

Disjunctivism

Contemporary Readings

edited by Alex Byrne and Heather Logue

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Introduction

Alex Byrne and Heather Logue

The philosophy of perception has been undergoing something of a resurgence recently, enlivened by fresh positions and arguments. One central debate concerns the status of perception as *intentional* or *representational* (see many of the essays in Crane 1992, Gunther 2003, Gendler and Hawthorne 2006). Another (related) central debate concerns the *disjunctive theory of perception*, the present topic. This book collects together work on disjunctivism, from its beginnings in the 1960s to a few years ago, that has played a significant role in the development of the theory and its rivals; a comprehensive bibliography follows these selections. We hope this book will be something of a companion volume to Haddock and Macpherson 2008b, a collection of new essays on disjunctivism.

1. What is disjunctivism?

Imagine that you are looking at an ordinary lemon in good light. Your vision is good: you see the lemon, and it looks yellow and ovoid. Now suppose that, unbeknownst to you, some minor deity removes the lemon, while preserving its proximal neural effects. Your brain is in the same local physical states as it was in when the lemon was there: the neurons in your visual cortex, for instance, are firing in the same pattern. After the removal, you do not see the lemon, because the lemon is not around to be seen. Yet—we can all grant—you notice nothing amiss. Questioned after the removal, you claim that

you have been looking a lemon for the last few minutes. In Mark Johnston's terminology ("The Obscure Object of Hallucination": xx, this volume¹), you have undergone a "subjectively seamless transition" from seeing the lemon to not seeing anything at all—at least, to not seeing any material object.

The minor deity has changed your situation: it has removed the lemon, for one thing. But has the deity changed you *mentally*, or *psychologically*? More specifically—assuming that we can help ourselves to the notion of a "visual experience"—has the deity changed the kind of visual experience you are enjoying? There is certainly some temptation to think that the answer is "no". The lemon is a (distal) *cause* of your experience, not a part of it, and still less an essential part of it. So removing the lemon but keeping the proximal cause constant will not change the nature of the effect, your experience.²

But this answer seems highly problematic. When you see the lemon, a certain yellow ovoid object is, as J. J. Valberg puts it, "present in experience" (1992: 4). Intuitively, that object "is right *there*, available for [you] to pick out or focus on, and refer to demonstratively" (7). Further, that object seems to enter into the nature of the experience itself. "What sort of experience am I now having?", you ask yourself. How can this question be answered, other than by attending to the objects of experience? Your "experience" is apparently not something that can be identified *independently* of its objects. So you cannot do better than reply: "I am having an experience of *that object*."

What is that yellow ovoid object that is present in your experience? It is, of course, overwhelmingly natural to take it to be the lemon. But is this right? After the

deity has removed the lemon, it is no longer “right *there*” and “available”. If the nature your experience has *not* changed, then the very same yellow ovoid object remains present in your experience. Therefore, this object is *not* the lemon. And since it can hardly be any other “external object”, we must join what, according to the Eighteenth Century Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid, has been the overwhelming consensus practically since philosophy began:

All philosophers, from Plato to Mr. Hume, agree in this, That we do not perceive external objects immediately, and that the immediate object of perception must be some image present to the mind. So far there appears to be a unanimity rarely to be found among philosophers on such abstruse points. (1785/1941: 86)

In the terminology of the last century, this is the *sense datum theory*. Setting aside the question of whether Reid’s history is entirely accurate, that theory has certainly been extremely popular.³ The sense datum theory’s star began to fade, however, in the 1940s. (In “Visual Experiences”, published in 1967 and reprinted here, J. M. Hinton remarks that the theory is “so out of fashion” (xx).) There was no silver bullet that killed the theory off for good—indeed, Howard Robinson, another contributor to this book, is one of the theory’s most prominent contemporary defenders. Rather, there was a general air of bafflement at the sense datum theorist’s insistence that if you *seem* to be seeing something yellow and ovoid, then there really is something yellow and ovoid that you are seeing.⁴

One might accuse many of the sense datum theory’s opponents of not realizing that their position in fact has radical consequences—and this is where disjunctivism

comes in. A few paragraphs back, it was suggested that if the nature of your experience has *not* changed, then the very same yellow ovoid object remains present in your experience. This conditional claim should be accepted by proponents and opponents of the sense datum theory. Contraposing, if the very same yellow ovoid object does *not* remain present in your experience, then the nature of your experience *has* changed. Before the deity removes the lemon, it is present in your experience; after the removal, something else is going on entirely—no *physical* object is present in your experience, and maybe no object of any sort is. So the pre- and post-removal experiences are radically different. Of course, they can be united verbally: each is an experience as of a yellow ovoid lemon. But the more metaphysically perspicuous characterization is *disjunctive*: each is *either* an experience in which the lemon is present, *or* an experience of a radically different sort.

Let us call the pre-removal situation *the good case* and the post-removal situation *the bad case*.⁵ Then the basic claim of disjunctivism can be put as follows: the experiences in the good case and the hallucinatory bad cases share no *mental core*: there is no (experiential) mental kind that characterizes both cases.⁶ More exactly, there is no such *reasonably specific* kind—specific enough, say, not to characterize a situation in which you veridically perceive a green stalk of asparagus, or veridically perceive the same lemon after it has been dyed pink or squashed into a cube. As Hinton, the first explicitly to propose a disjunctivist position, puts the idea in the excerpt from his book *Experiences*: there is no “common element” to the experiences in the good and bad cases (xx).⁷ Hinton’s formulation is echoed with minor variations by other contributors to this

volume. In “The Objects of Perceptual Experience”, Paul Snowdon characterizes disjunctivism as a view on which “looks-judgements are made true by two types of occurrence: in hallucinations...by some feature of [an] inner experience, whereas in perception they are made true by some feature of a certain relation to an object, a non-inner experience, (which does not involve such an inner experience)” (xx).⁸ According to M. G. F. Martin in “The Limits of Self-Awareness”, the disjunctivist denies that “statements about how things appear to a perceiver...report a distinctive mental event or state common to these various disjoint situations” (xx).⁹ And in “The Obscure Object...”, Johnston describes the disjunctivist as holding that such an appearance statement “is just shorthand for a disjunctive report, not the description of a kind of mental act common to hallucination and seeing” (xx).

