

PHILOSOPHICAL LECTURE

THE OBJECTS OF THE FIVE SENSES

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ONE may, with complete linguistic propriety, be said to see, hear, feel, smell, and taste a wide variety of things. Clearly one may see, hear, feel, smell, and taste physical objects like motor cars and apples; it requires ingenious stage setting to make 'I hear an apple' or 'I taste a motor car' sound natural—how do apples sound and motor cars taste?—but one may certainly hear a motor car or taste an apple. Events, too, are possible objects of the senses; one may see or hear a collision, feel the beating of a pulse, or smell the breakfast cooking, though it is not easy to find plausible examples of tasting events. Further, one may be sensibly aware that something is the case; one sees that the sun is shining, smells that someone has been smoking, and so on. There are also many possibilities that are harder to categorize, such as seeing the splendour of the sunrise, tasting the bitterness of the vinegar, and hearing the anger or contempt in a voice.

But I am not now directly concerned with the examination of these possible objects of the senses. Nor am I concerned with such objects as philosophers, while constructing theories of perception, have rightly or wrongly alleged to be the true, direct or ultimate objects of the senses, such as ideas in the mind or sense-data of debatable ontological status. Philosophers from Aristotle onwards have also wished to distinguish certain immediate or proper objects of the senses at a pre-theoretical level. Thus at the very beginning of the first of the *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, before Hylas has been shaken by any argument, Philonous asks: 'You will farther inform me, whether we immediately perceive by sight anything beside light, and colours, and figures: or by hearing anything but sounds; by the palate, anything beside tastes; by the smell beside odours; or by the touch more than tangible qualities.' Hylas answers without hesitation, though as yet philosophically unenlightened by Philonous, 'We do not.'

Some of us, at least, will not be willing to accept this as Berkeley understands it, so that an immediate consequence is that 'sensible things therefore are nothing else but so many sensible qualities, or combinations of sensible qualities'. But perhaps we can find a less tendentious formula which may give a certain primacy to at least some of the objects of the senses listed by Berkeley. Let us try the following: anyone who claims to perceive any other kind of object, such as a physical thing, an event, or a state of affairs, is committed to the claim that he perceives one of the objects listed by Berkeley; but he is not logically committed to any of these other claims by the claim to have perceived one of the objects listed by Berkeley. This seems to work pretty well with at least tastes, odours, and sounds. One can hardly claim to have smelt the toast burning but not claim to have smelt any odour, whereas one might claim to smell an acrid odour without being willing to commit oneself any further; one cannot claim to hear a motor car but deny that one hears a sound, whereas one may be unwilling to commit oneself further than that one hears a sound; one cannot claim to be tasting an onion without acknowledging that one tastes a taste, but may refuse to claim that a certain taste is the taste of an onion, just a taste in one's mouth, or anything else.

Sounds, smells, and tastes do seem to have a certain primacy as objects of hearing, smelling, and tasting; I do not wish now to dispute how felicitously the criterion proposed explains this primacy. It would also be implausible to deny that figure and colour are visible in some more basic way than are many things that we speak of ourselves as seeing, and it would be valuable to attempt to clarify in what way this is so. But within one lecture I propose to limit myself to a sufficiently difficult but more modest inquiry. I propose to discuss fairly fully the nature of sounds and, less fully, the nature of smells, and then to ask whether there are any objects of sight with approximately the same general status as that possessed by sounds and smells and which can be regarded as basic to sight in the same way as sounds and smells are basic to their senses. I shall try to show that the objects of sight which are most similar to sounds and smells in their general features have no claim at all to be primary objects of sight, the proper objects of vision, that nothing visible has a role analogous to that of sounds and smells. The conclusion to be drawn is that while it may be correct to regard, say, colours as in some way the proper objects of sight, they do not stand in the same relation to other objects of sight

as sounds and smells, the traditional proper objects of hearing and smelling, stand towards other things that we may properly be said to hear and smell. A further conclusion will be that we cannot have a single theory of perception for all the senses; but we shall be more concerned with noting facts than with drawing theoretical morals. We shall not be concerned with scientific problems, though there will be a scientific analogue to many of the points noted; nor shall we have to construct or criticize philosophical theories of perception. We are concerned rather with the linguistic phenomenology of perception, with exhibiting the way we do speak about such matters. This is something that we should be clear about before we say that it is adequate or inadequate, provide it with a metaphysical justification, or offer suggested improvements.

