

PHENOMENOLOGICAL DISJUNCTIVISM

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Consider two experiences, one a veridical perceptual experience of a black cube in front of one, and a matching hallucinatory experience. From the perspective of the subject undergoing these experiences they at least can be phenomenologically indistinguishable. Call this the phenomenological indistinguishability claim (PI for short). My aim in this paper is to argue for a distinctive view which I call phenomenological disjunctivism, drawing on the works of classical phenomenologist Edmund Husserl. Phenomenological disjunctivism significantly qualifies the PI claim, and in doing so is able to establish, through phenomenological analysis of the relevant experiences, an intrinsic difference in kind between veridical perception and (matching) hallucination, that is a difference in “essence” purely on phenomenological grounds. Phenomenological disjunctivism accepts that veridical perception and hallucination either are or at least can be phenomenologically indistinguishable at a time but argues that due to a key difference in the possibilities of fulfilment of their “horizon structure,” they are nonetheless phenomenologically distinguishable as fundamentally different types of experience over time (i.e., diachronically). This is the key Husserlian insight I will be reconstructing and attempting to make sense of in an articulation of phenomenological disjunctivism.

1. Introduction: Phenomenological Indistinguishability

Consider two experiences, one a veridical perceptual experience of a black cube in front of one, and a matching hallucinatory experience. From the perspective of the subject undergoing these experiences they at least can be phenomenologically indistinguishable (the hallucination would be a so-called “philosopher’s hallucination”). In the way it is often put, “from the inside” the subject can’t tell whether they are in the good case, that is where perceptual experience succeeds in latching on to a mind-independent real object (the physical thing itself), or the bad case, that is where the experience *seems to* latch onto some such real object, but where

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there is in fact no such object. Call this the *phenomenological indistinguishability claim* (the PI claim for short).¹

A significant amount of argumentation and theorising in the philosophy of perception—both historically and in contemporary debates—takes its lead from the PI claim, either using it as a premise in an argument (or perhaps as a datum that needs explaining), or denying a specific metaphysical claim that supposedly follows from it. For example consider the classic argument from hallucination for indirect realism and the role of the PI claim in it.² The argument starts with the claim that veridical perception and its hallucinatory counterpart at least can be phenomenologically indistinguishable “from the inside.” Now given that in hallucination a subject seems to be directly aware of something, but cannot be directly aware of a real object in their external perceptual environment, then we are led to posit some non-normal object of awareness (e.g., an image, “inner picture,” sense-datum etc.) as what the subject is directly aware of. Next, we get the familiar generalising step: What we are required to posit for hallucination (a non-normal object of awareness) is also required to be posited for veridical perception, such that even in the good case, that is in which there is some mind-independent real object in the vicinity, so to speak, subjects are never *directly* aware of it. The motivation for this generalising step is, critically, the need to explain the truth of the PI claim: What is thought to be required to explain the PI claim is the positing of something *real* that both hallucination and veridical perception are *related to*, a so-called “highest common factor” between the two states. Since this highest common factor can’t be a real physical object (because hallucination can’t be a relation to something like that), then we are led to posit something “mental” or “really immanent to consciousness” (e.g., a *real* sense-datum, image, picture, Fregean sense) that both states are related to.³ The resulting position is that perceptual experience, even in good cases, is at best an indirect form of awareness of the external world.

On such views, veridical perception only differs from phenomenologically indistinguishable hallucination *extrinsically*, that is in virtue of the holding of an additional contingent non-psychological condition in the “good case,” namely a causal relation between the relevant common “internal” referent and some external mind-independent object (there of course being no such object and so no possibility of some such causal relation obtaining in hallucination). On such views,

1. A similar claim is also referred to variously as subjective indistinguishability, qualitative identity, subjective indiscernibility. I take it that all these terms refer to the same notion. NB: claiming that the two experiences are *phenomenologically identical* is more problematic (and arguably false) for reasons we will come to later.

2. Classic statements of the argument can be found in (Moore 1903; Russell 1912/1997); and more recently (Smith 2002: ch.7; Fish 2009: ch.2; Pautz 2021).

3. See (Smith 2002: ch.7) for this way of framing the argument and the motivation for the generalising step.

veridical perception and phenomenologically indistinguishable hallucination are intrinsically or essentially identical, that is to say qua experiences they are identical or share the same “essence,” or are of the same fundamental kind (I’ll use these terms interchangeably throughout).

Contrastingly, consider disjunctivist theories of perception on which perceptual experiences *either* involve a relation to a real mind-independent particular (in good cases) *or* in the case of matching hallucination (the bad cases) only *seem to do so*.⁴ Critical to standard varieties of disjunctivism is the claim, as it is often put, that the type of experience a subject enjoys when they are related to a real mind-independent particular is simply *not the kind* of experience a subject can have when no such relation obtains (i.e., in cases of hallucination)—that kind of experience is simply not “available,” insofar as veridical perception is claimed to be constitutively dependent on the existence of the relevant mind-independent particular in our perceptual environment (hence the idea that veridical perception is object-dependent or essentially relational).⁵ As McDowell puts it, “which configurations a mind can get itself into is partly determined by which objects exist in the world.”⁶ What is of further note, however, is that standard varieties of disjunctivism also accept the PI claim. We can put this as follows: Even given that veridical perception and hallucination can be phenomenologically indistinguishable, from this it does not follow that they are ontologically or essentially identical. Note again here—as with the form of indirect realism above—what is of interest is a supposed *intrinsic or essential* difference (or non-identity) qua the experience-types under discussion. In this sense the relevant difference in kind posited between veridical perception and matching hallucination turns on more than just the extrinsic fact that a non-psychological causal relation obtains in the “good case” that doesn’t in the “bad case.”⁷

In this context, we have two main options: (1) we take the phenomenology of our perceptual experiences as a reliable guide to their essential nature qua kind of experience, and given the PI claim, it then seems hard to resist a view on which veridical perception and matching hallucination are intrinsically identical types of experience. (2) alternatively, we don’t take the phenomenology of perceptual experiences to be a reliable guide to their essential nature qua kind of experience, and given the PI claim, seek to establish an essential difference in kind between veridical perception and matching hallucination on non-phenomenological grounds, and so are led towards various non-phenomenologically motivated versions of dis-

4. For the classic statement see (Hinton 1973). See also (Snowdon 1979; 1990; McDowell 1982; Martin 2004; 2006).

5. For statements of the object-dependent view see Brewer 2011; Johnston 2004.

6. McDowell 1986: 139.

7. It is in this respect that disjunctivists (and indeed “naïve realists”) find themselves in opposition to various forms of externalist (causal) representationalism about perception. See, for example, the debate between McDowell and Burge in (McDowell 2010; 2013; Burge 2011).

junctivism: non-phenomenological in the sense that the relevant feature in virtue of which veridical perception and hallucination differ essentially and intrinsically in kind doesn't turn on their phenomenology (and, we might add, anything that can be gleaned through first-person reflection on that phenomenology).