According to disjunctivism, the good case and the (hallucinatory) bad case share no mental core. According to what we will call the *Cartesian view*, in both the good case and the bad case you are having exactly the same kind of perceptual experience. A specific version of the Cartesian view has already been mentioned: your experience consists in your awareness of a yellow ovoid sense datum in both cases. Howard Robinson gives a partial defense of this version in the excerpt from his book *Perception*, but the Cartesian view may be developed in other ways. According to *Intentional* versions of the Cartesian view, experiences are individuated by their representational contents, and the experiences in the good and bad cases have exactly the same content: that there is a yellow ovoid object before you, or something similar. This sort of view is discussed in Martin’s “The Reality of Appearances” (xx-yy). In “The Idea of

Experience”, Alan Millar defends the Cartesian view (in his terminology, “the experientialist picture”) while rejecting sense data, and tacitly remaining neutral on the issue of intentionalism.¹⁰

Since there is a half-way house between *being completely unlike in so-and-so respects* and *being exactly similar in so-and-so respects*, disjunctivism and the Cartesian view do not exhaust the options. According to the *moderate view*, the experiences in the two cases do have a common core, but nonetheless in certain respects differ mentally. Intentional versions of the moderate view agree with intentionalist Cartesianism on the similarities: both experiences represent that there is a yellow ovoid object before you. (This sort of position is defended in Byrne and Logue 2008.) Along related lines, Mark Johnston argues that in both cases you are aware of a certain “sensible profile”, “a complex, partly qualitative and partly relational property, which exhausts the way the particular scene before your eyes is if your present experience is veridical” (“The Obscure Object...”: xx).

Those are two suggestions for the moderate view’s experiential similarities; what about the experiential differences? Here are two obvious candidates: in the good case, but not in the bad case, you *see the lemon*, and it *looks* (to you) *yellow and ovoid*.

A proponent of the Cartesian view will thus deny that *seeing the lemon* (for instance) is a mental state; or, at least, she will deny that it is a mental state that (partly) constitutes the *experience* in the good case.¹¹ Although this is not compulsory, she may insist instead that *seeing the lemon* is a hybrid state, consisting of an internal mental component caused in such-and-such ways by a non-mental environmental component, the

presence of the lemon. (A similar account might be given of the lemon's looking yellow and ovoid.)¹²

So far, we have distinguished the Cartesian view, disjunctivism, and the moderate view. But a note of terminological caution is needed, because our characterization of disjunctivism isn't entirely uncontroversial. Some take it to be (roughly) the view that there are mental differences between the good and bad cases: disjunctivism, on this characterization, is simply the denial of the Cartesian view. For example, Snowdon has recently formulated disjunctivism as follows: "The experience in a perceptual case reaches out to and involves the perceived external objects, not so the experience in other cases" (2005: 136-7). This is compatible with a mental similarity between the good and bad cases: Johnston, for instance, although recognizing a common element, also claims that "[s]eeing goes all the way out to the things seen, the things with which it acquaints the subject" ("The Obscure Object...": xx).

In our view, it is a better terminological policy to adopt the narrower use 'disjunctivism'; we will accordingly do so for the rest of this introduction. (For more discussion see Byrne and Logue 2008: xx-yy.)

2. Distinctions between disjunctivisms

In the previous section only an hallucinatory bad case was considered, but there are other kinds of bad case. Imagine that the deity instantly replaces the lemon with a blue book, but cleverly distorts the conditions of viewing so that the book looks exactly as the lemon did. Like the earlier example, you undergo a subjectively seamless transition from seeing the lemon to seeing the book; unlike the earlier example, you continue to see a material

object; in fact, you see a blue book, although of course you do not realize this. Call this situation the *illusory* bad case.

On any version of disjunctivism, the good case and the hallucinatory bad case have no common mental element. What about the illusory case? Here disjunctivists divide. $V \vee I/H$ disjunctivism classifies the illusory and hallucinatory cases together, at least in this sense: neither shares a mental core with the good case. ('V', 'I', and 'H' stand for, respectively, veridical, illusory, and hallucinatory cases.) $VI \vee H$ disjunctivism classifies the illusory case with the good case. On this version of disjunctivism, the good and illusory cases share a mental core.¹³

Harold Langsam is a $VI \vee H$ disjunctivist, and this version is also discussed in the two papers by Snowdon. According to Langsam, "experiences themselves are either relations between material objects and minds (if they are perceptual experiences) or something else (if they are hallucinatory experiences) ("The Theory of Appearing Defended": xx). Similarly, according to Snowdon, the contrast is between situations in which "there is something which looks to [a subject S] to be F)" and hallucinations ("Perception, Vision, and Causation": xx; see also the quotation from "The Objects..." in the previous section).