Let us, then, start with sounds, which, somewhat surprisingly, are barely mentioned in most of the well-known philosophical works on perception. Needless to say, they are not physical objects, but they have some very general features in common with physical objects.

(a) Like physical objects, sounds are individuals and may be counted. As is the case with physical objects, there may be great practical difficulties in counting them, or theoretical difficulties about what in a given context is to count as one or many. As we may see one beach or a number of grains of sand, so we may hear the one sound of an orchestral chord or the discriminable sounds of many instruments. But on the whole we tend to regard independently generated sounds as separate sounds or as enumerable components of a sound. Further, if we hear two easily discriminable pitches we regard ourselves for many purposes as hearing two sounds, even if they are generated by a single event, for example, the over-blowing of a wind-instrument. In many situations we do not have and do not need, but could readily invent, criteria for determining the number of individual sounds to be heard. But it is as easy to count the ticks of a clock or the rings of an average doorbell as the rings on a fine lady's fingers or the bells on her toes. The difficulties about counting sounds are in principle no greater than those of counting things and events.

(b) Like physical objects, sounds last for a finite time. Probably most physical objects last longer than most sounds. But the sound of the Niagara Falls outdates our most cherished antiquities. 'How long did that sound last?' is always a reasonable question and there is no upper limit to the possible answers.

We know, too, that the sound of a bell may outlast the striking of the bell that generated it, though usually not the bell; the sound of a bomb explosion presumably outlasts both the explosion and the bomb.

(c) Like physical objects, but in this respect more like a quantum of some liquid or gas, sounds are three-dimensional. A sound may fill a room as easily as a pint of beer may fill a tankard. But the boundaries of sounds are usually ill-defined, and here there is a better analogy with a patch of mist, which often thins out imperceptibly at the edges.

(d) Like physical objects, sounds are capable of local motion. The sound of a transatlantic aircraft crosses the Atlantic with the aircraft and one may hear it receding into the distance. But sounds are also capable of independent motion, as the phenomenon of the echo plainly shows.

There are, of course, striking negative analogies between sounds and physical objects. In particular, sounds lack the primary quality of impenetrability or exclusive occupation of space; two sounds may simultaneously fill a room, but, alas, one cannot simultaneously have two pints of beer in a pint pot. But the positive analogies are sufficient to make it clear why we commonly regard sounds as individual physical phenomena rather than as qualities of, aspects of, or abstractions from other physical phenomena. As such, they enter into causal relationships with other physical things and phenomena. This is not a revelation of science. To speak of sounds making people jump and giving people headaches and of their being themselves made, produced, emitted, and generated is still to speak with the vulgar of facts which the learned explain but did not discover. In assigning causes to sounds, as in the case of other causal attributions, we customarily single out one of the many factors according to the context, our information, and our interests. A note may be attributed to a player, to a violin, or to the vibration of a string, a series of bangs to guns or to a battle, a crashing noise to two motor cars or to a collision. In the generation of some sounds, such as thunder, nothing that would ordinarily be counted as a physical body seems to be intimately involved. But, in general, any account of the cause of a sound which we should regard as tolerably complete will include reference to an event or events in which one or more bodies are participants.

Because any kind of object may participate in an event which generated a sound, we can, in a suitable context, say that just

about any body is making, was making, or made a sound. But we can say of a body timelessly that it makes a certain sound only if that body commonly and characteristically participates in events which cause that sort of noise. If I hear a spluttering sound from the direction of the oven and ask my wife what *is making* the noise, she may tell me that it is an apple pie. But there is no true statement to the effect that apple pies *make* any sort of noise; nor are apple pies unusual in this respect. On the other hand, circular saws make a screaming noise and a Rolls Royce makes the faintest purring sound. Doors in general do not make any particular sound, but it may be that *this* door makes a squeaking noise. If your wind-instrument is making a gurgling noise you had better blow it out; if it makes a gurgling noise you had better buy a new one.