My aim in this paper is to argue for a distinctive view which I call *phenomenological disjunctivism*, drawing on the works of classical phenomenologist Edmund Husserl. Phenomenological disjunctivism significantly qualifies the PI claim, and in doing so is able to establish, through phenomenological analysis of the relevant experiences, an intrinsic difference in kind between veridical perception and (matching) hallucination, that is a difference in "essence" purely on phenomenological grounds. It is worth noting that insofar as the PI claim is accepted (or at least accepted without qualification) this position would be countersensical: We would be claiming to be able to distinguish on phenomenological grounds alone two types of perceptual experience that are phenomenologically indistinguishable. So central to the argument will be explaining in what sense the PI claim should be qualified. Critical in this respect will be making a distinction between phenomenological indistinguishability *at a time*, and phenomenological indistinguishability *over time*, and so between what we can call *synchronic indistinguishability* and *diachronic indistinguishability*. Simply put, phenomenological disjunctivism accepts that veridical perception and hallucination either are or at least can be phenomenologically indistinguishable at a time but argues that due to a key difference in the possibilities of fulfilment of their "horizon structure," they are nonetheless phenomenologically distinguishable as fundamentally different types of experience *over time* (i.e., diachronically)—more on some of these terms of art later. This is the key Husserlian insight I will be reconstructing and attempting to make sense of in an articulation of phenomenological disjunctivism.

A few preparatory notes. First, it might be questioned why, even if successful, phenomenological disjunctivism would be of general interest to philosophers of perception. One key reason is that phenomenological disjunctivism promises to provide a detailed account of a central, but often overlooked, "internal" structural difference between veridical perception and hallucination, one that is, by the phenomenologist's lights, only revealed in the course of a detailed phenomenological analysis of the relevant experiences (again, what precisely is meant here by "phenomenological analysis" will be explained in due course). Insofar as the PI claim is accepted without qualification, we will be blind to the possibility of there being some such "internal" structural difference, and so stand to miss a critical respect in which disjunctivism can avail itself of phenomenological resources to motivate its position.⁸

8. NB: one recurring challenge for disjunctivism is providing a compelling substantive account of hallucination as different in kind from veridical perception (see, for example Johnston 2004). The phenomenological disjunctivism on offer here does have something substantive to

A further note on my use of Husserl. My aim here is to reconstruct a certain line of thinking found in Husserl to motivate a novel form of disjunctivism. I do not claim that the resulting view that is articulated is definitively Husserl's "official" view, although it is doubtless *Husserlian* in tenor. In this context, it would be disingenuous not to draw attention to the fact that there are tendencies in Husserl's philosophy—arguably both methodological and substantive—that suggest an account of perceptual experience that is in tension with (if not outright conflict with) the phenomenological disjunctivism articulated here.⁹ Resolving the exegetical question concerning Husserl's putatively official theory of perception is of independent interest (or at least is to those who take an interest in Husserl's views), however it will not be my focus here.

The argument structure of the paper is as follows. §2 draws on a claim made by Husserl that perceptual experience can be characterised as presenting its object "in person." Here it is argued that we can make sense of this in terms of the idea of the perceived object having a "sense of real existence." §3 argues that only by subjecting this "sense of real existence" to what Husserlian phenomenology calls "horizontal analysis" can we come to see how there is a fundamental difference in kind between veridical perception and (matching) hallucination. In doing so this section provides a detailed account of phenomenological disjunctivism, making clear its commitments and implications. Finally, §4 deals with two problems for the account provided, specifically in relation to some of the complex modal notions that are in play, arguing that the view has plausible responses to the relevant worries (it is also here that I provide more detail on the phenomenological disjunctivist approach to hallucination and compare it with extant approaches). While what is offered here is by no means an exhaustive defence of phenomenological disjunctivism, the view is presented as a distinctive and plausible way of trying to mark out the supposed difference in kind between veridical perception and hallucination, and therefore one that should be seen as a live option in continuing debates concerning this issue in philosophy of perception.

2. Givenness in Person and "Real Existence"

To see our way through to phenomenological disjunctivism I start by drawing on some materials in Husserl concerning a central feature of perceptual experience (throughout I will use perceptual experience to cover both veridical perception and hallucination; I will also drop the "matching" qualification on hallucination

say on this score that can be added to the disjunctivist response to this challenge (see §3 for more on this).

9. For the exegetical case that Husserl can be read as a kind of externalist or disjunctivist see Zahavi 2004; Poellner 2007; 2018; Smith 2008. For the alternative "internalist" picture see Smith and Macintyre 1982; Føllesdal 1969: 680–687.

and take this as read).

Husserl insists that a key feature of perceptual experience is that it presents the perceived object in *propria persona*, that is “in person” (also sometimes using the phrase “in the flesh”). He writes that “the spatial physical thing which we see is, with all its transcendence, still something perceived, given ‘in person’ in the manner peculiar to consciousness.”¹⁰ We might therefore think that this phenomenological feature could be that which enables us to distinguish on phenomenological grounds between veridical perception and hallucination, such that in the good case the object is given *in person* whereas this isn’t true for hallucination. However, Husserl makes it clear that this would be a mistake:

Thus there stands out in the initial consideration a peculiar character of perception which we can express in an intelligible way as follows: The object stands in perception as there in the flesh. . . Obviously, the foregoing characterization is not to be understood in the sense that there would pertain to the essence of every perception as such the existence of the perceived Object, the existence of that which stands there in it in the mode of presence in the flesh. In that case, talk of a perception whose object did not exist would indeed be countersensical; illusory perceptions would be unthinkable. It is the essential character of perception to be “consciousness” of the Object’s presence in the flesh, i.e., *to be the phenomenon of it*. To perceive a house means to have the consciousness, to have the phenomenon, of a house standing there in the flesh. How matters stand with the so-called existence of the house, with the true Being of the house, and what this existence means—about all that nothing is said. (Husserl 1907/1997: §4; see also §5)

The upshot of this is as follows: The character of presenting its object “in person” is a phenomenological feature shared by veridical perception and hallucination. Husserl guards explicitly against a reading of the “in person” character of perceptual experience which would necessitate that the phenomenology of “in personness” guarantees that the perceived object exists. Husserl confirms this in a later text when he writes that “anything physical which is given “in person” can be non-existent,” adding in a note “despite its givenness “in person.”¹¹ The possibility which is left open here by Husserl is a pre-eminently plausible one: something which *appears* to be given “in person” at a time may turn out to be non-existent, such that the relevant “in person” character can be “cancelled out” in the future course of experience.

10. Husserl 1913/1982: §43.

11. Husserl 1913/1982: §46 (note 228). See also 1907/1997: §84: “Every perceived reality (real thing) can perhaps not be, and thereby in principle each and every thing posited in perception and also in memory might not be.”

Now, it is also important to recognise that this “in person” character of perceptual experience, the perceptual object being “given in the flesh,” whatever its precise character (see below for more on this) is a non-doxastic phenomenal feature, manifestly qualifying or “attaching to” the object of perceptual experience. Put otherwise, this sense of the perceptual object being given “in person” isn’t to be equated with a (presumably conscious) *belief* in the existence of the object (although they usually come together, whereby the latter belief is rationally motivated by the aforementioned non-doxastic phenomenal feature). We can see this most obviously in cases where the “in person” character persists but any belief that the perceptual object really exists is withheld or “cancelled out,” that is in cases of unmasked hallucination. Husserl describes such a case to make precisely this point:

If we presentify the example of an unmasked hallucination, then we find in place of belief disbelief. Moreover, other examples offer themselves, ones in which we are at first perceptually doubtful whether it is a case of perception or hallucination. Here both belief and disbelief are lacking, and instead of them we have doubt and perhaps the suspension of every position-taking. Yet in all these cases the phenomenon of the standing there of the Object in the flesh persists or can persist... in the essence of perception in the ordinary sense [i.e., as covering both veridical perceptual and hallucination] a distinction appears between presence in the flesh (which is fundamental and essential to perception as such) and belief (which can either supervene or be lacking). (Husserl 1907/1997: §5)

Given our discussion so far, we will *not* be able to motivate phenomenological disjunctivism simply by reference to the “in person” character of the perceptual object, since this phenomenal feature is, according to Husserl, phenomenologically indistinguishable across veridical perception and matching hallucination (and indeed can even remain present in cases of unmasked hallucination). Put otherwise there doesn’t look to be anything here which provides us with material to challenge or qualify the PI claim; rather we have just highlighted a key respect in which veridical perception and hallucination are (or at the very least can be) phenomenologically indistinguishable. However, in what follows I argue that a sufficiently explicated account of this feature does in fact allow us to see our way through to phenomenological disjunctivism. To see how we need to begin by offering a more detailed characterisation of this feature.