It might seem obvious that Hinton is a $V \vee I/H$ disjunctivist, since he contrasts a veridical perception of a flash of light with an "illusion of a flash of light" ("Visual Experiences": xx).¹⁴ However, Hinton does not use the term 'illusion' in the now-customary narrow philosophical sense, which only applies to situations in which an object is perceived.¹⁵ An example of a Hintonesque illusion of flash of light is "what you

get for instance when an electric current is passed through your head in a certain way by experimental psychologists” (*Experiences*: xx; see also “Visual Experiences”: xx), which does not involve seeing anything at all. In standard philosophical terminology, Hinton is thus contrasting a veridical perception of a flash of light with an *hallucination* as of a flash (cf. *Experiences*: xx), which leaves the placement of illusory cases open. But a number of other passages indicate that he classifies them with hallucinations. For example, in *Experiences* he gives the following example of a “perception-illusion disjunction”: “Either I see a cobra, looking every inch a cobra and not looking to me in the least like any kind of non-cobra, or I am having that illusion” (xx). It is natural to understand “that illusion” as including a situation in which, due to an excess of sherry, Hinton’s briar pipe looks to him “every inch a cobra”. And in a section of *Experiences* not reproduced here Hinton writes that he “would say that in the case of a revolving-beam lighthouse you have an illusion of perceiving a flash of light” (1973: 118). Hence Hinton’s “illusions” apparently comprise (in our terminology) both illusions and hallucinations.¹⁶

Martin is a $V \vee I/H$ disjunctivist. He does not discuss illusory cases in detail, but when he mentions them, he groups them with hallucinatory cases on the “right-hand side” of the disjunction. “[P]erceptions”, he says, “fail to be the same kind of mental episode as illusions or hallucinations” (2006: 360; see also “The Reality...”: xx).¹⁷

There is a second distinction between disjunctivisms, concerning how to characterize the cases described by the right-hand disjunct (i.e., the hallucinatory and

illusory cases for a V v I/H disjunctivist, or just hallucinations for a VI v H disjunctivist). According to Jonathan Dancy:

The disjunctive account of perception really says that there are two quite different sorts of oasis-experience, which may none the less be indistinguishable to their owner. The first is the genuine article, and the second, though it is indistinguishable, has nothing in common with the first other than the fact that they are both oasis-experiences. In the standard formulation of the account, misleadingly, this is explicitly the way in which the second disjunct is characterized: we characterize it solely by saying that it is like what it is not. Presumably, however, there may be available a more direct characterization of the second disjunct, and in a totally explicit version of the theory it would indeed be characterized in that better way. The current characterization is just a sort of place-holder, showing what has to be said about the relation between the first and second disjunct (“Arguments from Illusion”: xx).

Dancy is suggesting (on behalf of the disjunctivist) that there is a positive characterization, in terms of specific kinds of mental states or events, of the cases on the right-hand side of the disjunction. We will call this disjunctivist position *positive* disjunctivism. Here is an example: you see the lemon in the good case (with no intervening sense data), and bear some other psychological relation (perhaps “acquaintance” in the sense of Russell 1912) to a yellow ovoid sense datum in the bad case. (See Robinson, *Perception*: xx.) Langsam’s proposal is another example: he suggests that hallucinatory experiences consist in “[certain] relations between regions of

physical space and minds, the regions of physical space in which the hallucinated objects seem to be” (“The Theory of Appearing...”: xx).¹⁸

According to Martin, however, the only viable version of disjunctivism is *negative* disjunctivism: there is no such positive characterization of the (hallucinatory) bad case.¹⁹ What, then, is happening when you hallucinate the lemon? Martin defends “a modest or minimal conception” of experience, on which “some event is an experience of a [lemon] just in case it couldn’t be told apart through introspection from a veridical perception of [a lemon]” (“The Limits...: xx). Trivially, the experience in the good case cannot be told apart from a veridical perception of a lemon, since it is such a veridical perception. And it will be agreed on all sides that the experience in the bad case, although *not* a veridical perception, cannot be distinguished from one by introspection. What is distinctive about Martin’s brand of negative disjunctivism is its claim to exhaustively characterize hallucinations in these negative epistemological terms: at a first pass, to *hallucinate* a lemon is simply to see nothing, and to be in “a situation which is indiscriminable through reflection from a veridical perception of a [lemon]” (xx).²⁰ And it is tempting to read Hinton as agreeing (*Experiences*: xx, yy).²¹

These distinctions are between versions of disjunctivism about perceptual experience. But there are other kinds of disjunctivism, principally disjunctivism about action and epistemological disjunctivism (the latter terminology is from Snowdon 2005). As might be expected, these other kinds of disjunctivism closely parallel the original Hintonesque kind: they deny that two kinds of situation have a “common element”, and involve some similar arguments. Disjunctivism about action is discussed by Dancy in

“Arguments from Illusion”: on one version of the view an act of trying to flip the switch is not a common element in successfully flipping the switch and trying but failing to flip it. Epistemological disjunctivism is defended by John McDowell in “Criteria...”, and is briefly discussed below.²²

3. Defending Disjunctivism

Some preliminary motivation was given for disjunctivism about perceptual experience in section 1. The lemon, not a sense datum, is present in your experience before the deity intervenes, and this object enters into the nature of the experience itself. Hence, after the lemon is removed, your experience changes. However, given the distinction between disjunctivism and the moderate view, this argument doesn’t establish its conclusion, even if we grant that the premises are correct. At best, the argument shows that the good case and hallucinatory bad case differ mentally, but that is consistent with the two cases having a common element.

Four principal arguments for disjunctivism can be found in the papers and book excerpts that follow. But before we outline them, some cautionary remarks are in order about the positions of Snowdon and McDowell.

3a. Snowdon and McDowell

In the literature, Hinton, Snowdon, and McDowell are often mentioned as the trinity of senior disjunctivists. This is misleading, because Snowdon has never actually endorsed the view in print, and there is a question mark over McDowell’s commitment to it.

