

# Settling a Question: Austin and Disjunctivism

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And it's the differences that matter.  
—J. L. Austin

## **1. Introduction.**

Was J. L. Austin's a disjunctivist? The question is made difficult to answer both by Austin's unwillingness to propound doctrine and by a lack of consensus as to the core commitments of disjunctivism. I shall attempt to make some progress in settling it by articulating some central aspects of some contemporary forms of disjunctivism and indicating some ways in which those aspects are foreshadowed in Austin's work. I shall be suggesting that, although Austin failed clearly to articulate or defend a version of this contemporary form of disjunctivism, his work was distinctively hospitable to its articulation and defence.

I'll begin, in the following section, by sketching some central themes in Austin's discussions of perception, and indicating some ways in which it is not entirely straightforward to classify Austin's position as an interesting (or non-schematic) form of disjunctivism. In §3., I discuss the way in which Austin sought to distinguish sensory perception from knowledge. In §4., I discuss some ways in which that distinction figured in Austin's treatment(s) of delusions, including sensory hallucinations. Austin's discussions of sensory hallucinations are then compared, in §5, with a central contemporary specification of disjunctivism, initially proposed by J. M. Hinton, and developed in different ways by John McDowell, Paul Snowdon, and M. G. F. Martin. (See Hinton 1967, 1973; McDowell 1982; Snowdon 1980–81; Martin 1997.) That comparison reveals that Austin's position was closer to these contemporary forms of

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disjunctivism than it is sometimes credited with being, but is nonetheless distinguishable from them.

## 2. Problems of Classification.

Three central themes in Austin's approach to philosophical discussion of perception and knowledge can be discerned in the opening pages of *Sense and Sensibilia*: (Theme (1)) that what is being offered is not so much a set of philosophical claims, as a *technique* for dealing critically with others attempts to make such claims; (Theme (2)) that one main component in that technique is the development of an appropriate sensitivity to *differences* amongst cases; (Theme (3)) that a second main component is to foster an attitude of *common sense realism* (Martin 2007: 15–29; Longworth forthcoming; Putnam 1994.), or trust in one's naïve judgements—both one's first-order judgements about one's environment and one's second-order assessments of those first-order judgements.

[Theme (1):] I am *not*, then—and this is a point to be clear about from the beginning—going to maintain that we ought to be 'realists', to embrace, that is, the doctrine that we *do* perceive material things (or objects) .... [Theme (2):] There is no *one* kind of thing that we 'perceive' but many *different* kinds, the number being reducible if at all by scientific investigation and not by philosophy: pens are in many ways though not in all ways unlike rainbows, which are in many ways though not in all ways unlike after-images, which in turn are in many ways but not in all ways unlike pictures on the cinema-screen—and so on, without assignable limit. [Theme (1):] So we are *not* to look for an answer to the question, what kind of thing we perceive. What we have above all to do is, negatively, to rid ourselves of such illusions as 'the argument from illusion' .... [Themes (1) and (3):] It is a matter of unpicking, one by one, a mass of seductive (mainly verbal) fallacies, of exposing a wide variety of concealed motives—an operation which leaves us, in a sense, just where we began. [Theme (1), (2), and (3):] In a sense—but actually we may hope to learn something positive in the way of a technique for dissolving philosophical worries (*some* kinds of philosophical worry, not the whole of philosophy). (Austin 1962: 4–6).

Insofar as disjunctivism amounts to a doctrine rather than a technique, Theme (1) tends to count against finding its traces in Austin. However, Theme (2) and Theme (3) are more hospitable.

Theme (3) seems naturally supportive of *naïve* approaches to perception. Such approaches seek to treat perception as at the same time subjective and environmental. Perception is treated as subjective in that it is viewed as determined by how things seem to its subjects and, so, as accessible to its subjects by introspection. And it is treated as environmental in that it is taken to depend constitutively on mind-independent elements, potentially including objects, activities, or conditions. Thus, we would ordinarily take ourselves to be able to tell, by introspection, whether we are seeing aspects of our environments.

Naïveté is threatened by arguments to the sophisticated conclusion that subjective and environmental conditions are independent. These arguments aim to show that it is possible to hold fixed how things appear to subjects whilst arbitrarily varying their environments; and that it is possible to hold fixed their environments whilst arbitrarily varying how things appear to them. The function of disjunctivism is defensive: it is designed to block those arguments by explaining away the appearance that it is possible for all of the ways things appear to subjects to vary independently of all of the aspects of their environments.

To a first approximation, the disjunctivist explanation appeals to differences amongst the ways things appear. According to the disjunctivist, the ways things appear fall into disjoint classes depending on whether or not they are constitutively dependent on aspects of the environment. The misleading appearance of independence is fostered only by slipping between the unthreatening claim that there are *some* ways things appear which are environment-independent and the threatening, but undefended, claim that, since the ways things appear form a unified kind, there are *no* ways things appear which are environment-dependent. Thus, Theme (2) figures in conditioning the disjunctivist to discern differences amongst the ways things appear to which the sophisticated theorist is insensitive.