Given that Husserl is explicit that the object of perceptual experience being given “in person” can’t guarantee the existence of what is so given “in person”—future “annulment” always being conceivable, no matter how unlikely or unmotivated by the course of past experience such “annulment” might be—it might be asked exactly what this phenomenal feature amounts to. It is tempting to think that what Husserl means here is something like the following: When an

object is given in person, that which is intuited does not *itself* figure as a sign for anything else, which seems right. However, this cannot be quite right since Husserl only uses the “in person” locution for perceptual experience while insisting that a range of other “intuitive” (i.e., sensory or quasi-sensory) intentional experiences also intuit an “it itself” in the sense that that which is intuited does not *itself* figure as a sign for anything else:

In immediately intuitive acts we intuit an ‘it itself’; on their apprehendings no mediate apprehendings are built up to a higher level; thus there is no consciousness of anything *for which* the intuited might function as a ‘sign’ or ‘picture.’ And just on that account it is said to be immediately intuited as ‘it itself.’ In perception the ‘it itself’ is further characterised in its peculiarity as ‘in person’ in contrast to its modified characteristic as ‘floating before us’ as ‘presentiated’ in memory or in free phantasy. (Husserl 1913/1982: §43)

What is clear then is that Husserl considers a range of “intuitive acts” to present their objects in this “it itself” way, but nonetheless they don’t necessarily present their objects “in person” or “in the flesh.” Here the contrast with sensory imagination is helpful:

In phantasy, the object does not stand there as in the flesh, actual, currently present. It indeed does stand before our eyes, but not as something currently given now... The phantasized is merely “represented” ... it merely places before us or presents but it “does not give itself” as itself, actual and now. (Husserl 1907/1997: §4)

What is distinctive of perceptual experience then according to Husserl isn’t merely that it “intuit[s] an “it itself,” but that it has the further or qualifying characteristic of presenting the object, so purportedly directly manifest, “in person.”

So the question remains what this peculiar “in person” character consists in. The most obvious view looks to be as follows: When the perceptual object is given “in person” the object is given as having the sense of *reality or real-existence*, where that amounts to its being given as spatio-temporally actually existing *hic et nunc*.¹² It is precisely in this respect that an informative phenomenal contrast is to

12. It is worth noting that for Husserl, as for Sartre (2004), what they would call “noematic characteristics”—in our case the way the perceived object is presented as being, as having *real existence*—are necessarily correlated with experience-type defining “noetic processes”, as “noetic” features or characteristics. In the case of perceptual experience the central “noetic feature” is that the experience is *itself* “pre-reflectively” given as a form of receptivity (and necessarily so insofar as it is perceptual experience). The sense of the term “pre-reflective” here is the idea that intentional experiences as lived through (rather than as reflected on), afford awareness of their “act-characters” or “noetic characteristics” (i.e., as *receptivity*, as *spontaneity*), but these *experiences themselves* are not “objectified” (i.e., made into intentional objects).

be drawn with sensory imagination which definitively doesn't present its object as having a sense of reality or real existence in this way; the "imagined object" is precisely *not* given as spatio-temporally actually existing *hic et nunc* (in what follows I will paraphrase this as the "sense of real existence").¹³

However, even given this analysis of the "in person" character of perceptual experience in terms of the sense of real existence of the perceptual object there is still no route to phenomenological disjunctivism in view. This is of course because we have not identified any phenomenological grounds for distinguishing between veridical perception and hallucination; hallucination will also present its object as having the sense of reality or real-existence, as spatio-temporally actually existing *hic et nunc*. So given what we have detailed so far the PI claim remains unqualified. Indeed, in this context it is not surprising to find Husserl expressing a claim clearly in the vicinity of the PI claim with respect to the sense of real existence in the following passage:

It can happen that later on I become correctly convinced that I have fallen victim to an illusion. But previously I did have purely the consciousness "house-existing-there;" descriptively [i.e., phenomenologically] it is no different from any other perceiving. Of course there can be no talk of external-internal psychophysical causality if the house is a mere hallucination. But it is clear that the momentary lived experiencing is in itself not only a subjective lived experiencing but precisely a perceiving of this house. Therefore, descriptively, the object-relation belongs to the lived experiencing, whether the object actually exists or not. (Husserl 1925/2012: §3d)

In this context it is fair to say that phenomenological disjunctivism remains countersensical, purporting to be able to distinguish on phenomenological grounds that which is phenomenologically indistinguishable.

3. Horizontal Analysis of "Real Existence"

To see our way towards phenomenological disjunctivism we need to avail ourselves of a form of analysis that is central to Husserlian phenomenology, namely "horizontal analysis." A central idea in Husserlian phenomenology is that explicative phenomenological analysis of any given experience and its object (as it is presented in the experience) requires an "unfolding" of its "sense" or content with respect to specifying what Husserl calls its "horizon structure."¹⁴

13. See also discussion in Dokic and Martin 2017, who claim that the notion of a "sense of presence" is equivocal between a *sense of reality* (as sense of the perceptual object as a denizen of the actual rather than "possible" world) and a *sense of acquaintance*, which they understand as a sense that our awareness of the relevant object is *unmediated*.

14. See Husserl 1931/1977: §19; §29.

To get a clearer sense of what this might amount to consider the case of visual experiences of three-dimensional objects. Standing in front of a house, we are visually presented with its front side, given from our location. Nonetheless, our visual experience is an experience of what is given to us as a complete three-dimensional entity: We enjoy a visual experience as of a house (complete with hidden sides), not a mere façade (where the latter would be experienced as a surface of a particular geometrical form). How are these phenomenological facts to be reconciled, as concerning how things are presented in visual experience, such that we enjoy an experience as of a complete three-dimensional entity despite being limited in any particular perceptual moment to perceiving the side(s) facing us from a specific spatial perspective? The following claim suggests an answer. For a subject to enjoy a visual experience as of a complete three-dimensional object that visual experience must have some components which “refer beyond” (as Husserl often puts it) to those occluded or presently unseen back-sides which (i) are not sense-perceptually given (which are strictly not visually experienced), and (ii) which cannot be sense-perceptually given while the subject is occupying the vantage point on the object that they are. These are the “horizons of visual experience” for the experience type *<visual experience as of complete three-dimensional objects>*. The central Husserlian claim is that such “horizontal references” are essential to the original experience presenting the object as it does (such horizons co-constitute the “sense” of the experience as Husserl puts it), and it is the job of horizontal analysis to provide a detailed account of how this form of “horizontal intentionality” works for any given experience type.