As we have the grammatically intransitive verbs 'fiddle' and 'flute' as synonyms for 'play the fiddle (flute)', and 'hedge' and 'ditch' as synonyms for 'make and tend hedges (ditches)', so we have intransitive verbs as synonyms for the making of sounds of various familiar kinds. We may say that the apple pie is spluttering, that circular saws scream, and that this door squeaks. The present perfect tense is, like the tenseless 'make a sound', used only with reference to characteristic sounds. It is more serious if your wind-instrument gurgles than if it is merely gurgling now.

We must now note that the noun 'sound' is ambiguous. As we have so far been using it, it is the name of a physical phenomenon, is approximately a synonym of 'noise', and is the generic name for the kind of thing of which screams, bangs, howls, groans, tinkles, and yells are species. But 'sound' is not always an approximate synonym of 'noise' and the name of a generic phenomenon. One way to make this clear is to instance some idioms in which the word 'sound' naturally occurs but the substitution of 'noise' would produce not a slight deviation in sense but a barbarism.

Clearly it is idiomatic to say that the French horn has a romantic sound, that this violin has a mellow sound, a gently flowing brook has a soothing sound, vacuum cleaners have an irritating sound, and the like. But while we can say that a violin makes or is making a mellow sound and a French horn a romantic sound, with different but equally good sense, one cannot say in any circumstances that a violin or a French horn is having a mellow or romantic sound. Nor can one say that the brook is having a soothing sound, even if it is having a soothing effect on one's nerves, and similarly with other examples.

But not only are we unable to substitute 'is having' for 'has' in the expression 'has such and such a sound', we are also unable to replace the noun 'sound' by 'noise' in that expression. No doubt the fact that 'noise' is generally used disparagingly of sounds of indeterminate pitch in musical contexts makes the sentence 'That French horn is making a very romantic noise' sound a bit odd; but it is at least possible English, whereas 'The French horn has a romantic noise' is not. Certainly 'The brook is making a soothing noise' is impeccable, as is 'Vacuum cleaners make an irritating noise'; but we cannot say either that the brook has a soothing noise or that vacuum cleaners have an irritating noise.

We may also note that while one may say of something that it makes a noise or makes a sound one cannot say that it has a sound, unqualified. One may say of a whistle that it makes a sound or noise if one blows it, but not that it has a sound or noise, with or without the conditional 'if one blows it', though one may say that it has a shrill sound.¹

The explanation of these points of idiom, not in themselves of excessive importance though of interest to those who find the subtleties of language as much a source of wonder as the starry heavens, is, I think, that 'sound', in addition to its meaning in which it is an approximate synonym of 'noise', has also a meaning in which it is an approximate synonym of 'tonal characteristic', 'tone quality', and 'timbre'. One employs the causal verb 'make' when the object is a physical phenomenon, a sound or noise, produced, emitted, or made. But 'The French horn has a romantic sound' is parallel to 'This crime has certain interesting features' or 'The monkey-puzzle tree has a curious shape'. One might say that the French horn has a romantic sound and arresting visual characteristics as well; this does not involve the crashing of logical gears which 'The French horn has a romantic sound and a cup mouthpiece' would entail. Again, one may simply say that something made, or produced a noise without specifying what the noise was like; but to say that the French horn has a sound, *tout court*, involves the same

¹ It would be too much to say that the expression 'has a noise' cannot occur in idiomatic English; one may say that a certain motor car has an (irritating) noise in its differential, for example. Here 'has' must be treated as a synonym of 'possesses' or 'contains'; one is locating the noise within the motor car. In this case one would not say that the motor car is making the noise in its differential; it will be something like a fractured pinion that is making the noise within the car. But now the fractured pinion will not be said to have a noise.

inanity as to say that a crime has features or a monkey-puzzle tree has a shape. One says that a thing has a sound of a certain sort, not that it is having a sound, since in general the possession of a quality is not an activity, and here one is predicating a tone quality, not attributing production of a noise.