Not only are Themes (2) and (3) indicative of a propensity towards disjunctivism, there is some reason to think that when the issue is considered at this level of generality, our finding that Austin endorsed a naïve view of perception would settle the question in favour of his also endorsing a form of disjunctivism. As Paul Snowdon puts the thought,

...disjunctivism is, in a nutshell, the idea that *apparent* perceptual experiences should be thought of as belonging to two alternate, disjoint classes. They belong, that is, to one or the other case, where one case is the kind of experience that constitutes genuine perception of an item or feature in the percipient's environment, and the other is an experience which seems to be that way but which is actually not that way, and is, rather, an hallucination. We might, therefore, using a somewhat resonant term, describe disjunctivism as experiential *dualism*. Now, the conclusion of most reflection about perception in our philosophical tradition has been that all such experiences have a single nature, usually taken to be the apprehending, or directly perceiving, of some inner item. Consequently it can be said that the standard philosophical approach has been in favour of experiential *monism*. There has, however, always been a tradition of thought in which naïve realism about perception is defended. It seems, though, that this naïve realist tradition must accept the claim that there are, besides the perceptual experiences which can be described in accordance with the naïve realist conception (whatever it is), other sorts of experiences, say hallucinations, which seem to the subjects of them to be of the genuinely perceptual sort, but which are certainly *not* of the same sort. This seems to mean that they must be experiential *dualists*, and so disjunctivists, of some sort. (Snowdon 2008: 36–37.)

Although I've suggested that Theme (3) is naturally supportive of naïve approaches to perception, I haven't yet provided any evidence that Austin would have agreed. So, even if Snowdon's sketch showed that a commitment to a naïve view of perception brought in train a commitment to disjunctivism, more work is required in order to decide whether Austin was so committed.

Part of the evidence in favour of attributing to Austin a commitment to a naïve approach to perception stems from his resistance to arguments *against* naïve treatments, and will emerge more fully in the remainder: that resistance is, I think, best explained by his being committed to a naïve treatment.

Further evidence is supplied by Austin's conception of the role of perceptual experience in settling questions and, so, in sustaining knowledge about one's environment:

One might add that Warnock subtly intensifies this air of chanciness by taking his examples from the sphere of hearing. It is, as a matter of fact, quite often true that, just going by the sound, we do make some sort of inference in saying what we hear, and it is quite often easy to see how we might go wrong. But then seeing is *not*, as Warnock quietly takes for granted, exactly like this; for it is, characteristically, by seeing the thing that the question is settled. (Austin 1962: 138–139.)

The idea that one might exploit one's seeing *a thing* in order to settle a question seems to depend on the idea that it is possible, in propitious circumstances, to tell by introspection that one is seeing the thing. Austin treats similarly the role of plainly viewing a pig:

But if the animal then emerges and stands there plainly in view, there is no longer any question of collecting evidence; its coming into view doesn't provide me with more *evidence* that it's a pig, I can now just *see* that it is, the question is settled. (Austin 1962: 115)

Plainly viewing, or seeing, a pig can put one in a position to see *that it is a pig* and, so, to know—in a sight-specific way—that it is a pig. And Austin's appeal to plainness plausibly suggests, once again, a role for introspective availability in enabling one to use perception to settle questions. (For further discussion of plainness, see Hinton 1973: 29–34, 41–43; Snowdon 2008: 41–43. For further discussion of Austin's views about knowledge, and about the role of perception in sustaining knowledge, see Putnam 1994; Martin 2007; Longworth 2018.)

However, even granting reason to think that Austin would have endorsed a naïve view of perception, at least three sorts of reasons might be offered for resisting the further attribution, made solely on that ground, of a commitment to disjunctivism.

The first reason for resisting the easy transition to an attribution of disjunctivism is that even if a naïve approach to perception or knowledge were to entail disjunctivism, Austin might not himself have recognized the entailment. And we shouldn't assume that if he were to

have been brought to acknowledge the entailment, he would have treated it as a reason for accepting disjunctivism, rather than as a reason for rejecting any approach to perception or knowledge that entailed it.

The second reason is that we might hold that the attribution of sheer experiential dualism, in Snowdon's sense, is insufficient for an interesting attribution of disjunctivism. That is, we might hold that disjunctivism, as understood by its contemporary proponents, is a more specific doctrine than the simple denial that the ways things seem form a unified kind—a doctrine that incorporates, for example, a more or less detailed explanation for how the ways things seem can merely seem to form, without in fact forming, a unified kind. Put another way, we might be willing to allow that Austin instances the schematic form of disjunctivism that figures in Snowdon's sketch whilst at the same time seeing the ways in which his position differs from contemporary forms of disjunctivism to be more important than the schematic similarities. (I don't mean to suggest that Snowdon is under any illusion about this.)