There are, however, two critical dimensions to horizontal analysis: First there is a specification of the “noematic horizon,” or the horizontal features considered *noematically*, and so as relating strictly to apparent features or properties of the object. In our example this would be the currently *unseen sides* of the three-dimensional object. But there is also the horizon considered “noetically,” that is the supposed implicit references that the current experience makes to *future possible perceptual experiences* in which those noematic horizontal features would be “brought to fulfilment,” as Husserl typically puts it. Further detail need not derail us here, as long as we have a broad sense of what is involved in *horizontal analysis* as envisioned by Husserl.

The phenomenal characteristic we are interested in is the perceptual object being given as having *the sense of real existence*. In a range of passages in different texts Husserl gestures towards what is revealed in explicative horizontal analysis of the “real existence” character of perceptual experience, as what we might—following the above—call an “unfolding” of the sense of real existence with respect to its “horizontal implications” (I quote the most pertinent passages below):

At first, I shall meditate as a “naïve” human being. I see and apprehend the physical thing as given “in person.” To be sure, I am sometimes

deceived, and not only with respect to the perceived determinations but also with respect to the factual being of the thing itself. I suffer an illusion or hallucination. At such times perception is not “genuine” perception. But when it is, and that means when it allows of *being “confirmed” in concatenations of actional experience*, perhaps with the help of correct thinking based on experience, then the perceived physical thing is *actual*, and, more particularly, *actually itself* given in perception “in person” (Husserl 1913/1982: §39, my italics).

Anything physical which is given “in person” can be non-existent. [fn 228: despite its givenness “in person”] (Husserl 1913/1983: §46)

One should notice in what sense, and what particular sense this contingency pertaining to the positing of the world possesses. One must never tear such sentences out of context. The physical thing must exist if the continuity of experience goes on harmoniously ad infinitum. (Husserl 1913/1982: §46, fn. 299; see also 1913/1982: §§138, 142, 144, 149)¹⁵

An experienced object holds for us as an actuality of experience, as an existing real thing, which we designate afterwards as a member of the real and actually existing world, insofar as it holds for us as something harmoniously experienceable by ever new experience—one’s own and others,” actual or to be made possible. (Husserl 1925/2012: §11)

This broadest sense of the “In itself” refers us to evidence, not however to a particular evidence as a de facto experience, but rather to certain potentialities which are grounded in the transcendental Ego and his life: first of all, to the potentiality of the infinity of intendings of every kind that relate to something as identical, but then also the potentiality of verifying these intendings, consequently to potential evidences which, as de facto experiences, are repeatable *in infinitum*. (Husserl 1931/1977: §27; see also §28)

On the basis of these passages we get the following view: the “naïve” experiential character of “real existence” (the perceptual object given as spatio-temporally actually existing here and now, as a real material thing in space)—which is present in both genuine perception and hallucination—is revealed under analysis as necessitating the *real possibility* of a harmonious fulfilment of its horizons. (I will

15. The appendix to sections §11 and §20 of the 5th Logical Investigations (1901/2001) signals Husserl’s broad sympathy for something in the vicinity of disjunctivism, and perhaps a scepticism about the “highest common factor” claim (the appendix definitively signals his opposition to various forms of “image theory” or “sense-datum” theories associated with indirect realism and the argument from hallucination), although no phenomenological grounds are given there for distinguishing between veridical perception and hallucination.

discuss in more detail the modal force of *real* rather than merely logical possibility in the next section).¹⁶ Put otherwise, what is revealed to be required for some perceptual object to appear to have the sense of *real existence*, according to Husserl, is that the subject implicitly anticipates the possibility of “ever new experiences” of confirmation, that is of future possible perceptual experiences of the object in which its “real existence” would continue to be “confirmed”, such as to “hold good,” and so in which the “continuity of experience” goes on, or more precisely would go on, harmoniously “ad infinitum.” This would be the form of the experiential potentiality (the “horizon”) essentially “prefigured” by the perceptual object having the sense of *real existence*.¹⁷

Now, it is important to note that any hallucination considered *at a time*, and critically prior to any “revelation” that things are not as they seem, and so as long as it genuinely remains phenomenologically indistinguishable from veridical perception, would also be revealed in the course of phenomenological analysis to have the aforementioned implicit horizontal structure. If it didn’t then something would have gone wrong in the analysis, since as noted previously hallucinations present their objects as having the sense of real existence. This accords with, and is arguably a product of, a familiar methodological heuristic that is central to Husserlian phenomenology. Namely, that the phenomenologist having made the so-called phenomenological reduction—a key part of which involves having bracketed or “put out of play,” for the duration of phenomenological analysis, any standing “natural attitude” interest in the veridicality of the sample experiences under analysis—can make just as good use of a hallucinatory experience or illusory experience in explicating the essential features of perception and its manifest objects, *just as long* as such experiences remain subjectively indistinguishable from their veridical counterparts.¹⁸ Simply put, they serve the phenomenologist *just as well*, and in our particular case serve the phenomenologist just as well for the relevant explicative horizontal analysis of the “sense of real existence.” Indeed, within the so-called phenomenological attitude towards experience produced by making the phenomenological reduction any judgement about the existential status (i.e., concerning spatio-temporal existence) of the object of the sample experience is, as Husserl puts it, completely closed or “shut off,” and therefore the veridicality or not of the sample experience is strictly speaking irrelevant.¹⁹ As Husserl puts it in a later passage, within the phenomenological attitude “there is no question to be raised of the sort whether or not something corresponds to it [the perceived object]

16. See also Poellner 2018: 195; Smith 2003: 167.

17. We might wonder if this enough to explicate the sense of real existence? With respect to its implicated horizon structure I think it is but perhaps there is also the requirement to bring to light a *causal component*, such that in perception and some kinds of hallucination my experience is given as *determined* by the object (see Dorsch 2018 for this kind of view).

18. See Poellner 2007.

19. See Husserl 1913/1982: §32.

in ‘the’ actuality.”²⁰ And this is critical for Husserlian phenomenology since the results established within the confines of the phenomenological reduction are claimed to hold *regardless* of metaphysical contingencies, that is regardless of whether the particular samples used for explicative analysis turn out *themselves* to be veridical or not (in our case whether it turns out that the perceived object of the sample perceptual experience *really exists*).

However, notwithstanding the above, there is now a further point that the phenomenologist comes to recognize in the course of their analysis of some sample perceptual experience which presents its object as having the sense of real existence. Once this horizational structure of the sense of real existence is explicated we come to recognise that there is an essential *diachronic* difference between any possible veridical perception and any possible hallucination. This is because in principle a hallucination won’t be able to meet the “demand” placed on future experience by the horizon structure involved in the “sense of real existence.” Put otherwise, considered *diachronically* hallucination is revealed to essentially have a conflicting or “unfulfillable” horizon structure compared with veridical perception. If this is right, then we have hit on putatively purely phenomenological grounds—that is grounds available purely within the scope of a phenomenological analysis of perceptual experience—for the familiar disjunctivist claim that there is an essential and intrinsic difference in kind between veridical perception and hallucination. Let me now unpack these ideas further, with the previous formulation serving as a first pass.