It may seem a brachylogy to say that the objects which make the sounds have tonal characteristics, as we certainly do, rather than that the sounds made have the tonal characteristics. It may thus seem more accurate to say that the sounds made by horns are romantic than that the horn has a romantic sound. I take it, however, that we want to attribute the tonal qualities of the noises made to the nature of the thing that produces them, and thus ascribe the tonal characteristics to the thing itself as causal properties. As we have seen, we may say that a thing is making a sound but not that it has the sound when we do not wish to attribute the quality of the sound to the special nature of the thing. The apple pie in the oven may be making a spluttering noise, but so may anything else that is cooking, and the apple pie does not always make it, even when in an oven; so we do not say that the apple pie has a spluttering sound. The word 'sound', then, may be the name of a type of three-dimensional phenomenon or be an approximate synonym of 'tonal characteristic'.

We must leave our study of sounds and noises in this incomplete state and move on to a brief consideration of smells. Smells seem to me to have a very similar status to that of sounds, though we could not repeat verbatim about them all that we said of sounds. Like sounds, smells are physical phenomena, three-dimensional phenomena which may pervade a volume of space. They persist through time, often outlasting whatever made, produced, or emitted them. They may be blown about on the wind. Successive discrete smells are readily counted, though, no doubt because our powers of discrimination are less in smelling than in hearing, our ability to count and our criteria for counting concomitant smells are relatively feeble. As in the case of sounds, we may make a causal attribution of smells to events like explosions. But when we attribute a smell to a thing the case is rather different from that of sounds. At the phenomenal, as well as at the scientific, level we recognize that when we attribute a sound to a thing, the cause will always be expansible into something happening to that thing; but at the phenomenal level we often regard things as giving off smells without anything happening to them. The kipper just

gives off a smell without being beaten, crushed, or shaken. Consequently, when we say that something made a smell we are much more ready to say that it has that smell than is the case with sounds. But, once again, I think that to say that something made a smell is to attribute to it the production of a physical phenomenon, whereas to say that it has a certain smell is to attribute a quality to it. 'Smell' is thus ambiguous as 'sound' is.

Here I leave my account of smells and sounds. Little has been said of smells, but sufficient, perhaps, to establish that they are of a similar general character to that of sounds. It is time now to turn to our main question.

Are there any things that we see that are reasonably parallel to the sounds that we hear and the odours that we smell? We have quoted Berkeley as listing colours (and even figures) with sounds and smells, and know that countless other philosophers have done the same. We shall consider colours more closely later on; but obviously they are not three-dimensional individuals persisting through time and typically caused, made, produced, or emitted by bodies and events. They are non-starters as the visible analogue of sounds and smells. There are, however, some more plausible visible analogues to be considered, though they have received very little attention from philosophers. I refer to such things as glows, flashes, glares, beams of searchlights and headlamps, and halos. It seems almost platitudinous to say that the visible analogue of an audible clap of thunder is a flash of lightning, so it may be reasonable to attempt to extend this platitude to other sounds and other visible things that have the same general status as flashes of lightning.

Like sounds, glows are clearly three-dimensional individuals, normally made, produced, or emitted by some object or event, such as a glow-worm or a fire. They can be counted; I may from a mountain at night count ten glows from the lights of ten different cities. If I bring two glowing objects into a small room their glows may become fused, rather like the ingredients of a cocktail, but temporally discrete glows, flashes of a signal lamp, and the like, are easily counted. Clearly glows and searchlight beams can move, though less independently of their source than is the case with smells and sounds, perhaps, since we have likened sounds to physical objects, we may note that beams and shafts are physical objects and find the expressions 'headlight beam' and 'shaft of sunlight' not inappropriate.

Enough has been said, I trust, to show that in certain ways

such visible phenomena as glows and flashes are quite analogous in character to smells and sounds, far more so than any other visible phenomena that I can think of. But, on the other hand, they are clearly impossibly implausible candidates for the role of being the proper objects of the sense of sight, as smells and sounds are the proper objects of the senses of smell and hearing. Whatever one hears, one must hear a sound; whatever one smells, one must smell a smell. But I may see a needle or a haystack in the complete absence of any glows, or kindred phenomena. Such phenomena are merely possible objects of sight, in this respect on a par with physical objects, not inevitable ingredients in any use of the sense of sight. Let us then turn our attention to colours, though we have already seen cause to doubt whether their role in perception is in any way analogous to that of sounds and smells.