The third reason is more specific to Austin, and derives from Theme (2). As Snowdon presents schematic disjunctivism, it embodies both negative and positive components. The negative component is the rejection of experiential monism. Here, I think that Austin—and, indeed, any other proponent of a naïve approach to perceptual experience—would be inclined to agree. The positive component is the acceptance of experiential *dualism*: the claim that sensory experiences fall neatly into two classes, those in which experience is partly constituted by mind-independent aspects of the environment, and those in which it isn't. Here, I think that Austin's attitude is likely to have been more equivocal. For, on one hand, the appeal to mind-dependence will mark out exactly two classes only if the relevant notion of mind-dependence does so, and Austin might well have resisted the idea that the notions of mind, and so mind-dependence, are sufficiently sharp to sustain the required classification. (Here, one might consider, for example, what Austin's attitude would have been to the question whether after-images are mind-dependent. See his 1962: 27.) And, on the other hand, even if Austin were willing to accept that sensory experiences can be sorted into these two classes, he might at the same time have held that differences within each of the two classes, or similarities across the class boundary, are of greater importance. Thus, for example,

I am not denying that cases in which things go wrong *could* be lumped together under some single name. A single name might in itself be innocent enough, provided its use was not taken to imply either (a) that the cases were all alike, or (b) that they were all in certain ways alike. What matters is that the facts should not be pre-judged and (therefore) neglected. (Austin 1962: 14, fn.1.)

For these reasons, it would be safer to think of Austin's rejection of experiential monism as supporting not experiential dualism, but rather experiential *pluralism*. (See also Snowdon 2008: 38, fn.6; Kalderon 2011.)

With those warnings about seemingly easy resolutions in hand, the question before us divides into two. (i) Did Austin's commitment to a

naïve treatment of perception translate into a commitment to *schematic* disjunctivism—the rejection of experiential or cognitive monism? (ii) Insofar as Austin was committed to schematic disjunctivism, did his position also manifest more specific similarities with, or differences from, contemporary forms of disjunctivism?

### **3. Perception and Cognition.**

Underpinning Austin's various discussions of knowledge and perception is a distinction between them. On one side of the distinction is propositional knowledge, an outcome of the operation of a power of propositional cognition or judgment. Exercises of that power can be susceptible to assessment as correct or incorrect, in light of the fit, or lack of fit, between the propositions they engage and the ways things are. On the other side of the distinction is sensory or perceptual experience, the outcome of a power to enjoy awareness of, or acquaintance with, concrete environmental elements—for example, objects, events, conditions, stuffs, processes, or other environmental ephemera. Unsuccessful exercises of that power can fail to sustain perceptual awareness of environmental elements, but not in a way which sustains an easy distinction between correct and incorrect such exercises. The distinction plays two central parts in Austin's drama, as well as taking on a number of important subsidiary roles.

The first central role played by the distinction is in undermining treatments of propositional knowledge, and in particular propositional knowledge about one's own mind, as comprising a form of acquaintance. Austin's concerns here are twofold: first, if introspective self-knowledge is treated as a mode of acquaintance, then it is hard to see how other people could enjoy the same form of knowledge about us that we can enjoy about ourselves; second, if self-knowledge is treated as a mode of acquaintance, then it is hard to make room for errors and uncertainties—again marking a principled distinction between one's knowledge of one's own mind and one's knowledge of others'. In response, Austin emphasizes the essential role of predication, or description, in propositional cognition, both as something that cannot be delivered up through simple acquaintance, and as what makes room for the possibility of error:

Any description of a taste or sound or smell (or colour) or of a feeling, involves (is) saying that it is like one or some that we have experienced before: any descriptive word is classificatory, involves recognition and in that sense memory, and only when we use such words (or names or descriptions, which come down to the same) are we knowing anything, or believing anything. But memory and recognition are often uncertain and unreliable. (1946: 92)

Similarly, if 'on the basis of being in pain' only means 'when I am (what would be correctly described as) in pain', then something more than merely *saying* 'I'm in pain' is necessary for knowing I'm in pain: and this something more, as it involves recognition, may be hesitant and/or mistaken (1946: 95)

The second central role played by the distinction between propositional cognition and sensory experience is in undermining the converse mistake: treating sensory experience as if it were a form of propositional cognition. The treatment at issue would be one on which what was given in sensory experiences determined how things would have to be in order for the sensory experiences to be correct or incorrect, and so determined the sorts of propositional contents which could also figure in the operations of cognition or its expression in speech:

Very clearly detailed, this is the view that, at least and only in a certain favoured type of case, I can 'say what I see (or otherwise sense)' almost quite literally. (1946: 90)

So, on this treatment, sensory experience already involves classification which can then simply be replicated in sense-based cognition.