According to the view we are developing the central claim is that in a phenomenological analysis of the horizon structure of a sample perceptual experience (disregarding whether that sample is veridical or not) hallucination is revealed to be *essentially and intrinsically* a different kind of experience than veridical perception. This is because we come to realise that in the case of hallucination there simply isn’t the *real possibility* of fulfilment of its horizons in future possible experience ad infinitum, but only something like a “presumed” or “apparent possibility of fulfilment” of such a thing at a time, that would necessarily have to be cancelled out or nullified at some possible future stage (that is in a future possible experience where the horizon was *unfulfilled*). So, with respect to the possibilities of fulfilment implied by its horizon structure hallucination is critically not what

20. See Husserl 1913/1982: §88. See Poellner 2018: 195. This point is not to be confused with the idea that in “abstaining for all positing” (Husserl 1913/1982: §90) concerning real existence we miss the phenomenon of the perceived object of perceptual experience being given as having the sense real existence; quite the opposite, as Husserl (1913/1982: §90) explains “the “parenthesis” undergone by perception prevents any judgement about perceived actuality... But it does not prevent the judgement about the fact that perception is consciousness of an actuality (the positing of which, however, should not be “effected [gone along with]); and it does not prevent any description of this perceptually appearing “actuality” as appearing with the particular ways in which it is here intended to...”

it appears to be at a time, since its being a hallucination essentially implicates possible *diachronic disconfirmation*. So while veridical perception and hallucination are phenomenologically indistinguishable qua their horizon structure (and the possibilities of fulfilment this requires) *at a time*, considered diachronically they are *essentially different* with respect to the possibilities of fulfilment implicated by that horizon structure; veridical perception requires the *real possibility* of a fulfilment of its horizons “ad infinitum,” whereas hallucination necessarily requires a possible “disconfirmation” or frustrating of its horizons (its horizon necessarily at some point going *unfulfilled*). Put otherwise, as a matter of essence or identity, for something to *be a hallucination* there would have to be some really possible future experience in which the hallucination was revealed to the experiencing subject to be a hallucination, and so a future possible experience in which its object would be revealed to in fact *not possess* the sense of real existence it seemed to possess prior to such “unfulfillment,”²¹ (I return to a potential worry with this understanding of the “essence” of hallucination in the following section).

Critically, it is important to note what this kind of phenomenological disjunctivism implies. It won’t, and indeed can’t, guarantee that either a naïve subject or indeed the reflecting phenomenologist has available to them (even if only potentially) phenomenological grounds to tell in any given particular instance whether the perceptual experience they are enjoying (much less the sample that is being used for phenomenological analysis) is itself in fact a veridical perception or hallucination. Put otherwise, phenomenological disjunctivism can’t tell us whether a token of the purportedly different types—veridical perception or hallucination—is instantiated in any given instance. Remember Husserl’s pre-eminently plausible claim that anything physical which is given “in person” can be non-existent, despite its givenness “in person,” that is to say any experience which *seems to be* a veridical perception of a real object at a time can turn out, in the future course of experience, to not be so. This possibility as pertaining to *particular perceptual experiences* should not, and cannot, be foreclosed on purely phenomenological grounds.

However—and this is the crux of the matter—this does not stop the phenomenologist from having hit upon an essential difference in experiential type or kind between veridical perception and hallucination on the basis of what is revealed in phenomenological analysis of a sample perceptual experience of the relevant class (perceptual experiences with a sense of real existence attaching to the perceptual object). This indeed is an instance of a central aspect of Husserlian phenomenology discussed above, in which the supposed “eidetic insight”—the

21. Note what we are interested in here is *possible diachronic disconfirmation*. The “essence” of hallucination doesn’t require *actual disconfirmation* but just the possibility of some such disconfirmation in future experience. See discussion in §3 for more on the relevant modal notions here.

supposed “seeing of essences,” or in this case, the “seeing” of a *difference* in essence—holds regardless of particular metaphysical contingencies, that is in our case regardless of whether the sample perceptual experience used to gain this supposed “eidetic insight” of a difference in kind between veridical perception and hallucination *is itself* a veridical perception or hallucination. What is revealed in explicative phenomenological analysis of perceptual experience by the lights of phenomenological disjunctivism isn’t (and indeed couldn’t be) whether *this particular sample experience* in fact meets (or indeed fails to meet) the relevantly explicated necessary condition for being a veridical perception (the *real possibility* of a fulfilment of its horizons ad infinitum). Rather what is disclosed to the phenomenologist in their analysis are the relevant necessary or “constitutive” phenomenologically based identity conditions (i.e., identity conditions that are fixed by a reference to actual and possible experience) of veridical perception *per se* (veridical perception’s “essence”) and its difference from the phenomenological identity conditions on hallucination *per se* (hallucination’s “essence”).

Returning more squarely to the PI claim, we now have landed on a view which significantly qualifies that claim. Prior to this articulation of phenomenological disjunctivism it would have been entirely natural to accept the view that since veridical perception and hallucination can be phenomenologically indistinguishable then they are *phenomenologically* (if not necessarily metaphysically) *identical*. And if we take the phenomenology of experience as a reliable guide to the “essences of experiences”—a near axiom of Husserlian phenomenology—then it is hard to resist the conclusion that they are essentially the same kind of experience. Disjunctivism would be off the cards for the Husserlian phenomenologist if they take the PI claim to be unqualifiedly true *and* take it that the phenomenology of experience is a reliable guide to the “essences of experiences” (i.e. their essential structural features).

However, we can now see more clearly the required qualification to the PI claim that we need to get phenomenological disjunctivism off the ground. While in one sense it remains right to say that the relevant pair of perceptual experiences are phenomenologically indistinguishable *at a time*, it is in fact revealed in phenomenological analysis, that there is a more fundamental sense in which they are *not* phenomenologically identical insofar as the possibilities of fulfilment for veridical perception vs. hallucination, as required by their horizon structures, are *essentially different*. And if there is an essential difference between two states, which turns on a difference in their constitutive phenomenological possibilities, then the two states cannot be phenomenologically identical even if they can be phenomenologically indistinguishable at a given time. This follows from the following plausible thought: An experiential state’s phenomenological possibilities are a necessary feature of it, such that an experiential state which lacked or had different phenomenological possibilities of development would essentially be a

different kind of state.

A key point to notice here is that in order to see our way through to phenomenological disjunctivism we have to abandon the “atomistic” view that the “phenomenology of an experience” is little more than some manifest naïve “subjective character,” framed in terms of how things seem to the experiencing subject *at the time*. Rather, in the more fundamental analysis the “phenomenology of an experience” is something that includes its horizon structure and critically the relevant possibilities of fulfilment of that horizon structure for experiences of the relevant type. Once this arguably subtler and more substantive sense of the phenomenology or phenomenal character of any given experience type is recognised, we can see how the phenomenological indistinguishability at a time of any particular veridical perception from its hallucinatory counterpart does not necessarily entail the phenomenological identity of veridical perception and hallucination *qua* type of experience. Quite the opposite: As noted above, what is disclosed to the phenomenologist in their analysis are the relevant phenomenologically-based identity conditions on veridical perception *per se* and how they necessarily differ from the phenomenologically-based identity conditions on hallucination *per se*.

