INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I have undertaken two tasks. First, I have put together and critically examined the various criticisms which have been levelled against the sense-datum theory of perception. This theory, once very fashionable amongst philosophers, has been criticised from many different points of view during the last two decades. I have grouped these criticisms under three heads: the epistemological, the linguistic and the phenomenological. The points made out by these three groups of criticisms are not entirely mutually exclusive, but there is a distinct difference in emphasis which has led me to this classification.

In the second place, I have tried to formulate my own attitude towards the sense-datum theory of perception and so in a way towards the philosophical problem of perception in general in the light of the criticisms and my reflections on them. It would be seen that my own outlook has been greatly influenced by the phenomenological theory of perception as we find it in Merleau-Ponty and also in Whitehead.

The thesis is not meant to be an exhaustive study of the problem of perception in general. I have chosen only one particular theory for critical examination. It is not also historically exhaustive. In the first chapter I have
given a brief account of the sense-datum theory, again
without aiming at exhaustiveness. My purpose is to explain
briefly the main points of this theory as well as the main
arguments on which it is based. In this statement I do not
claim to have any novelty. But to the best of my knowledge
there does not exist any exhaustive account of all the
different criticisms which have been in recent years made
against the sense-datum theory. That is why I have devoted
a large part of my work to collect together, systematise,
classify and critically examine all these various criticisms.
The next five chapters are devoted to this. I believe that,
this in itself would fill in an important gap in the philo­
sophical literature on perception. Those who are linguis­
tically oriented have neglected the important works of the
phenomenologists, and the phenomenologists who believe in
perception have not been aware of the works of the linguistic
and analytical philosophers. I have tried to put them
together for I think both to be well done. My own thinking
has been influenced by both, but most of all by Merleau­
Ponty and Whitehead.

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