Snowdon's main aim in "Perception, Vision..." and "The Objects..." is to argue against the "causal theory of perception", as defended by H. P. Grice and others. This may be roughly characterized as the view that (in the visual case), a necessary condition for *S* to see *o* is that *o* cause in *S* an "inner experience" ("The Objects...": xx), thought of as something that can be a common element in perception and hallucination.

Traditionally, the causal theory was supposed to be a "conceptual truth", knowable from the armchair. Snowdon deploys disjunctivism to argue both that the causal theory is not a *conceptual* truth, and that the causal theory is not obviously *true*.²³ But he does not conclude or assume that disjunctivism is true: he merely argues that it is neither a conceptual falsehood nor obviously false for other reasons. (See also Snowdon 2005: 137, fn. 15.)

Although Snowdon does not endorse disjunctivism, at least it takes center stage in his discussion. McDowell, on the other hand, is arguably not concerned with disjunctivism at all, at least as it is characterized in section 1.

In "Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge" (partially reprinted here), McDowell's chief topic is the epistemology of other minds, especially as Wittgenstein conceived it. The traditional view sets up the problem as one of inferring another's psychology from non-psychological evidence, namely "a corpus of 'bodily' and 'behavioral' information" (xx). Crucially, this evidence is supposed to be shared between "good" cases (where one knows that another person is in pain, say), and the corresponding "bad" cases (for example, where the person is just pretending to be in pain). The sceptic about other minds then argues that such an inference from this

common behavioral evidence is shaky, at best, and concludes that we never know that others are in pain. McDowell (following, he thinks, Wittgenstein) “rejects the assumption that generates the sceptic’s problem” (xx), namely that one needs to traverse the divide from behavioral evidence to psychological facts. Instead, we can say that (at least sometimes) “the [psychological] fact itself is directly presented to view” (xx).

As McDowell notes, the traditional problem of the external world is structurally similar to the traditional problem of other minds. Your evidence in the good case when you see the lemon, and thereby come to know that it is yellow and ovoid, is supposedly the same as your evidence in the bad case—this common evidence presumably concerns “appearances”, in some sense.²⁴ The sceptic about the external world then argues that an inference from the appearances to the presence of a lemon is shaky, at best, and concludes that you do not know that there is a lemon before you. More generally, perception never allows you to know what your environment is like. Again, McDowell diagnoses the mistake in the initial setup of the problem. In the good case, the fact that the lemon is yellow is “made manifest” (xx) to you: you know it without any “inference from a highest common factor” (xx).

So McDowell thinks the good and bad cases are *epistemologically* very different: your evidence in the good case is much stronger than it is in the hallucinatory bad case. He is thus an *epistemological disjunctivist*.²⁵ What is open to dispute is whether he endorses *Hintonian* disjunctivism—that is, disjunctivism as explained earlier.²⁶ (Admittedly, McDowell himself draws a comparison with Hinton: see “Criteria,...”, xx, fn. xx.) In any event, the two positions are not equivalent: in particular, one may agree

with McDowell's claim about evidence, while also accepting that the good and bad cases are mentally importantly alike. As McDowell himself has recently remarked, "[t]he difference in epistemic significance is of course consistent with all sorts of commonalities between the [good and bad cases]" (2008: xx).²⁷

3b. Disjunctivism as the default view of perceptual experience

Although disjunctivism might seem an outlandish view, Hinton seems to have thought that the onus is on his opponent to show that it is false. After laying down some requirements for a report of experience to concern the elusive "common element", Hinton writes:

If nothing meets all those requirements then there is no such thing as an experience-report of that kind, in one sense or non-sense. I do not see that anything does meet all those requirements. Indeed, my impression or tentative belief, which may of course be entirely mistaken for all that I am by no means the first to hold or to have received it, is that as far as anyone knows or has a right to believe, nothing meets all those requirements. (*Experiences: xx*)

He goes on to remark that arguments for the sense datum theory—which, if sound, would establish one kind of common element—are the subject of "widespread scepticism".

In "The Limits...", Martin elaborates and defends Hinton's position:

When Michael Hinton first introduced the idea, he suggested that the burden of proof or disproof lay with his opponent, that what was needed was to show that our talk of how things look or appear to one to be introduced more than what he

later came to call perception-illusion disjunctions...The aim of this paper is [in part]...to explain the way in which Hinton was correct in his challenge. Properly understood, the disjunctive approach to perception is the appropriate starting point for any discussion of the nature of perceptual experience. (xx)

The upshot of Martin's argument is that the non-disjunctivist has to make substantive assumptions about one's epistemic access to one's perceptual experiences, assumptions the disjunctivist does not have to make. Thus, Martin concludes, disjunctivism is the default view of perceptual experience.²⁸

3c. Disjunctivism as following from the theory of appearing

As William Alston explains it, the theory of appearing "takes perceptual consciousness to consist, most basically, in the fact that one or more objects *appear* to the subject *as so-and-so*, as round, bulgy, blue, jagged, etc." (1999: 182). In the good case, the lemon appears (as) yellow and ovoid. In the illusory case mentioned earlier, the blue book also appears yellow and ovoid. Since, according to the theory of appearing, "appearing yellow and ovoid" is a genuine respect of mental similarity, the theory of appearing entails that the good case and the illusory case have a common element, and so that V v I/H disjunctivism is false.