Much of Austin's 1962 discussion of perception is taken up with trying to undermine this assimilation of sensory experience with propositional cognition. His main lines of argument here appeal to the idea that sense-based cognition is the upshot of the interaction of sensory experience with propositional cognition. Because of this, there is no backward path from errors in sense-based cognition to specifically sensory dysfunction. In particular, there is no such path that is suitable to sponsor a distinction between correct and incorrect (veridical and non-veridical) sensory experiences. For example,

when the plain man sees on the stage the Headless Woman, what he sees (and this *is* what he sees, whether he knows it or not) is not something 'unreal' or 'immaterial', but a woman against a dark background with her head in a black bag. If the trick is well done, he doesn't (because it's deliberately made difficult for him) properly size up what he sees, or see *what* it is; but to say this is far from concluding that he sees something *else*. (1962: 14)

Seeing what it is that is before one is a matter of seeing that something is so, and so is a form of propositional cognition. Indeed, plausibly, it is a form of propositional knowledge. Failures, or errors, in propositional cognition needn't trace to failures, or errors, in sensory experience. And, furthermore, seeking so to explain such errors can lead to definite mistakes, as when one tries to explain why someone failed to see that there is a woman against a dark background with her head in a black bag by appeal to the idea that they saw something else—so that, for example, their sensory experience would have been correct just in case there had been a headless woman there. More generally, with responsibility for errors in sense-based cognition distributed over the capacity for propositional knowledge, the capacity for perception, and the interactions of those capacities, one can better account for the variety of ways in which things can go wrong without seeking to trace all those ways to simple incorrectness in sensory experience:

That is to say, once again there is no neat and simple dichotomy between things going right and things going wrong; things may go wrong, as we really all know quite well, in lots of *different* ways—which don't have to be, and must not be assumed to be, classifiable in any general fashion. (1962: 13)

Austin summarises his response to the assimilation of sensory experience to propositional cognition in the following way:

...though the phrase 'deceived by our senses' is a common metaphor, it *is* a metaphor; and this is worth noting, for in what follows the same metaphor is frequently taken up by the expression 'veridical' and taken very seriously. In fact, of course, our senses are dumb—though Descartes and others speak of the 'testimony of the senses', our senses do not *tell* us anything, true or false. (1962: 11)

And his diagnosis is, again, that this treatment of sensory experience is fostered by insufficient sensitivity to the differences between perception and propositional knowledge:

Uncritical use of the direct object after *know* seems to be one thing that leads to the view that (or to talking as though) *sensa*, that is things, colours, noises, and the rest, speak or are labelled by nature, so that I can literally *say* what (that which) I *see*: it pipes up, or I read it off. It is as if *sensa* were *literally* to 'announce themselves' or to 'identify themselves'.... But surely this is only a manner of speaking...: *sensa* are dumb, and only previous experience enables *us* to identify them. If we choose to say that they 'identify themselves' (and certainly 'recognizing' is not a highly voluntary activity of ours), then it must be admitted that they share the birthright of all speakers, that of speaking unclearly and untruly. (1946: 97)

Austin's distinction between sensory experience and propositional cognition plays important subsidiary roles in underwriting lifelike explanations of a variety of ways in which sense-based cognition can go wrong, or in which subjects can be tempted towards making sense-based mistakes. Strictly, the distinction makes available three general forms of error-explanation, which may operate in combination: (a) explanations which appeal to cognitive failure, perhaps through inattention or carelessness, or in more extreme cases, through some form of cognitive disorder; (b) explanations which appeal to more general failures of the system as a whole, including the interactions between its sensory and cognitive elements, as in some forms of visual illusion, wherein one sees how things look, and responds cognitively in ways typically appropriate to things' looking that way, and yet the outcome cognition fails to fit how things are; (c) explanations which appeal to specifically sensory malfunction. However, Austin's view is that cases of type-(c) are uncommon, and certainly less common than philosophers have typically thought. And insofar as errors, or inclinations towards error, can be

given type-(a) or type-(b) explanations, that fact can help to insulate naïve accounts of perception from objections which might otherwise be thought to arise simply from the obtaining of tendencies towards sense-based error. In order to be effective, such objections would have to be supported by specific reasons to accept two claims about cases of sense-based errors: first, that some such errors must be explained by appeal to forms of specifically sensory malfunction that are unsusceptible to naïve treatment; and, second, that the required explanations generalise, so as to preclude naïve treatments of any case of perceptual experience. In the following section, we'll consider in more detail how Austin proposes to treat some specific cases. (For further discussion and development of Austin's distinction, building especially on his 1962: 33–43 discussion of “looks”, “appears”, and “seems”, see Travis 2004. See also Price 1952.)