When philosophers say that we hear sounds we can construe them as saying that typical, perhaps the primary, objects of the verb 'to see' are names of sounds. But, though it is a platitude of philosophies of perception that we see colours, this dictum cannot be given a parallel interpretation. 'I hear a squeak, a grunt, a groan' is all very well; but 'I see a blue, a pink, and a yellow' makes sense only when a noun is contextually supplied. (Perhaps there are variously coloured pansies in a flower bed; I myself see a blue, a pink, and a yellow.) One may also say 'I see blue, pink, and yellow', though it is not a very common remark and requires a rather special context. It is the sort of thing that one may say in response to the question how many colours one can see on a map. But now one is no longer listing individuals; if there are three blue, three pink, and three yellow patches on the map one says that one sees three colours, not nine. Thus, when a colour word is the object of the verb 'to see' we have a rarish and sophisticated idiom, not a typical report of visual experience. The dictum that we see colours is not parallel to the truism that we hear sounds.

Colours are, obviously, in the jargon of philosophy, qualities, not individuals; noises and smells are individuals, not qualities. In the case of musical sounds, an area in which our vocabulary is more sophisticated than elsewhere, timbres and pitches would have a status more like that of colours than the sounds themselves. If three groups of three instruments play a triad of notes one will, if one's ear is good, hear nine sounds but three pitches; the pitches not the sounds, will thus be parallel to the colours on the map. Psychologically, the analogy between colour and

timbre is still more appealing than that between colour and pitch. Musicians, indeed, very often speak of tone-colour rather than of timbre. So if we refuse colour admittance into the list on which sounds and smells feature, we can add it to the list which contains timbre and pitch. As everything that we see, including glows and flashes, has some colour, though usually a pretty nondescript one, so every sound we hear has some timbre, though usually a pretty nondescript one and components varying in pitch; as we can list colours—red, blue, green, etc., so we can list timbres—acidity, reediness, brassiness, etc. Our vocabulary of smell is poorish, but we can list acidity, fragrance, mustiness, etc. As we can explain scientifically the timbre of a sound in terms of the combinations of frequencies of vibrations, but it remains nonsense to speak of the sound as causing its timbre, so we can explain the colour of its possessor in terms of other physical properties of that thing but cannot say that the thing causes its colour. Maybe the presence of chlorophyll makes the grass green and the sun makes the tomato grow red, but to say that the grass causes its green or that the tomato makes, produces, or emits its red is nonsense. Philosophers have too often talked as though colours were like glows, emitted by a thing but condensed into a film on the thing's surface. It is as if a glow were like a pan of gravy and a colour like the film on the bottom of the pan when one has allowed the water to boil away. But colours are not dehydrated glows. If anything visible is parallel to a sound, it is a glow; if anything audible is parallel to a colour it is a timbre or tone-colour. But neither a tone-colour nor a visible colour is ontologically parallel to a sound.

There is, however, yet another traditional candidate for the position of visual analogue of the sound of a thing. As we may say that a thing has such and such a sound, so we may say that it has such and such a look, and as we may say that we do not like the sound of a thing, so we may say that we do not like the look of it. This parallelism may be supported by obvious similarities between the expressions 'This sounds f' and 'This looks f'. There are also obvious dissimilarities between looks and sounds which should quickly dissuade us from pressing the comparison; most notably, it would be a barbarism to speak of a thing making, producing, or emitting a look, as it may emit a sound. Examples of similarity are easier found when 'sound' means quality of tone than when it means a noise. In general, a look is not a three-dimensional physical phenomenon which enters into causal relations with other physical things, as is a

sound. But a short discussion of looks will not be out of place, since I know of no even approximately correct account of them.

I do not propose to examine carefully here our use of expressions of the form 'This looks f'; there is as yet no entirely satisfactory discussion of these either, but I cannot now try to provide it. However, it seems clear that when we say that a thing looks f the question whether it is in fact f arises in some way. To say that a thing looks f may in one context be to suggest that it is f; in another context the fact that it looks f may be contrasted with the fact that it is not f. Thus we may say 'She looks tired', with the implied suggestion that she probably is, or say that the sun looks no bigger than a sixpence in contrast with our knowledge of its vast size. Thus 'This looks f' may be a tentative approach to 'This is f' or a contrast with 'This is f'. But we shall find that when we use the noun 'look' quite different issues are raised. The noun needs separate investigation and must not be assumed to be similar in all respects except grammar to the verb.

