusory situations, and veridical perceptual situations if we also allow the Spreading Step. So perhaps the arguer from illusion can deliver a blow to our common sense conception of perception after all, despite what we've argued?

We have three remarks to make in response to this. First, with such a thin and non-specific conception of elementary sense-data, why should we think that introducing them in cases of illusion is at odds with anything we are committed to in our ordinary understanding of perception? Unless the arguer from illusion can establish some thicker conception of elementary sense-data, whether or not their introduction is at odds with our common sense picture of perception is an open question.

Second, we need to distinguish between a claim being inconsistent with common sense, and a claim being additional to the claims of common sense (see the discussion of 'revisionary metaphysics' in Snowdon (2008, p. 117)). Each case requires a revision of common sense, but the revision required in each case is different. The invalid version of the argument from illusion involves the Interim Negative Claim which is inconsistent with common sense. But once we correct for the invalidity of that argument it is not at all obvious that we get a claim which is *inconsistent* with, as opposed to merely *additional to* our common sense picture of perception: not being committed to there being Fs of which we are aware is not the same as being committed to there not being Fs of which we are aware.

Now it may be thought that, by the Spreading Step, if we are aware of elementary sense-data in the illusory case, then we are aware of such sense-data in the veridical case. As Broad (1952) puts it:

> No doubt it would be possible in theory to admit [that illusions require sense-data], and yet to maintain that in the one case of direct vision through a homogeneous medium one really is (as one appears to oneself to be in all cases) prehending a part of the coloured surface of a remote foreign body. But, in view of the continuity between the most normal and the most abnormal cases of seeing, such a doctrine would be utterly implausible and could be defended only by the most desperate special pleading (p. 9)

And Robinson agrees: 'It is, therefore, very implausible to say that some of these cases involve direct apprehension of an external object and in the others of a sense-datum. So the argument generalises easily.' (1994, p. 57).

Broad and Robinson are working on the assumption that the Interim Negative Claim has already been established, and so conclude that it would be implausible to go from being aware of an ordinary object in a case of veridical perception to instead being aware of just a non-ordinary sense-datum in cases of illusion. As Smith (2002, p. 28) puts it 'it is crucial to our understanding of illusion… that we are aware of the same object in an illusion that we could perceive veridically. Thus the very nature of illusion demands acceptance of the generalizing step of the argument.'

But as we have shown, the Interim Negative Claim has not been established. Rather what has been established is that in an illusion one is aware of an elementary sense-datum non-identical to the ordinary object one is purportedly perceiving. But as we have highlighted above, this is consistent with Smith's desideratum that we are aware of the same object in illusory cases – the ordinary object – that we perceive veridically in non-illusory cases. Further, if we consider a case of veridical experience where we seem to be aware of ordinary objects, and then introduce an illusory aspect, e.g., by bathing a white wall in yellow light, it seems very odd to say that we go from seeing the wall to not seeing it, even if we endorse the Phenomenal Principle. So if we hold on to the Phenomenal Principle it seems natural to posit elementary sense-data only when needed. And given that they are not needed in veridical cases, there is no need to posit them in such cases. Our third and final point, then, is that the Spreading Step, does not force a revision of our common sense picture of veridical perception.

It might be replied, however, that our observations are otiose, since in cases of *hallucination*, one is not aware of an ordinary object. If so, could not a case against the common sense picture of perception be mounted from this uncontroversial premise?

There are three things to note here. First, our focus has been on the argument from illusion and how *it* seeks to establish a revision of common sense. It is worth getting straight on whether this argument achieves its aims even if there are other arguments which establish the same conclusion. Second, the uncontroversial premise is not inconsistent with our common sense picture of hallucination, and so contrasts with the Interim Negative Claim which is inconsistent with our ordinary understanding of illusion. So conceding the former does not immediately threaten the common sense picture of perception in the way in which accepting the Interim Negative Claim does. Third, it is not clear that the Spreading Step in the imagined argument from hallucination is as plausible as it is in the argument from illusion. As Smith puts it

> it is crucial to our understanding of illusion, as opposed to halluci-

> nation, that we are aware of the same object in an illusion that we could perceive veridically. Thus the very nature of illusion demands acceptance of the generalizing step of the argument… To deny this is to treat illusions as hallucinations (2002, p. 28).

So one may happily concede that one is not aware of ordinary objects in cases of hallucination, and even that one is aware of an elementary sense-datum in such cases, without conceding that one is not aware of ordinary objects (and that one is aware of non-ordinary sense-data) in cases of perception, whether veridical or illusory. The types of considerations which have motivated the arguer from illusion do not carry over, *mutatis mutandis*, to cases of hallucination. This is not to deny that there are other considerations which might support an argument against the common sense picture of perception from the possibility of hallucination. But this would be a different type of argument (e.g., Martin (2004)). As a result, there is no suasive argument from illusion, or from the considerations which drive it, even granting the Phenomenal Principle.

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