#### **4. Perception and Hallucination.**

A type of case which might be thought to make trouble for a naïve treatment of perception would be a case in which one had an experience in which it seemed to one as if one were perceiving environmental elements but in which no such environmental elements were present, a type which Austin characterises as *delusion*. For according to the naïve approach, the experience one has when genuinely perceiving has a nature partly constituted by environmental elements. Hence, one couldn't be having a sensory experience of the same nature as a genuine perception of particular environmental elements if no such environmental elements were present.

Part of Austin's response to the thought that such cases would make trouble for a naïve treatment of perception is to appeal to the distinction between perception and cognition and to try to explain such cases by appeal to cognitive, rather than sensory, disorder. That is, Austin appeals to the idea that it might seem to one as if one were perceiving environmental elements not because of the kind of sensory experience one was undergoing, but rather because of disorder in the power responsible for sizing up what one's experience reveals about one's environment:

Delusions, on the other hand, are something altogether different from this [i.e., typical cases of illusions]. Typical cases would be delusions of persecution, delusions of grandeur. These are primarily a matter of grossly disordered beliefs (and so, probably, behaviour) and may well have nothing in particular to do with perception. (1962: 23)

However, Austin also seems to allow that there might be delusions which cannot be explained merely by appeal to cognitive disorder, but must be explained partly by appeal to features of the sensory experiences they involve:

But I think we might also want to say that the patient who sees pink rats has (suffers from) delusions—particularly, no doubt, if, as

would probably be the case, he is not clearly aware that his pink rats aren't real rats. (1962: 23)

Here, Austin appears to leave open that someone might have a sensory experience that was qualitatively similar to that involved in a genuine perception of pink rats, but undergone in the absence either of pink rats or of any other suitable environmental elements. That is, Austin appears to allow here for the possibility of hallucinatory sensory experiences which are qualitatively similar to, and perhaps qualitatively indistinguishable from, perceptual experiences. (Austin would certainly have disallowed the transition from the former to the latter, on the grounds that things can be alike without being perfectly alike.)

If Austin allows for the possibility of such cases, and at the same time seeks to uphold a naïve treatment of the experiences involved in genuine perception, then we would expect him to appeal to a difference in nature between the genuine and the hallucinatory cases. And that is something we do find:

If I am told that a lemon is generically different [—that is, different in nature—] from a piece of soap, do I expect that no piece of soap could look just like a lemon? Why should I? (Austin 1962: 50)

Austin's thought seems to be that, similarly, it does not follow from the supposition that pink rats are generically different to hallucinated pink rats, or pink rat sense-data, that pink rats and pink rat sense-data cannot appear similar or, indeed, exactly similar. And if pink rats and pink rat sense-data can appear exactly similar, then perhaps nothing precludes an experience of one from being generically different to, and yet qualitatively indistinguishable from, an experience of the other. Thus, Austin develops the thought:

But if we are prepared to admit that there may be, even that there are, *some* cases in which 'delusive and veridical perceptions' really are indistinguishable, does this admission require us to drag in, or even to let in, sense-data? No. For even if we were to make the prior admission (which we have so far found no reason to make) that in the 'abnormal' cases we perceive sense-data, we should not be obliged to extend this admission to the 'normal' cases too. For why on earth should it *not* be the case that, in some few instances, perceiving one sort of thing is exactly like perceiving another? (1962: 52)

Now, at first sight, it's natural to feel sympathy with Snowdon's comment about this passage:

Austin here looks to be precisely making room for what I have been calling experiential dualism. (Snowdon 2008: 38.)

However, a second glance is apt to be less comforting. For one thing, Austin seems to concede a potential role for sense data only for the sake

of (further) argument. For another, the proposal that a naïve treatment of perception entails experiential dualism seemed to rely on two ideas: first, that on a naïve treatment of the experience involved in perceiving some environmental elements, enjoying such an experience requires perceiving such elements, and so that kind of experience would not be possible in the absence of suitable such elements; and, second, that it is possible for there to be sensory experiences in the absence of any such environmental elements, and so in the absence of perception. By contrast, Austin doesn't say anything here about the possibility of sensory experiences in the absence of perception. Rather, the two sorts of experiences which he discusses both involve perception, it is just that they involve perceiving elements of different sorts, since only some of them are sense data. An attempt could be made to press Snowdon's suggestion by appeal to the idea that sense data are not environmental elements, and so are not potential objects of perception. (See e.g. Snowdon 2008: 39.) However, since Austin doesn't commit to a view about the nature of sense data, doing so would involve going beyond the available evidence.