On the other hand, assuming (on the face of it correctly) that *nothing* appears yellow and ovoid to you in the hallucinatory case, the theory of appearing does entail VI v H disjunctivism, since the theory (at least as naturally interpreted) does not recognize any *other* mental respects in which the hallucinatory and good cases might be similar. As Langsam puts it, "[T]he phenomenal features of hallucinatory experiences cannot be

instantiations of relations between material objects and minds, for the only material objects that can enter into these relations are objects of perception, and when a subject is hallucinating, he is not perceiving any material object” (“The Theory of Appearing...”: xx).²⁹

One might block the entailment by denying the assumption, and indeed Alston himself suggests that in hallucinations “what appears to the subject is a particularly vivid mental image” (1999: 191). This sort of position is not disjunctivism as explained here, because it recognizes a common element: an object appears yellow and ovoid in both the good and hallucinatory cases. (Contrast the examples of positive disjunctivism given in section 2, which involve different psychological relations across the good and hallucinatory bad cases.) However, there is something “disjunctive” about the view, because the *objects* of experience in the (hallucinatory) bad and good cases are supposed to be radically different: a lemon in the good case, and a mental image in the bad case.³⁰

3d. Disjunctivism as saving Naïve Realism

In “The Limits...”, Martin characterizes a view he calls ‘Naïve Realism’ as follows:

Some of the objects of perception—the concrete individuals, their properties, the events these partake in—are constituents of the experience. No experience like this, no experience of fundamentally the same kind, could have occurred had no appropriate candidate for awareness existed. (xx)

Here Martin is talking about *veridical* experience: so, according to Naïve Realism, in the good case the lemon is a constituent of your experience. On Martin’s understanding of

“constituents”, it is supposed to follow that the lemon is an *essential* constituent of your experience—the experience could not have occurred if the lemon had not existed. And the “fundamental kind” to which your experience belongs is “its most specific kind; it tells what essentially the event or episode is.” (Martin 2006: 361).³¹

According to Martin, Naïve Realism forms an inconsistent triad with two other claims: the Common Kind Assumption (CKA) and Experiential Naturalism (EN). According to CKA, “whatever [fundamental] kind of mental event occurs when one is veridically perceiving some scene, such as the street scene outside my window, that kind of event can occur whether or not one is perceiving” (“The Limits...”: xx; cf. Martin 2006: 357). According to EN, “our sense experiences, like other events or states within the natural world, are subject to the causal order, and in this case are thereby subject just to broadly physical causes (i.e. including neuro-physiological causes and conditions) and psychological causes (if these are disjoint from physical causes)” (“The Limits...”: xx; cf. Martin 2006: 357).

In brief, the argument that Naïve Realism, CKA, and EN are jointly inconsistent is this. Let K be the fundamental kind characterizing the experience in the good case, when you see the lemon. By CKA, an experience of kind K could have occurred when hallucinating a lemon. By EN, such an hallucinatory experience can be generated in the complete absence of lemons, “through suitable manipulation of mind and brain” (Martin 2006: 358). Hence an experience of kind K can occur even though the lemon had not existed, and so Naïve Realism is false. (See “The Limits...”, xx-yy.)

Naïve Realism, Martin argues, is “the best articulation of how our experiences strike us as being to introspective reflection on them” (“The Limits...”: xx). So either CKA or EN must be sacrificed, and since EN is entirely unobjectionable, CKA must go.

Note that to deny that the experience in the bad case falls under K—the fundamental kind instantiated in the good case—is not yet to embrace disjunctivism. As Martin notes, this is consistent with the experiences in the good and bad cases falling under the same (specific) mental kind K^\dagger : it is merely ruled out that K^\dagger is the *fundamental* kind instantiated in the good case. The rest of Martin’s argument is intended to establish that there is no such kind K^\dagger —more strongly, that the bad case can only be characterized in “negative epistemological” terms.

Suppose that the experience in the bad case falls under a mental kind K^\dagger —for example, suppose that the experience involves awareness of yellow ovoid sense data, or of a certain Johnstonian “sensory profile”. Since the good case preserves the “same proximate causal conditions” (xx) as the bad case, Martin argues (following Robinson: see xx) that the experience in the good case also falls under K^\dagger .

But Martin thinks that if the Naïve Realist were to stop here, she wouldn’t be able to rebut the charge that the presence of K^\dagger in the good case renders the Naïve Realist kind K “explanatorily redundant” (xx). “It would be a severe limitation on the disjunctivist’s commitment to Naïve Realism,” he writes, “if the Naïve realist aspects of perception could not themselves shape the contours of the subject’s conscious experience” (xx).

And negative disjunctivism is Martin’s way out: the experience in the bad case does not fall under any such positive mental kind K^\dagger :

[T]here are certain mental events, at least those hallucinations brought about through causal conditions matching those of veridical perceptions, whose only positive mental characteristics are negative epistemological ones—that they cannot be told apart by the subject from veridical perception. (“The Limits...”: xx).^{32, 33}

4. Against disjunctivism

For the most part, objections to disjunctivism fall into two categories: appeals to indistinguishability, and appeals to causal considerations. (The papers by Millar and Johnston add other complaints.) Both kinds of objection are discussed at length in the contributions to this book.

4a. Indistinguishability

When the demon removes the lemon, you are unable to detect any change. As Johnston puts it, “[t]ry as you might, you would not notice any difference, however closely you attend to your visual experience” (“The Obscure Object...”: xx). In that sense, your pre-removal veridical experience is subjectively indistinguishable from your post-removal hallucinatory experience: you are not in a position to tell that the first experience differs mentally from the second (if it does at all).

One objection to disjunctivism stems from the idea, mentioned earlier, that the distinction between appearance and reality collapses in the special case of *experience*. In “The Reality of Appearances” Martin nicely poses the intuitive threat to disjunctivism as follows:

[I]f something really is an essential aspect of the conscious or phenomenal character of an experience, then what is true of it should be true of any state of mind indistinguishable from it for the subject: for what more can there be to the character of conscious states of mind than a subject can herself discern when she reflects on them? (xx)

Millar states an (apparently) similar concern in “The Idea of Experience”, although he does not press it.³⁴ Martin, however, takes the challenge very seriously, and responds to it in some detail, trying to offer a diagnosis of its appeal.

