

Forthcoming in F. Macpherson & D. Platchias, *Hallucination*, MIT Press.

## **Silencing the Argument from Hallucination**

István Aranyosi

### **<1> Introduction**

Ordinary people tend to be realists regarding perceptual experience, that is, they take perceiving the environment as a direct, unmediated, straightforward access to a mind-independent reality. Not so for (ordinary) philosophers. The empiricist influence on the philosophy of perception, in analytic philosophy at least, made the problem of perception synonymous with the view that realism is untenable. Admitting the problem (and trying to offer a view on it) is tantamount to rejecting ordinary people's implicit realist assumptions as naive. So what exactly is the problem?

We can approach it via one of the central arguments against realism – the argument from hallucination. The argument is intended as a proof that in ordinary, veridical cases of perception, perceivers do not have an unmediated perceptual access to the world. There are many versions of it; I propose the following<sup>1</sup>:

1. Hallucinations that are subjectively indistinguishable from veridical perceptions are possible.
2. If two subjective states are indistinguishable, then they have a common nature.
3. The contents of hallucinations are mental images, not concrete external objects.
4. Therefore, the contents of veridical perceptions are mental images rather than concrete external objects.

The key move is, I believe, from the fact that hallucinations that are subjectively indistinguishable from cases of veridical perception are possible to an alleged common element, factor, or nature, *in the form of a mental state*, in the two cases – that is, premise 2. Disjunctivism, at its core, can be taken as simply denying this move, and arguing that all that follows from the premise stating the possibility of hallucinations that are subjectively indistinguishable from cases of veridical perception is that there is a broader category, that of “experience as of...”, which encompasses both cases. Further, disjunctivists argue that this broader category might not be characterized otherwise than as a disjunction of the two categories it encompasses. The resulting view is then that all that veridical perception and hallucination of an object O have in common is the platitude, once we admit the category of experience as of something, that there is a disjunctive description that is true of both: “perceiving O, or hallucinating O”<sup>2</sup>

There are various objections –some of them clear, some unclear, some fair, some unfair- to disjunctivism, but there seems to be a complex of critical statements

focusing on disjunctivists' alleged inability to make intuitive the coexistence of the belief in indistinguishability between veridical and hallucinatory experiential states and the belief that the two states do not share a highest common factor (McDowell 1982) or that they have radically different intrinsic natures (Martin 2002: 404). On the other hand, it appears as quite intuitive, many would agree, that once we accept indistinguishability we are entitled to conclude that there is a common nature to both veridical and hallucinatory states.

In what follows I will offer an argument in order to weaken the intuition of a common factor, and to strengthen the case for disjunctivism. Before that, however, some clearing of the "battleground" is called for. I will start with a view on recent discussions around a potentially relevant distinction regarding types of hallucination, which will bring me to the notions of indistinguishability that have been proposed. I will end with a view on indistinguishability that will certainly appear as minimalist or deflationary to many, but which I believe to be very natural and what, for instance, philosophers arguing for the existence of a veil of perception (indirect realism, representative realism, sense data, idealism, etc.) must have meant all along.

## <2> Indistinguishability

Assuming we had a clear notion of what is meant by indistinguishability in the first premise of the argument from hallucination, the existence of some common intermediary item, like, for instance a sense datum, would act as an *explanans* of this phenomenon. Not so, critics argue, with the lack of such intermediary – in virtue of what does a hallucination of the relevant kind have the property of being indistinguishable from its veridical counterpart, if they have nothing of the sort in common?

A lot depends, I will argue, on what exactly we should most naturally mean by indistinguishability. William Fish (2008: 146), M. G. F. Martin (2004: 62) and Scott Sturgeon (2008: 126), for instance, all appeal to the notion of indiscriminability due to Timothy Williamson (1990: 8), according to which *a* and *b* are indiscriminable at a time *t* for a subject *S* iff at *t*, *S* is not able to activate the relevant knowledge that *a* and *b* are distinct.