Whatever the bearing of Austin's thought in this passage on his classification as a schematic disjunctivist, that thought is anyway apt to be found unsatisfying as a response to the challenge to naïve treatments of perception sustained by the possibility of certain sorts of sensory hallucinations. (See e.g. Martin 1997, 2007; Soteriou 2016: 16–26.) Furthermore, it is precisely in order to provide a more adequate response to that type of challenge that contemporary articulations of disjunctivism have developed beyond the schematic form. In what follows, I seek to explain both concerns via a stepwise development of the challenge. The aim is to establish at which step this proposal of Austin's stumbles. (The challenge sketched here derives from, and is developed in greater detail in, Martin 1997, 2004, 2006. See also Soteriou 2016: 39–52, 158–184.)

Central to naïve treatments of perception is the claim that one couldn't undergo the very same kind of experience that is involved in perceiving aspects of one's environment in the absence of such perceived aspects. Now consider a subject who is perceiving aspects of their environment. It is plausible that their sensory experience is enabled by specific physical aspects of what is going on in their brains and nervous systems. Furthermore, it is plausible that by perfectly replicating, in the subject, those specific physical aspects of what is going on in the perceiving subject's brain and nervous system, it is possible to induce a subjectively similar hallucination. It seems reasonable to allow that it is possible to replicate those aspects of what is going on in the perceiving subject's brain and nervous system without replicating the aspects of environment that they are perceiving. It follows that any sensory experience enjoyed by the subject of replication can be undergone in the absence of relevant environmental aspects and, so, is not susceptible of naïve treatment. That much is consistent with Austin's proposal, since all we are bound to accept to this point is that the experiences of perceiving and induced hallucination are subjectively similar. In particular, we are not yet forced to accept that any experience undergone by the replicating subject has the same qualities

as, or is of the same kind as, the experience undergone by the perceiving subject. However, on further natural assumptions, that result seems to be compelled.

It is very natural to assume that the subjective similarity between the target hallucination and its matching perceptual experience is due to their sharing an array of qualities and that its having those qualities explains why the hallucination seems to its subject to be of the same kind as the matching perceptual experience. Thus, it is because the hallucination possesses those qualities that it has the phenomenal character it does. If that assumption is accepted, then it follows that it is possible to explain why an experience seems to its subject to be a case of perceiving aspects of the environment without affording perceived aspects of the environment a constitutive role in determining the nature of that experience. However, it doesn't follow that it is possible to explain why experiences of perceiving aspects of the environment seem the way they do without affording perceived aspects of the environment a role as constituents of those experiences. For the considerations to this point leave open that, although the qualities of the hallucination explain why it seems to its subject to be a case of perceiving, and although the experiences one has when perceiving also have those qualities, nonetheless the experiences one has when perceiving have additional qualities and those additional qualities play an essential role in explaining its phenomenal character. Thus, further assumptions are required in order to undermine Austin's proposed treatment.

A key further assumption concerns the nature of the target hallucination. We've already assumed that it is possible to bring about that hallucination in the absence of perceived aspects of the environment. The new assumption is that it is possible for an experience with the same qualities as the target hallucination to occur in the *presence* of perceived aspects of the environment and, indeed, for such an experience to occur consistently with the occurrence of all the other conditions that enable the subject to perceive aspects of their environment. It follows from the assumptions made to this point that an experience with the same qualities as the target hallucination occurs whenever a perceptual experience occurs. As J. M. Hinton characterizes the former kind of experience, it would be

a quasi-hallucination, for which one must no more supply an actual object than for a genuine hallucination, but which occurs whenever one has a veridical experience. (1967: 227)

But it seems to follow from the assumptions made to this point, first, that the qualities of the quasi-hallucination would suffice to explain the way that the experience of perceiving seems to its subject and, second, that the explanation furnished by appeal to those qualities would be more general than the explanation offered by the naïve realist, since it would explain not only the experience of perceiving but also the experience of undergoing a matching hallucination. The challenge facing the naïve realist at this point is to defend the claim that perceived aspects of the environment figure in the constitution of the experience of perceiving those aspects given that the qualities of the coincident

quasi-hallucination would appear to screen off any qualities peculiar to the experience of perceiving and, so, to prevent those qualities from playing a role in explaining how the experience of perceiving seems to its subject.

Even at this stage, it might still be possible to defend the letter of Austin's proposal that the natures of perceptual experiences and quasi-hallucinations differ. And it might be possible to defend the claim that perceptual experiences have qualities which quasi-hallucinations lack. (For discussion, see Martin 1997, 2002.) However, it seems reasonable to allow that, since they are screened off by the qualities of the quasi-hallucination, those differences will play no role in explaining the ways perceptual experiences seem to their subjects. It therefore seems reasonable to accept that perceptual experiences and quasi-hallucinations fall into the same *experiential* kind. And to accept that would be to reject the naïve treatment of perceptual experiences.