Note that this sort of objection could be cast as an objection to the moderate view as much as disjunctivism; indeed the rhetorical question at the end of the quotation from Martin suggests as much. And Hinton has his opponent ask “But is it not the very same experience?” on the ground that the “illusion is...indistinguishable from the perception” (*Experiences*: xx).

A second objection that applies only to disjunctivism is that an *explanation* of the indistinguishability between the pre- and post-removal experiences is required, which the disjunctivist is accused of failing to supply. As Johnston puts it:

The Disjunctive View has nothing satisfactory to say in answer to the pressing question: What kinds of things can visual experience be a relation to so that in a transition from a case of [seeing] to a case of [visual hallucination] there need be no difference which the subject can discern? Once the resources are found to address this question, the Disjunctive View will fall by the wayside. (“The Obscure Object...”: xx)

This challenge is briefly addressed by Langsam (“The Theory of Appearing...”: xx-yy) and Dancy (“Arguments from Illusion”: xx-yy).

The kind of subjective indistinguishability—call it *indistinguishability*₁—characterizing the “subjectively seamless transition” is a relation between two of your experiences. The pre-removal experience is indistinguishable₁ from the post-removal experience, and Johnston is demanding an explanation of that fact.

Indistinguishability₁ is defined in terms of your inability to know a statement of non-identity: that the pre-removal experience is not identical in mental respects to the post-removal experience. Since the proposition that *a* is not identical to *b* in respect R is trivially equivalent to the proposition that *b* is not identical to *a* in respect R, indistinguishability₁ is symmetric. If one is not in position to know the first proposition, one is not in a position to know the second. So, if the first experience is indistinguishable₁ from the second, then the second is indistinguishable₁ from the first.³⁵

It is important not to confuse this sort of subjective indistinguishability with the notion of indistinguishability Martin uses to explain his version of negative disjunctivism—call it *indistinguishability*₂. According to Martin, the experience in the bad case can only be characterized in negative epistemological terms: in particular, the experience cannot be “told apart through introspection from a veridical perception [of a lemon]” (“The Limits...”: 48).

Like indistinguishability₁, indistinguishability₂ is defined in terms of the inability to know. Unlike indistinguishability₁, it is not a relation between experiences, and the relevant unknowable items are not statements of non-identity between two experiences.

Instead (as it is put in Martin 2006: 363-4) they are statements to the effect that an “individual experience” is not a certain kind of veridical perception, for instance a veridical perception of a lemon as yellow and ovoid.

One reason why it is important to keep the two notions of indistinguishability separate is that a Cartesian may endorse the slogan that experiences are mentally identical iff they are indistinguishable (cf. the principle “(IND)”, in Martin’s “The Reality of Appearances”: xx), a slogan that the disjunctivist must reject. Since identity in mental respects is an equivalence relation on experiences, the relevant notion of indistinguishability must be an equivalence relation on experiences too. A precise rendering of the slogan accordingly requires something like indistinguishability₁, not indistinguishability₂.³⁶

A third indistinguishability-based objection is solely directed to *negative* disjunctivism, and to Martin’s version in particular. Consider Johnston’s lowly cane toad, which he uses to press a closely related objection (“The Obscure Object...”: xx). The cane toad, suppose, is hallucinating a stationary light; it is not hallucinating a moving dark spot. The “mind-blind” toad is not in a position to know anything about its experience. A fortiori, it is not in a position to know that its experience is not a veridical perception of a moving dark spot. According to Martin, if an experience is indistinguishable (or, as he often says, “indiscriminable”) from a veridical perception of a moving dark spot, then it is an experience of a moving dark spot. So, on Martin’s view, it would appear to follow that the toad *is* having an (hallucinatory) experience of a moving dark spot, which is false.

As Martin says, this sort of objection raises the question of “how exactly the disjunctivist should articulate the way in which indiscriminability is employed in the positive account of the notion of perceptual experience in general” (“The Limits...”: xx), which he addresses at length in that paper and elsewhere.³⁷

4b. Causal Arguments

We have already briefly seen how causal considerations pose a threat to disjunctivism in our discussion of Martin’s argument in section 3d. Martin concedes that *if* the experience in the hallucinatory bad case falls under a mental kind K^\dagger , then so does the experience in the good case, because the proximal causes are the same. However, he denies the antecedent, claiming that the bad case only has the negative epistemological property of being indistinguishable₂ from a veridical perception of a yellow ovoid lemon.

This sort of causal argument purports to establish that if the experience in the bad case is of kind K^\dagger , so is the experience in the good case. It is compatible with the argument that the converse fails: the experience in the good case is of a certain kind K that is absent in the bad case. Let us call this the *Bad-to-Good Causal Argument*: it argues from the bad case to a conclusion about the good case.

A. D. Smith, in the selection from his book *The Problem of Perception*, endorses the Bad-to-Good Causal Argument, with a specific candidate for the hallucinatory kind K^\dagger . Smith argues that if you are aware of a “non-normal object” (a sense datum) in the hallucinatory bad case, then you are aware of such an object in the good case. And if you are aware of a yellow ovoid sense datum in the good case, then (according to Smith) you do not enjoy “immediate awareness” of the lemon, a “normal physical object” (xx).

Hence, Smith concludes, “[o]nce [non-normal] objects get into your philosophy, Direct Realism is sunk” (xx).

Notice that this conclusion need not bother Johnston, who is “a ‘Direct’ Realist, and a radical one at that” (“The Obscure Object...”: xx), because although he concedes that there is a common kind K^\dagger , he denies that it involves awareness of sense data.