There is a not infrequent situation in which we are required to describe the visual aspect of a thing, or, more colloquially, say what it looks like. You might, for example, not ask me for a full architectural description of my house, but ask me to describe its visual aspect, to tell you what it looks like. Many things can be said in answer to such a request. For example, the account may include 'It's plain brick', which is not strictly part of an account of the look of the house, but is in order since from it an inference to such an account is readily made. More importantly, such an account will include such information as 'It is red' or 'It is square' much more naturally and normally than 'It looks red' or 'It looks square'. In other words, to describe the look of a thing is primarily to say how it is, in so far as visible, not to say how it looks in contrast to how it is.

Now our vocabulary for describing the look of a thing, so far as simple adjectives are concerned, is meagre beyond colour, shape, and size (nor are shape and size purely visual features). This is part of the reason why in describing the look of a thing we so commonly give such information as 'It's made of brick', 'It's rusty', or 'It's dirty', from which the visual aspect may be inferred, in preference to attempting a strictly visual description. But we have another device, especially useful for giving general impressions and for more or less aesthetic appraisal. We may say such things as 'She has a tired (fragile) look'; 'The Alps have a majestic look'; or 'He has an opulent look'. To say

that she has a tired look is to say something quite different from either 'She is tired' or 'She looks tired'. I may say that she looks tired this evening because she is slumped in a chair with her eyes half closed; either appearances are deceptive or we should not expect too much from her. But to say that she has a tired look is to add a more subtle touch to a description of her which may have started out by mentioning her fair hair and slender arms. The question whether she is tired is not being raised.

Again, when Caesar wished to describe the visual aspect of Cassius it would not have been to the point to say that Cassius was hungry, even if it was true. If he had said that Cassius looked hungry, one would have taken him to be speculating on the basis of visual evidence that Cassius was in need of a square meal, rather than describing Cassius. What Caesar said was that Cassius had a hungry look, which is a pure description of visual aspect and does not raise the question whether he was in need of food or not. Sometimes when it is said that a thing has an *f* look the question whether it is in fact *f* could scarcely be raised, since the adjective cannot be directly applied to it. I may say that a certain lily has an opulent look, but one could scarcely raise the question whether it is in fact opulent. It could be said that the Alps have a majestic look; it could indeed be said that the Alps were majestic, quite simply, since there is no likelihood here of misinterpretation; one may omit the word 'look' since it is so clear that the adjective 'majestic' is here functioning as an adjective of visual description. But if someone were to raise the question: 'Admittedly the Alps have a majestic look, but are they in fact majestic?', we should be hard put to it to find a literal significance for his question. No doubt there is always some connection between being *f* and having an *f* look. Presumably an opulent look is one which is in some way appropriate in the rich, but nobody would suppose that all and only rich men have an opulent look. To say that somebody has an opulent look is to describe his visual aspect, not to speculate about his bank balance.

Since the expression 'has an *f* look' is used to supplement such accounts of the visual aspect of objects as 'It is red (high, square)', one would not expect such adjectives as 'red' and 'high' to be incorporated in the phrase 'has an (adjective) look'; they already clearly refer to such visible features. These expectations are justified. In describing the visual aspect of a thing one says that it is red, not that it has a red look. The Alps have a majestic look; we say that since 'majestic' does not primarily apply to

visual aspect. But they are not said to have a high look—they simply are high. The whole point of adding the word 'look' is to show that the adjective which precedes it is being used to describe the visual aspect when otherwise it clearly would not (tired or might not (romantic) be so understood. But it is obvious that such adjectives as colour words are being so used and the expedient would be otiose. When such adjectives are occasionally used in conjunction with 'look', it is precisely to indicate that they are not now to be taken quite literally, as when we say that somebody has an angular look.

The noun 'look' functions generally in the way just described, and not only when incorporated in the phrase 'has an f look', the case so far considered. Thus, to say that one likes the look of a building is to say that one likes it considered as an object of sight, without committing oneself about its other merits. Certainly it is not to say that one likes something other than the building, which one sees in some more fundamental sense of 'see' than that in which one sees the building. Again, if one sees a building from a great distance, so that it looks like a little box, one is simply not in a position to say that the building has a box-like look, an aesthetic judgement best made only after careful inspection. Or, further, the *O.E.D.*'s quotation from T. Fuller: 'This colourless Syrup . . . gives no unpleasing colour, nor alters the look of the Medicine in the least', though dated 1710, is still standard English. It clearly means that the syrup alters neither the colour nor any other feature of the medicine that is accessible to the sense of sight. The look of a thing is that aspect of it which one can become aware of by looking at it.