However, we now encounter a problem, or at least a possible complaint given how we have framed phenomenological disjunctivism. As we have seen above, central to phenomenological disjunctivism is something of a shift to a *diachronic* understanding of “the phenomenology of an experience” or its phenomenal character, or at least a recognition of diachronic elements therein (e.g., horizons), away from what we might call a *static* understanding of phenomenal character, for example something like the “atomistic” array of phenomenal properties, qualitative features, and looks (etc) a subject is presented with at a *particular time*—as what might be called an instantaneous snapshot. Indeed this is the understanding of phenomenal character that is usually at issue in the contemporary debate between common-kind views and traditional forms of disjunctivism, as reflected in the original framing of the PI claim. Now, the complaint might take the form that in shifting to a diachronic understanding of phenomenal character in framing phenomenological disjunctivism, and so qualifying the PI claim as we have done, we have in fact shifted the meaning of phenomenal character as it features in these debates, and so have surreptitiously shifted the terms of the debate.

Given this complaint it will be helpful to briefly say something about the motivation for shifting towards a diachronic understanding of phenomenal character—or at least for exploring views which are informed by some such conception—especially in our present context of perceptual experience, where that principally involves the positing and recognition of so-called “horizontal features” of perceptual experience.

First, there are grounds for arguing that at least some of the kinds of sensible properties putatively manifest to the subject on the “static” or “snapshot” con-

ception, say the particular *look of an object* (e.g., its size and shape) themselves require, for their representation in perceptual experience, the positing of certain “diachronic” elements (i.e., horizons). For example, a perceptual experience of an object in my perceptual environment *as a cube* from a perspectively-limited point of view which only reveals at most three of its sides—theorized as an instantaneous snapshot—arguably still requires a “horizontal reference” to parts of the cube currently *out of view*, and so connected perceptual anticipations. If one responds that on the “snapshot” conception of perceptual experience and its phenomenal character, the experiential content is nothing more than that of a series of connected square-surfaces arranged in a “cube-ish” way, we radically misdescribe the phenomenology of perceptual experience, and the way in which it seems to make us aware of complete or “whole” three-dimensional objects *as complete three-dimensional objects* (despite our perspectival limitations). No doubt there is a lot more to be said on this issue, but in this respect we might be tempted by the broad thought that any plausible account of the phenomenal character of perceptual experience, and the kinds of properties represented in perceptual experience, is going to need to appeal to diachronic elements (however precisely theorised) even for the basic representation of spatial properties, and so phenomenological disjunctivism can piggyback on an independent motivation we have for adopting a more “dynamic” or diachronic understanding of the phenomenal character of perceptual experience.²²

More directly though, as I have tried to emphasise, central to the philosophical issues surrounding veridical perception and hallucination are questions of possible (dis)confirmation (to put matters in Husserlian terms). Indeed, as we have already seen and will see in more detail in the following section, part of our conception of hallucination arguably implies ideas relating to possibilities of “unmasking” that could only be realised *over time*, where the possibility of a contrast or conflict with some *earlier time* is live. Similarly we might think that central to the concept of veridical perception is something akin to continued possible confirmation of its “real existence,” as what Husserl calls a “harmonious” confirmation, as a continuation of *what came before*. Put broadly then, our understanding of veridical perception and hallucination looks to be temporally “loaded,” as reflected in our conceptual explications. Importantly, if we think this is right, the phenomenological disjunctivist has an explanation why: It is precisely because the phenomenology of perceptual experience implicitly includes the relevant diachronic elements, that our conceptions of veridical perception and hallucination have the kind of temporal inflections and implications that it has been suggested they do. In this respect, insofar as a theorist of perceptual experience is hoping to better understand veridical perception, hallucination, and their relation, it serves them well to have to hand a conception of phenomenal

22. See (Soteriou 2013: ch.2) for more arguments that go in this direction.

character that can be sensitive to matters of temporal phenomenology, where in our context that principally involves the positing and recognition of “horizontal” features of perceptual experience.

Ultimately, though perhaps what is needed to fully dispel the complaint at issue here would be a plausible independent defense of the *very notion* of an intentional horizon as a “diachronic” structural feature of perceptual experience, as supporting this kind of conception of the phenomenal character of perceptual experience.²³ However, on this issue let me finally note that if the diachronic understanding of the phenomenology of experience that phenomenological disjunctivism works with is accused of amending the terms of the traditional debate, then it might be responded that such an amendment is not necessarily illicit or unjustified, if by doing so we can open up new positions in the logical space of possible views concerning disjunctivism vs. common-kind views; indeed some such amendment might be precisely what is required to be able to explore philosophically fruitful new lines of inquiry on what is, after all, a long-standing debate.²⁴

So much for an articulation of phenomenological disjunctivism. In what follows I examine a range of further problems with the view.

4. Modal Worries: Infinity and Real Possibility

The first worry with the form of phenomenological disjunctivism articulated in the previous section concerns the ad infinitum condition. It might fairly be said that no finite agent can really confirm anything “ad infinitum,” much less the *harmonious fulfilment of horizons* (the “prefigured potentialities”) relating to the “real existence” of a perceptual object. So what is the force of this condition? This issue can be dealt with fairly easily, as Husserl makes clear:

...this open infinity does not signify an actual continuation in infinity, the nonsensical demand *actually* to produce all possible variants—as if we could only then be sure that the eidos which subsequently becomes grasped actually accords with all possibilities. Rather what is meant is that the variation itself as the process of forming variants has a character of optionalness, that it is to be carried out in the consciousness of optionally forming further variants.” “I could continue thus” ... Therefore the remarkable and extremely important consciousness of “and so on optionally” belongs essentially to every multiplicity of variation. What we call an “openly infinite” multiplicity is given only in that manner. . .

23. I provide this in separate work; see Mitchell 2026.

24. There is some growing recognition of the need for positing “perceptual anticipations” to capture the phenomenal character of perceptual experience in some recent analytic philosophy of perception (see, for example, Siegel 2006; Schellenberg 2007; Gregory 2017).

(Husserl 1925/2012: 57; see also 1913/1982: §143)

Husserl's point in our context can be understood as follows. The force of the *ad infinitum* condition is merely that of a possible continued confirmation with reference to an in principle open or endless series, an "open infinity." In the case of veridical perception, the thought would be something like the following: Insofar as what we are dealing with is a veridical perception, "fulfilling experiences" of the sense of real existence could *in principle* go on forever, such that their simply couldn't be—insofar as the perceptual object *really exists*—a perceptual disconfirmation of the sense of real existence.