If the Bad-to-Good Causal Argument is sound, and the experience in the bad case falls under K^\dagger , then there is a Hintonesque common element, and disjunctivism is false. However, since this conclusion is consistent with the experience in the good case essentially involving a relation to the lemon, it is consistent with the moderate view.

The *Good-to-Bad Causal Argument* purports to rule out the moderate view, and so establish the Cartesian view. It proceeds in a similar manner but in the other direction, arguing from the good case to a conclusion about the bad case. That is, according to the Good-to-Bad Causal Argument, if the experience in the good case is of kind K , so is the experience in the bad case, because the proximal causes are the same. However, the Good-to-Bad direction is considerably more problematic than the reverse. The obvious worry about the Good-to-Bad Causal Argument is that if the experience in the good case is individuated partly in terms of external environmental objects (in particular, the lemon), then a proximal neural state can hardly be sufficient for it. As Johnston puts it, “[t]here is no such ‘last’ brain state that then causes seeing” (“The Obscure Object...”: xx). A similar point is made by Langsam, who argues that “the ‘same cause, same effect’ principle applies only to *intrinsic* changes” (“The Theory of Appearing...”: xx).

The Bad-to-Good Causal Argument is particularly threatening to positive disjunctivism; as we have seen, this is why Martin is a negative disjunctivist. Langsam defends his positive disjunctivism against the argument by proposing an *extrinsic* account of hallucinations: as quoted earlier, he suggests that they involve “relations between regions of physical space and minds” (“The Theory of Appearing”: xx). In effect, he gives the same reply to both directions of the Causal Argument. And the cogency of this reply is apparently endorsed by Johnston, who says that “the Disjunctivist has a quick way with the [Bad-to-Good argument]”, namely to deny “that there is an interesting type of mental act that supervenes just on one’s brain state” (“The Obscure Object...”: xx). Indeed, Hinton himself denies it (*Experiences*: xx).

Robinson defends the Causal Argument in both directions, thus offering an argument for the Cartesian view. According to Robinson, “[i]t is necessary to give the same account of both hallucinating and perceptual experience when they have the same neural cause” (*Perception*: xx), and he assumes that in a situation like the one involving you, the deity, and the lemon, the “perceptual experience” *does* have the same (sufficient) neural cause. This assumption, however, is open to the accusation that he is begging the question against his opponents. (For a similar complaint, see Martin, “The Limits...”: xx-yy.)

Robinson’s argument could be used to establish a form of intentionalist Cartesianism, or the form of Cartesianism favored by Millar. However, Robinson’s own version of the Cartesian view is that the experiences in both the good and bad cases are constituted by awareness of sense data, which he argues for elsewhere in the book.³⁸

Notes

¹ Page references with titles are to this volume; page references with dates are to items listed at the end of this introduction.

² For the purposes of this introduction we will assume (with many of the contributors to this volume) that talk of “experiences” is reasonably clear. However, as the excerpt from J. M. Hinton’s book *Experiences* brings out (see also the last few pages of his “Visual Experiences”), in a more careful treatment this assumption needs to be questioned. See Byrne and Logue 2008: xx-yy, Byrne forthcoming.

³ For a brief history of the sense datum theory with especial relevance to the present volume, see Crane 2000.

⁴ See, for example, Barnes 1944/5: 152-3. Incidentally, the alleged sense datum is more accurately described as yellow and semi-ovoid, since sense data were typically not supposed to continue out of view.

⁵ The terminology is borrowed from Williamson 2000, although used somewhat differently.

⁶ Like the contributors to this volume, we will focus on visual experience, although disjunctivism itself is not so constrained.

⁷ A. D. Smith (forthcoming) argues that Husserl, the nineteenth century founder of phenomenology, was a disjunctivist.

⁸ Note that Snowdon goes a little beyond our official characterization of disjunctivism in offering a specific account of the experience in the good case, as involving “a certain relation to an object”; another example is Campbell 2002a: 134-5. Other disjunctivist views are possible: for instance, one might take the experience in the good case to involve a certain relation to a fact.

⁹ For a complication in connection with Martin, see note 21 below.

¹⁰ Millar 2007 finds more insight in disjunctivism than “The Idea...”, although Millar still defends the experientialist picture.

¹¹ On the sense datum version of the Cartesian view, these issues about seeing might not even arise, because it is hard for the sense datum theorist to maintain that we ever see physical objects like lemons (see Barnes 1944/5: 139-40).

¹² See Johnston, “The Obscure Object...: xx-yy, on the “Conjunctive Analysis of seeing”, and Jonathan Dancy, “Arguments from Illusion”: xx.

¹³ Cf. Snowdon, “The Objects...”: xx.

¹⁴ Hinton’s choice of ‘I see a flash’ to characterize a veridical perception of a flash (which is clearly his intent) is unfortunate, since one may see what is in fact an F even though it looks nothing like an F (see Snowdon, “Perception, Vision,...”: xx). Hinton fixes this problem in *Experiences* by stipulating that ‘see’ means (in his jargon) *plainly see*. See *Experiences*: xx, yy.

¹⁵ For Hinton’s discussion of this terminological issue, see 1973: 115-7.

¹⁶ This interpretation (which we are only tentatively advancing) might be thought to be at odds with this passage: "...the perception-proposition in a perception-illusion disjunction can very well be a proposition about how something looks: one kind of perception-illusion disjunction is exemplified by: 'Either I visually perceive an optical object which looks (a great deal, a little, hardly at all) like a two-dimensional coloured shape, or I am having the illusion of doing so'" (Experiences: xx). Here the left-hand disjunct describes cases in which objects are seen and look to be a certain way, regardless of whether or not they are that way. But Hinton's point seems to be that the alleged "inner experience" (the common element) is not specifiable in terms of an external object's looking a certain way, because the common element is supposed to be present in the hallucinatory case. That is consistent with the experiences in the good and illusory cases having no common element, and so consistent with V v I/H disjunctivism. (See also the following note.)