There is a couple of questions about how this notion is supposed to be relevant for the case of veridical versus hallucinatory episodes.

First, if a relation, binary in our case, is instantiated in actuality, then its relata must exist in actuality. It is hard to see how the relation of indiscriminability will apply to experiential cases, especially that Williamson's definition involves a time index, since the veridical perception and hallucination are never simultaneously actual – whenever one is perceiving, one is not hallucinating, and vice versa. Maybe one could appeal to successively presented episodes of veridical perception and hallucination, so that the notion would apply to these cases. But there are two problems with this. One is that the argument from hallucination does not have to presuppose that necessarily some hallucination has to be actual, so that we can have a pair of compresent episodes of which we can assert indistinguishability. It might be that no hallucination perfectly similar to any actual veridical experience is ever actual – yet the intuition is that the argument from hallucination should still work, if it is to work. The second problem is

that the condition of succession for the episodes also brings factors that are external to the relevant data for comparison, for instance memory, anticipation, non-experiential background beliefs.

Second, there is a problem with the supposed relation involving *particular* actual episodes and indexing the supposed relation to a *particular* subject. Again, the argument from hallucination is supposed to work, if it is to work, regardless of whether particular actual experiences and hallucinations are involved or actual and possible experiences and hallucinations. Similarly, there has to be something having to do with the episodes themselves rather than with some relation between a particular subject and the episodes that makes them indistinguishable. For one thing, as I have pointed out, the episodes are not necessarily inhabitants of the same world, and so there is no reason to involve a particular actual subject that stands in some relation to both of them.

Before expounding my own view on the notion of indistinguishability, I would like to point out another more or less common misunderstanding. Some authors talk as if the argument from hallucination needs a certain special category of hallucinations, namely those for which it is true that they are indistinguishable from veridical perceptions, in the sense that the subjects undergoing them do not doubt the veridicality of their experience. Martin (2004: 47) calls them “perfect hallucinations”, Fish (2008: 145) calls them “true hallucinations”, Katalin Farkas (this volume) calls them “philosophical hallucinations”, and Howard Robinson (this volume) calls them philosophers’ hallucination”. As opposed to these, we are to have a category of real, actual, “psychological” (Alex Byrne, this volume), or “resisted hallucinations” (Fish 2008: 145), that are recognized as hallucinations. The difference, it is argued, comes from the fact that empirical data show that when people actually hallucinate, they realize their experiences are not veridical – the contents of their hallucinations are far from coherent, conflicting with background beliefs about the context, with expectations, and with medium or long term memories. In sum, hallucinations are actually crazy, reality is not.

I’m sceptical about whether this classification has any use. Indistinguishability in the context of the argument from hallucination is a two-way street: it shouldn’t matter whether some experience is crazy or not in order for it to be thought as indistinguishable from another – hallucination might appear really orderly, and reality might go really crazy. Let us introduce a new term, that of “doxastic noise”. It will refer to the amount of a complex of doubt, indecision generated by incoherence and inconsistency on the part of a standard experiencer as to whether her experience is veridical. Doxastic noise is a phenomenon that admits of degree, so rather than having two categories, like in the “real-philosophical” type classification, we would end up with a continuum of cases.

It is intuitive that doxastic noise should not be taken as relevant to the issue of indistinguishability. The reason is that even supposing all possible hallucinations are crazy, that is, doxastically noisy, that does not change the fact that there are possible veridical perceptions that are equally noisy. It might turn out tomorrow, somehow, that all our veridical seeming experiences so far were actually hallucinations, and that reality is in fact very crazy – it might turn out, in other words, that schizophrenics got it right!

If doxastic noise is irrelevant, then we should formulate the notion of indistinguishability by assuming a constant level of doxastic noise. Second, as I tried to stress actuality should also be irrelevant. We are talking about experiences, actual and

possible, because if something is true of the nature of actual experiences, then any view that is worthy of the name “theory of experiences” will posit it as true of all possible experiences too. So in my view the argument should work equally well, if it is to work, regardless of whether it starts with the assumption of the existence of actual veridical experiences, actual hallucinations, possible veridical experiences, or possible hallucinations, and compares each of them with actual or possible hallucinations or veridical perceptions, in order to find that they are indistinguishable.