Just because sounds are individual phenomena and looks are not, we find here a dissimilarity between the use of 'has an f look' and 'has an f sound'. We say that the Alps have a majestic look, but that they are high, rather than that they have a high look. But if we take an adjective clearly descriptive of the audible, such as 'reedy', we find that we may say that the oboe has a reedy sound just as easily as that it has a plaintive sound. The explanation of this fact is that there is the sound to be described, and we may say that it is reedy or slightly acid. But there is not a look to be talked about, so we cannot say that a look is red or tall. Adjectives like 'shrill', 'reedy', 'booming', etc., primarily apply to sounds and thence to things; adjectives like 'red', 'high', and 'square' apply to things primarily, and there is no such thing as a look for them to be applied to.

Thus to talk about sounds is primarily to talk about physical phenomena caused and emitted by things; to talk about looks is to talk about things in so far as they are objects of sight. Since some philosophers have incautiously talked as though looks might be the colloquial equivalent of ideas or sense-data, it might be as well to note that we can change non-visual adjectives into visual ones by means of the 'look' device when we apply them to, for example, hallucinations as easily as when we apply them to physical objects. As I may supplement my description of the visible aspect of an animal by adding the information that it has a menacing look to the information that it is tawny, so I may tell you that my hallucination of an animal, known by me to be such, is tawny and has a menacing look. By saying that it has a menacing look rather than that it is menacing I indicate that I am engaged in describing what I see. If I had said that it was menacing you might have thought that I was under the delusion that it might eat me. It is to be hoped that no one will assimilate the ontological status of the look of a hallucination to that of the sound of a trumpet, or wish to translate 'I now see a hallucinatory beast that has a menacing look' into 'I now see a menacing sense-datum belonging to a hallucinatory beast'.

This discussion even of the objects of sight and hearing is far from complete. Not only have we left the verbs 'to look' and 'to sound' in sad obscurity, having concentrated on the substantives 'a look', 'a sound'; we have not discussed at all such objects of sight as views and appearances, and, no doubt, many others. I am sure this investigation needs extending to the objects of the other senses, as well as being made more thorough in itself. Philosophical works on perception commonly spare only a cursory glance at these matters. Now I am myself far from clear quite what a philosophical theory of perception is supposed to do; it is not clear what remains to be done when we have the linguistic phenomenology and the scientific theory to explain the facts. Some philosophers appear to think that a philosophical theory is needed to provide us with a more accurate and less misleading way of thinking about perception than we normally use, while others appear to think that it should provide us with a clearer understanding of our conceptual system rather than a correction of it; others again apparently wish to give us some deeper account of what really happens. But, whatever may be the right view on this matter, it is surely necessary for us to have at our disposal a reasonably full and

accurate description of the conceptual apparatus which is to be improved or philosophically illuminated. Yet we have certainly no such accurate account at our disposal. If what I have said in this paper has seemed glaringly obvious rather than new discovery I shall in a way be glad; for a description of something with which we are all familiar should strike us in this way.

But standard treatments of perception by philosophers often ignore or belie what I have been saying. Thus, to take a clear example, traditional subjective idealism and phenomenalism have made out physical objects to be bundles of ideas of the five senses, or logical constructions out of sense-data of the five senses. But without casting any doubt on the legitimacy of such general programmes, we can see at once that the auditory sense-data or ideas should belong to bundles of ideas or logical constructions which are sounds, and that these must be seen as causally related, sometimes quite unimportantly, to the otherwise composed bundles or logical constructions which are physical objects. Such theories may, indeed, be objectionable for far more basic reasons; but they are also in this way simply inadequate to the facts. Perhaps matters have not been advanced very far in this lecture; my excuse must be that I have started at the beginning of a large enterprise, in which philosophers usually start in the middle with false assumptions. There is a lot of work yet to be done before we reach the customary starting-point of philosophies of perception.