### **5. Disjunctivism.**

The path from Austin's proposal to the failure of the naïve treatment seems to proceed straightforwardly from his opening concession that there can be cases of hallucinatory experiences which are qualitatively indistinguishable from—that is, which have the same experience determining qualities as—perceptual experiences. As was mentioned above, contemporary forms of disjunctivism have developed beyond the schematic form precisely in order to block that path. The central development is aimed at explaining why an hallucination might seem to be qualitatively indistinguishable from a matching perceptual experience even though it doesn't in fact share qualities with the perceptual experience. As Hinton observes, we would ordinarily allow that the things we perceive might merely seem to us to share qualities without really doing so. The disjunctivist seeks to extend that permission to experiences:

If things had to have a common property for you to take one for the other then a dagger, or a flash of light (such as may occur unobserved) would have to have properties in common with 'dagger of the mind' or a 'phosphene': a flash you see when an electric current is passed through your brain. Or else it would have to be, strictly speaking, a sense-datum of the one that you took for a sense-datum of the other. Why, if we don't think that, should events have to have properties in common in order to be mistaken for one another? Why should it not just seem as if they had properties in common? Seeing a flash of light and having that illusion seem, but only seem, to have in common the property 'when x occurs a flash of light occurs'. (Hinton 1967: 225)

The view is one on which the ways our experiences seem and, in particular, the qualities that they seem to us to instantiate, are determined, not only by the qualities they have, but also by our abilities to tell which qualities they have and, so, to classify them as similar or different. On this view, our awareness of the qualities of our experiences

is not a matter of simple acquaintance with those experiences or their qualities. Rather, it involves the operation of the power of introspective cognition. It is therefore possible to explain why it might seem to us that two experiences shared a quality despite their not in fact sharing that quality by appealing to limitations on the operations of that power. On the assumption that operations of the power of introspective cognition are so limited that we might fail to discriminate amongst experiences that fail to share relevant qualities, we can explain why such experiences might seem to us to share such qualities without doing so.

If such a view could be made out, then it would provide the resources to block the crucial assumption, according to which a perceptual experience and an internally physically matching hallucination may share all of the qualities that are relevant to determining the way the experience seems to the subject. The assumption is made to seem plausible in two steps. In the first step, a case is made for thinking that the subject of such an hallucination would be unable to discriminate it on the basis of introspection from its internally physically matching perceptual experience. In the second step, a case is made for thinking that the best explanation of the subject's inability to discriminate the hallucination from its matching perceptual experience is that the two experiences share qualities. The disjunctivist proposal that we are considering seeks to block the move from the first step to the second. According to the proposal, a superior explanation of the subject's inability to discriminate amongst their experiences is provided by appeal only to limitations on their power of introspective cognition. As Hinton puts it,

It can indeed be the same experience, but this only means that it can 'be the same' experientially or subjectively or 'qualitatively', *i.e.* that you can be quite unable to tell the difference. It is no more allowable to twist subjectively indistinguishable events into indistinguishable subjective events than to twist subjectively indistinguishable girls into indistinguishable subjective girls. (Hinton 1967: 226)

When so conceived, this contemporary specification of disjunctivism seems to differ from Austin's proposal in blocking the transition—which in our target passage Austin seemed to accept—from introspective or subjective indiscriminability to qualitative indistinguishability. Thus, although the target passage might sustain the attribution to Austin of a commitment to schematic disjunctivism, it doesn't support the attribution of a commitment to the contemporary specification. Albeit that the contemporary specification of disjunctivism is rooted in the distribution of labour availed by Austin's clarification of the distinction between perceptual and cognitive powers, is that the most we can say about Austin's role in its development?

Hinton himself suggests that there may be more to say here. Characterizing his own stand against the slide from introspective indiscriminability to qualitative indistinguishability, he writes:

The stand is of course like Austin's. As just intimated, it is not confined to *sensa*—or, one may add, *sensibilia*. (Hinton 1980: 39)

To what extent was Austin's stand like Hinton's?

We've already noted a further point of likeness, in the form of Austin's use of the distinction between acquaintance and propositional knowledge in order to make room for introspective error and uncertainty. Furthermore, in the passage leading up to the proposal considered above, Austin exploits the distinction in order to block transitions like that from indiscriminability to qualitative indistinguishability:

I do not, of course, wish to deny that there may be cases in which 'delusive and veridical experiences' really are 'qualitatively indistinguishable'; but I certainly do wish to deny (*a*) that such cases are anything like as *common* as both Ayer and Price seem to suppose, and (*b*) that there *have* to be such cases to accommodate the undoubted fact that we are sometimes 'deceived by our senses'. We are, after all, not quasi-infallible beings, who can be taken in only where the avoidance of mistake is completely impossible. (Austin 1962: 52)