This condition turns out to be critical, since we can imagine the following scenario. For a particular subject as long as they can remember, and over the course of their lifetime, this particular perceptual object (whatever it might be) has always been given with the sense of real existence, such that there never has been any *actual experience* in which the relevant horizons, the prefigured potentialities, were not harmoniously fulfilled in yet more experiences of the object as having the sense of real existence. Yet, this is of course entirely compatible with the intentional object in fact not existing—with our subject being the dupe of a particularly stubborn hallucination—it is just the case that our subject was never apprised of this by a disconfirming experience (hallucination remained "unmasked"). Yet insofar as the requirement on an experience's being a veridical perception is a real possibility of a fulfilment of its horizons in an *in principle* unbounded series of future experiences of "harmonious confirmation," then our imagined dupe was subject to a perceptual experience that simply doesn't and can't meet this condition, even though they were in this particular instance experientially blind, so to speak, to this 'eidetic' (i.e., essential or pertaining to type) state of affairs. What this condition therefore makes clear is that for phenomenological disjunctivism the identity of the perceptual experience in question—veridical perception or hallucination—is not hostage to the empirical contingencies of what a finite subject *does in fact* experientially (dis)confirm, but to what *in principle* would have to be the case regarding possible (dis)confirmation; whether the "I could continue thus," as Husserl puts it, is a *real possibility*, not a merely apparent possibility.²⁵

This clarification of the *ad infinitum* condition also allows us to respond to a related worry. Surely, we might think it questionable that the horizontal structure of everyday perceptual experience somehow includes an *infinite series*, even if only a possible or *in principle* infinite series (and regardless of whether what we

25. This is again an instance in which the fact that the true nature of any particular sample perceptual experience—veridical perception or matching hallucination—can remain opaque to a subject at a time does not fundamentally undermine the ability of phenomenological disjunctivism to nonetheless bring to light an essential difference in the phenomenological identity conditions on veridical perception and hallucination.

are dealing with is real or merely apparent possibilities of fulfilment). Here we need to distinguish between how *qua* phenomenological analysis this horizational feature of experience is theorized, and its “naïve” manifestation in perceptual experience. Husserl emphasises that the pre-theoretical manifestation of this “infinite” horizon structure, in our case pertaining to the sense of real existence, is in terms of “consciousness of ‘and so on optionally,’ as a ‘I could continue thus’,” so in terms of a kind of background or unthematized *ability awareness*. Indeed Husserl is careful to emphasise precisely that “what we call an ‘openly infinite’ multiplicity is given only in that manner,” that is to say in perceptual experience itself this is how this feature is manifest to the experiencing subject.

Next, one might wonder about the modal force behind the talk of *real* possibilities in the articulation of phenomenological disjunctivism. Remember the claim is that the horizational structure and identity condition on veridical perception we have uncovered is as follows: The sense of the perceptual object as having “real existence” (the perceptual object being given as actually existing here and now, as a real material thing in space), if the object indeed is real, requires the *real possibility* of a harmonious fulfilment of its horizons ad infinitum (in the case of hallucination this of course, given our analysis, precisely isn’t really possible).

In his discussion of the notion of *real possibility* in Husserl’s philosophy of perception, A.D. Smith glosses the notion of “real possibility” as akin to *motivated possibilities* given the course of experience thus far.²⁶ Now, Husserl’s distinction between empty and motivated possibilities *qua* horizons is just that there might be some anticipated possibilities, say that the table I can see has ten-legs rather than four, (and my anticipating *that*), that while not ruled out by experience, are not possibilities that are motivated by what is given in the current and previous course of experience, they would be “unmotivated” or “empty” possibilities; as Husserl puts it “this four-leggedness, on the contrary, is a motivated possibility in respect of the definite perception which I am just enjoying.”²⁷ However, with respect to the issue of the horizational possibilities relating to further experiences of the object *as really existing*, I take it that in both the veridical perception and hallucination the prefigured possibilities would appear to be *motivated* by what is present in the original experience. In this sense, the kinds of possibilities in play in hallucination wouldn’t in this specific sense be *empty possibilities*, since they would be (apparently) motivated possibilities but just ones that stand to be, at some possible future point, unfulfilled in some future course of experience (i.e.,

26. Smith 2003: 175–176.

27. See Husserl 1913/1982: §140, see also (1907/1997: §84). It is worth noting that the kind of “motivation” that is involved in the horizational structure of perceptual experience, of anticipation and fulfilment, is for Husserl—as for later phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty—part of what grounds a subject’s rational capacities, especially the kind of “categorical synthesis” involved in predicative judgement (see Husserl 1931/1977: §17: 39)—space precludes exploring this topic further here.

possibilities that appear to be motivated by the course of experience but in fact are not).

So, what then is the modal force behind talk of *real possibilities* in our discussion, if talk of “motivated” vs “empty” possibilities doesn’t seem to help us all that much? To get some more traction on this let’s consider again the core claim of phenomenological disjunctivism. What is supposedly disclosed to the phenomenologist in their analysis are the relevant necessary or “constitutive” phenomenologically based identity conditions (i.e., identity conditions that are fixed by reference to *actual and possible experience*) on veridical perception per se (veridical perception’s “essence”) and its difference from the phenomenological identity conditions on hallucination per se (hallucination’s “essence”): Veridical perception requires the *real possibility* of a fulfilment of its horizons “ad infinitum,” whereas hallucination necessarily requires a *really* possible “disconfirmation” or frustrating of its horizons. Put otherwise, as a matter of essence or identity for something to *be a hallucination* there would have to be some *really possible* future experience in which the hallucination was revealed to the experiencing subject to be a hallucination, and so a future possible experience in which its object would be revealed to in fact *not possess* the sense of real existence it seemed to possess prior to such “unfulfillment.” So framed is it clear that the notion of *real possibility* here is key in both cases.

According to phenomenological disjunctivism then, real possibility is akin to *genuine phenomenological possibility*, where the relevant possibilities are necessarily indexed to actual and possible experiences a subject could have. Importantly, a significant subset of these will be “motivated” possibilities, that is possibilities motivated by the past or present course of experience, but this does not exhaust the set. This is important to note since the possibility of the obtaining of various sceptical scenarios—say that I’m in the Matrix or being systematically fed mutually confirming “illusions”—are *not* possibilities that are motivated by my present or past course of experience (although of course *ex hypothesi* they are compatible with it), and so they are “unmotivated” possibilities, but on the current understanding they remain *real phenomenological possibilities* in the sense that they are possibilities indexed to actual and possible experiences a subject could have (given how these sceptical scenarios are usually described).

To further bring out the force of this idea of “real possibility” let’s turn more directly to hallucination and consider the following case. We might think that it is logically possible (that is, not a self-contradictory state of affairs) that my experience might go on indefinitely (say if I come to possess the secret to immortality), such that the sense of real existence of the object is *continually*, indeed indefinitely, *confirmed*, and would continue to be so for as long as I continue to have experiences of the perceptual object, “ad infinitum.” However, I am again the dupe: An evil demon has arranged things such that for the

rest of time I enjoy “confirming” experiences of the perceptual object as “really existing.” Yet to make the case even more dramatic—and to highlight an important point—let’s also stipulate that the evil demon doesn’t itself have the power to stop the hallucinations. In this case what we have hit upon as a logical possibility is a kind of experience ruled out by phenomenological disjunctivism, namely a hallucination where in principle the “unmasking of it” isn’t *really phenomenologically possible* (unmasking is ruled out *ex hypothesi*—there isn’t any actual or possible experience the subject in this scenario could have that would lead to an “unmasking”).

The important thought which comes out of considering a “non-phenomenological” *merely logically possible* case like this is as follows: For some experience to count as a hallucination, it must be the case that it is really, and not merely logically, phenomenologically possible for the hallucination to be “unmasked.” Put otherwise, if an end to the hallucination, and so an “unmasking of it,” is not *really possible*, then according to phenomenological disjunctivism, what we have simply doesn’t meet the phenomenological identity conditions for hallucination. As such for phenomenological disjunctivism it must be *really possible* for my hallucination to be revealed as such, such that it would have to be the case that it must be *really possible* in our above case for the evil demon to end his deception.²⁸

But—so the critic of phenomenological disjunctivism might respond—why assume that for something to count as a hallucination requires the *real possibility* of its being revealed as such (regardless of course, of whether it in fact is, that is whether what is a real possibility turns into an actuality)? One further thought here, congenial to phenomenological disjunctivism, is that our very notion of hallucination gets its sense or meaning from there being experiences (actual and possible) in which horizons are unfulfilled, or put otherwise cases in which the “sense of the experience” is changed or nullified by further experience. On this kind of picture, we only “acquire” the sense ⟨hallucination⟩ from actual or imagined cases in which an experience’s horizons are not fulfilled in the course of some further experience. So, the idea of a “hallucination” that isn’t just not *in fact* revealed to be such in the actual course of experience, but one where its being so revealed is just not a real phenomenological possibility at all, has the status of a *phenomenological countersense*. This would be a case where considering merely logical possibilities that are untethered not just from the reality we do experience, but *any possible reality we could experience*, distorts our sense of what the identity conditions on the relevant experience types should be.