¹⁷ Note that V v I/H disjunctivism does *not* imply that the experiences in the illusory and hallucinatory cases are mentally the same, or even that they share a mental core. The view simply denies that the experience in the good case shares a mental core with the experiences in the illusory and hallucinatory cases. Further, the V v I/H disjunctivist may consistently take *seeing the lemon* to be an experiential mental state, and so a point of overlap between the good and illusory cases. This is not a Hintonesque "common element", however, because it is not specific enough. For instance, one may see the lemon (in good light, etc.) if it has been dyed pink or squashed into a cube (see page xx above).

¹⁸ A similar suggestion is briefly canvassed and rejected in Alston 1999: 191. Alston, however, takes the relevant relations to be the same in both cases; we are assuming that Langsam takes the relations to be different. See section 3c below and note 30.

¹⁹ Note that Johnston has negative disjunctivism in mind when he claims to have “provided a positive account of hallucination in the face of the denials of the Disjunctivists” (“The Obscure Object...”: xx).

²⁰ This is only a first pass, because one may hallucinate a lemon while seeing other objects.

²¹ We assume that to be in such a negative epistemological situation is not thereby to be in a specific *mental* state. Martin may think otherwise (see “The Reality...”: xx); this issue is more terminological than substantive.

²² For a version of disjunctivism about action that is closely related to epistemological disjunctivism, see Hornsby 2008.

²³ The “causal theory of perception”, as Snowdon characterizes it, implies the existence of “inner experiences”. That theory should be distinguished from the claim that a necessary condition for S to see o is that o cause S to see it, which has no such implication, and which the disjunctivist need not dispute. There is nothing obviously problematic about o’s causing S to see it, as Snowdon’s own example of marriage (“Perception, Vision,...: xx) shows: sometimes (indeed, usually), A causes B to be married to him, namely by asking her. (Note that this does not appear to violate Humean

strictures about cause and effect being “independent existences”: A’s proposal might have been turned down.)

Hinton, incidentally, evidently took the causal theory of perception *not* to imply the existence of “inner experiences”. Commenting on Snowdon, he remarks that “[i]n my *Experiences* the view I took with reference to Grice was there is no incompatibility [with disjunctivism], unless the Grice-like view goes out of its way to create one” (1996: 220).

²⁴ A qualification: since the bad case comes after the good case, your evidence will differ with respect to time.

²⁵ For a more precise characterization of epistemological disjunctivism, see Byrne and Logue 2008: xx-yy.

²⁶ There is no doubt that McDowell endorses the *moderate* view: see McDowell 1986 and 1994: 191-3.

²⁷ For more discussion of McDowell in this volume, see Snowdon, “The Objects...”: xx and Dancy, “Arguments from Illusion”: xx-yy. See also Thau 2004, Snowdon 2005: 139-40, Byrne and Logue 2008: xx-yy, Haddock and Macpherson 2008a, Neta 2008, Pritchard 2008, Wright 2008, Millar forthcoming.

²⁸ For discussion of Martin’s argument, see Siegel 2004, Byrne and Logue 2008: xx-yy.

²⁹ Cf. Chisholm: “It is significant that no philosopher (as far as I know) has suggested that the language of appearing be applied to experiences other than those involved in external perception” (1963: 111). Barnes (1944/5) adopts the theory of appearing as an

alternative to the sense datum theory, but gets himself into an uncharacteristic tangle over hallucinations (163).

³⁰ For the distinction between disjunctive accounts of experience and disjunctive accounts of the objects of experience, see Thau 2004: 194-5. If Alston's "mental images" may be taken to be sense data, then Alston's position is *Austinian disjunctivism*, so-called in Byrne and Logue 2008: xx, because it makes a brief appearance in Austin 1962: 32; Austinian disjunctivism is the "Selective Theory", as Johnston describes it ("The Obscure Object...": xx). (For Alston's position on the metaphysics of mental images, see Alston 1999: 191-2.)

³¹ For a different but closely related formulation of Naïve Realism see Langsam, "The Theory of Appearing...": xx. Since Langsam is a VI v H disjunctivist, he thinks that in cases of illusion the merely apparent properties of objects are (in Martin's terminology) "constituents of the experience".

³² See "The Limits...": xx-yy for Martin's explanation of why these negative epistemological features do not render the Naïve Realist kind K explanatorily redundant.

³³ For other arguments for disjunctivism, see Campbell 2002b: ch. 6, Martin 2002.

³⁴ Millar explains "experiential indistinguishability" in terms of "looks-as-if ascription[s]" (xx); given the use to which he puts these ascriptions, namely to help define "a hallucinatory counterpart of [a] perception" (xx), Millar's explanation of indistinguishability might not be epistemological.

³⁵ See Williamson 1990: 10-1.

³⁶ That is not to say that indistinguishability₁ is an equivalence relation on experiences, merely that it is at least a *relation* on experiences. It is usually not taken to be an equivalence relation, on the grounds that it is not transitive. See Martin, “The Reality...”: xx-yy, and “The Limits...”: xx-yy; for discussion, see Hawthorne and Kovakovich 2006, Sturgeon 2006.

³⁷ For a brief summary of this and other related objections with references see Byrne and Logue 2008: xx, fn. yy. See also Siegel 2004, Hawthorne and Kovakovich 2006, Martin 2006, Sturgeon 2006, Siegel 2008, Sturgeon 2008.

³⁸ For valuable advice and/or comments on the introduction and/or assistance with the bibliography at the end of this volume, thanks to David Chalmers, Tim Crane, Fiona Macpherson, Paolo Santorio, and Susanna Siegel.

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