And again, just before the target passage, Austin says:

From the fact that I am sometimes 'deluded', mistaken, taken in through failing to distinguish A from B, it does not follow at all that A and B must be *indistinguishable*. Perhaps I should have noticed the difference if I had been more careful or attentive; perhaps I am just bad at distinguishing things of this sort (e.g. vintages); perhaps, again, I have never learned to discriminate between them, or haven't had much practice at it. (Austin 1962: 51)

Now one difference between what Austin says here and Hinton's proposal is that to which Hinton alludes: Austin's eyes are on the objects of perceptual experience, rather than the experiential events. And another is that Austin focuses here on cases in which discrimination by sight is possible in principle, but not achieved, or achievable, by particular subjects. That is, he appeals to contingent, rather than principled, limitations on subjects' powers of introspective cognition. However, although Austin's attention is on the objects of experience, his claim about what does or doesn't follow from discriminatory error is entirely general. And furthermore, Austin seems to drop the restriction to contingent failures of discrimination in the following passage:

Again, when 'the quickness of the hand deceives the eye', it is not that what the hand is really doing is *exactly like* what we are tricked into thinking it is doing, but simply that it is *impossible to tell* what it is really doing. In this case it may be true that we can't distinguish, and not merely the case that we don't; but even this doesn't mean that the two cases are exactly alike. (Austin 1962: 52)

Here again Austin's focus is on the objects of perceptual experience. However, in that context, he gives the appearance of being prepared to disallow the transition from (a) its being impossible to discriminate through sight what the hand is doing from what it might be doing but isn't to (b) the event of its doing the one thing and the event of its doing the other being exactly alike. However, since, as we've seen, Austin was prepared to disallow the transition from qualitative indistinguishability to exact likeness—at least, where the latter amounts to sameness of nature—we still lack decisive evidence that Austin would have disallowed the earlier transition.

So, Austin has to hand some of the materials that are required in order to construct the contemporary disjunctivist treatment of internally physically matching hallucinations. And there is some evidence that Austin was prepared to exploit those materials in order to block the problematic transition from indiscriminability to qualitative indistinguishability. However, as far as we can now tell, he didn't make use of those materials in the way that Hinton did in order to provide an account of the ways matching hallucinations seem based on principled limits to introspective cognition. It is natural to wonder why.

Insofar as Austin didn't see clearly the possibility of adopting the contemporary specification of disjunctivism, that is plausibly due to the operation of three main factors.

First, Austin seems not to have considered in detail the type of challenge to schematic disjunctivism, that arises from internal physical replication. (See Martin 2007.) As we saw, it was reflection on that challenge which motivated the contemporary specification.

Second, although Austin considered contingent failures of introspective discrimination—failures due, for example, to inexperience or inattention—he didn't have clearly in view the possibility of there being principled limits to the power of introspective cognition as such.

Third, in those cases with respect to which Austin did apparently consider principled limits of discrimination—for example, in considering the upshot of principled limits to what it is possible to discriminate by sight—the nature of the target power would have made it plausible that indiscriminability in such cases corresponds with the sharing of qualities—albeit superficial qualities, like looks. (See Austin 1962: 33–43; Martin 2008, 2010.) Thus, exploiting the notional distinction between introspective indiscriminability and qualitative indistinguishability in order to respond to the challenge to schematic disjunctivism required attaining a view of introspective cognition on which seeming sameness needn't correspond with sameness of superficial qualities ('seemings'), and Austin didn't clearly attain such a view. (For developments of the required view, see especially Martin 2008; Soteriou 2016: 169–184.) It is worth observing, however, that Austin's rejection of an acquaintance-based model of introspection (Austin 1946), as well as his differential treatment of "looks", "appears", and "seems" (Austin 1962: 33–43), are distinctively congenial to the development of the required view. (See again §3 above.)

## 6. Conclusion.

My aim has been to defend two suggestions about Austin's relation to contemporary forms of disjunctivism. The first suggestion is that Austin failed to articulate or defend a central element in those contemporary forms of disjunctivism, the proposal that principled limits to the power of introspection can be exploited in order to block the transition from introspective indiscriminability to qualitative indistinguishability. The second suggestion is that Austin's discussions of perception provided an intellectual environment that was distinctively hospitable to the later development of more specific forms of disjunctivism.

In summary form, the three components of Austin's position which shape that environment are the following: (i) his distinction between cognitive and sensory powers; (ii) his treatment of introspection as a cognitive, rather than sensory, power; (iii) his treatment of the cognitive power of introspection as fallible and, to that extent, limited. With those components of Austin's position in view, it is possible better to appreciate his accomplishments whilst at the same time recognizing the precise extent of the challenges that he bequeathed to his successors.

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