No doubt there is more to be said about this account of hallucination (and its complexities), but before closing let me briefly speak to the relation between the broad treatment of hallucination given by phenomenological disjunctivism

28. I thank Peter Poellner for this example and extensive discussion of this case and the issues surrounding it.

(as above) and two existing treatments of hallucination in the literature. First, consider Mark Johnston's proposal that veridical perception and matching hallucination share a *common phenomenal core*, namely what he calls a *sensible profile*, as a complex of properties, relations, and qualities. The difference concerns *instantiation*: The object(s) of veridical perception are mind-independent particulars which instantiate the relevant sensory complexes, whereas the object of hallucination is merely a sensible profile that is precisely *not* instantiated in the subject's perceptual environment (but counterfactually *would be* if the subject were enjoying a veridical perception).²⁹ Importantly, even given this *common phenomenal core*, if the disjunctivist (of whatever stripe) wants to take up this analysis of hallucination, they will still have to maintain that qualitative similarity in this respect doesn't necessitate sameness or identity *qua experiential kind*.³⁰

Interestingly, phenomenological disjunctivism has provided *two things* that can buttress but also go beyond Johnston's "common phenomenal core" claim about hallucination. In the first instance phenomenological disjunctivism has provided a more detailed and novel account of the relevant phenomenal commonalities between veridical perception and hallucination in reference to the shared "horizontal structure of fulfilment" qua the experiential character of "real existence": to repeat, when perceptual experience presents its object as possessing "real existence," (the relevant part of) that experience's horizontal structure is such that the subject implicitly anticipates future possible perceptual experiences of the object in which its "real existence" would continue to be "confirmed." This analysis of a putative "common phenomenal core" goes significantly beyond a claim concerning a shared "sensible profile" between veridical perception and hallucination. But as we have seen it is precisely in a further phenomenological explication of this horizontal structure that we can distinguish *on phenomenological grounds* between veridical perception and hallucination, and provide the kind of detailed account of hallucination and its horizontal and modal characteristics in a way that we will simply be blind to if our form of disjunctivism takes its leave of phenomenology after conceding something like a common phenomenal core claim—say as limited to Johnston's sensory profiles.

The approach to hallucination given by phenomenological disjunctivism also contrasts with some aspects of Martin's naïve realist disjunctivism. Briefly, Mike Martin's naïve realist form of disjunctivism claims that there are phenomenal features or properties that veridical perceptions possess that hallucinations cannot possess. Martin then also makes the claim that the phenomenal character of hallucination (or at least causally matching hallucination; that is in which there is an identical proximate cause and non-conscious psychological state common

29. Johnston 2004.

30. It is worth noting that the position Johnston (2004) argues for is a *non-disjunctivist* form of relationalism or naïve realism about perceptual experience.

to veridical perception and hallucination) is exhausted by the *negative* epistemological characteristic of being introspectively indistinguishable from its veridical counterpart. In this respect this “naïve realist” form of disjunctivism rescinds from providing, indeed denies the possibility of providing, what we might call a *non-derivative* or positive account of (at least) the phenomenal character of hallucination. The motivation for this approach is surely that if whatever one says *positively* qua phenomenal character about hallucination is also in play when one enjoys a veridical perception—say the instantiation of a qualitatively similar phenomenal event-type—then this puts significant pressure on the initial naïve realist claim that veridical perception has phenomenal features or properties that hallucination can’t possess.³¹ Interestingly, phenomenological disjunctivism can reject Martin’s negative claim—there is significantly more to be said about the phenomenal character of hallucination than simply being introspectively indistinguishable from veridical perception, as a negative epistemological claim—while maintaining that on a more detailed phenomenological analysis there are indeed phenomenal features that veridical perceptions possess that hallucinations cannot, where this is explicated in terms of the different *possibilities of fulfilment* in relation to their shared “horizon structure.”

As previously noted, doubtless there is significantly more to be said about how phenomenological disjunctivism theorises cases of hallucination, and broader contrasts between further disjunctivist (and indeed non-disjunctivist) treatments. However, at a broad level of relief it seems that phenomenological disjunctivism offers a reasonably novel way of meeting Dancy’s (1995) request that disjunctivism offer a *positive account* of hallucination, and that in doing so identify conditions and criteria that characterise what is phenomenologically distinctive of hallucination. That phenomenological disjunctivism can meet this requirement in a distinctive way is surely a benefit.³²

31. For criticism of Martin’s (2004) approach see Siegel (2004; 2008).

32. Fish (2008) provides a “positive” account of hallucination that is significantly different in tenor from that given by phenomenological disjunctivism: Fish focuses on the cognitive and behavioural *effects* of undergoing a (matching) hallucination (where we are aware of no potential defeaters or countervailing circumstances), principally—in the case of mature humans—the formation of higher-order beliefs that have the same content as the higher-order beliefs one forms when enjoying a veridical perception (namely that one is *seeing an X*). Insofar as Fish is resistant to any motivation to provide a more detailed phenomenological characterisation of hallucination, preferring to explain supposed indistinguishability in terms of the detailed shared effects, his account of hallucination contrasts sharply with that provided by phenomenological disjunctivism. Note also, the kind of “positive” eliminativism about the phenomenal character of (at least total) hallucination articulated (if not ultimately defended) in Logue 2012, strikes me as uncongenial to the phenomenological approach taken here, although I save detailed comparison for a separate occasion.

5. Conclusion

Doubtless there are further worries and objections that could be levelled against phenomenological disjunctivism. My aim here was primarily to get this Husserlian view off the ground and deal with more immediate worries with respect to the terms and conditions the view places on veridical perception in contrast to hallucination. In closing, it might be good to highlight one particularly fruitful way of framing phenomenological disjunctivism by way of the headline *phenomenological indistinguishability at a time is not equivalent to and does not necessitate phenomenological identity over time*. It was in the details of the view that this claim was borne out.

It is also worth emphasising that, insofar as theorizing about perceptual experience begins by accepting the PI claim in an unqualified way, we will simply be “blind” to the essential structural differences between veridical perception and hallucination that phenomenological disjunctivism seeks to draw our attention to. In that sense phenomenological disjunctivism serves as something of an invitation to consider again what has seemed to many to be obvious, namely the PI claim, and the related thought that disjunctivism should, in its initial move, take its leave of phenomenology. If phenomenological disjunctivism is a live option as a plausible form of disjunctivism, then this initial move should be questioned, and phenomenological disjunctivism can serve not only as a corrective to it, but one which promises to provide novel phenomenological grounds for distinguishing in kind between veridical perception and hallucination, and so as support for the disjunctive theory of perception.

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