In light of the foregoing considerations it is time now to put forward the elements of the proposed view on indistinguishability. I will say that perceptions have veridicality-conditions, those in virtue of which they count as perceptions. Suppose you visually perceive a wombat; then the existence of the wombat in one’s visually accessible environment is the necessary condition on a set of possible worlds to qualify as the veridicality-condition of your wombat experience. Hallucinations have content-conditions, those in virtue of which they count as contentful. Content-conditions are sets of worlds sharing the way the actual world is represented to be by the hallucination. For example, the content-conditions of a hallucination of a green elephant are all those possible worlds in which a green elephant in the appropriate context exists. Veridicality-conditions co-inhabit possible worlds with veridical perceptions whose truth-conditions they are. Content-conditions of hallucinations are present in all possible worlds that contain the states of affairs that are veridicality conditions for all veridical perceptions indistinguishable from those hallucinations<sup>3</sup>. Then an apparently circular definition of indistinguishability will be as follows:

(D1) A hallucination H is indistinguishable from a perception P iff the set of worlds constituting the veridicality-conditions of P is a proper subset of the set of worlds constituting the content-conditions of H.

The definition appears circular because content-conditions appear above as accounted for in terms of indistinguishable perceptions. But the circularity is illusory, because the above assertion connecting content-conditions with indistinguishability from perceptions is not supposed to define content-conditions, but only to assert a (brute) fact about them. Content-conditions are supposed to be understood simply as the actual or merely possible states of affairs that ground the representational features of hallucinations. Further, we have no experiencing subject that is supposed to discriminate between these worlds, and, therefore, indistinguishability comes out as an objective fact about what possible worlds have in common as states of affairs. In any case, we get important information about the set theoretic relations among the relevant worlds, which brings us to the following two propositions containing one-place predicates:

(P1) Any hallucination is *indistinguishable-from-some-perception*.

(P2) Any perception is *indistinguishable-from-some-hallucination*.

We define the two predicates as follows:

(D2) A hallucination *H* is *indistinguishable-from-some-perception* iff there is a perception *P* such that for any possible world *W*, *W* is included in the veridicality conditions for *P* only if *W* is included in the content-conditions of *H*.

(D3) A perception *P* is *indistinguishable-from-some-hallucination* iff there is a hallucination *H* such that for any possible world *W*, *W* is included in the veridicality conditions for *P* only if *W* is included in the content-conditions of *H*.

Both (P1) and (P2) are suitable as premises in the argument from hallucination. We have no problem of some agent comparing actual and nonactual situations, no problem of some agent having to remember successive episodes, and no problem of having to select some “elite” class of “philosophical hallucinations”. Indistinguishability comes out as a notion with a flavour of a brute, unexplained fact, but this bruteness comes from the bruteness of facts about the modal space. We don’t normally ask questions like “how could we explain why there are so many distinct possible worlds?”, or “why some possible worlds share some states of affairs?”. Principles like that of plenitude in modal logic and metaphysics are taken as axioms, with no need for some special explanation of their truth.

### <3> Silence

The argument is inspired by recent discussion of perception of absences by Roy Sorensen (2008). One of the cases of such perceptions is that of hearing silence, i.e. the absence of sound. Relative silence is a ubiquitous phenomenon. Think of people who prefer buying houses in noiseless neighborhoods. Or think about the pauses between two movements of a symphony performance. These are states of relative silence as they are not characterized by the absence of all sound, but the absence of the salient kind of sounds – the sound of cars and noisy people in the first example, and the absence of musical sounds in the second. Absolute silence is also actual, I suppose. The argument in this paper will be based on the possibility of absolute silence.

There are four observations I would like to put forward regarding silence.

A. *Quantification*. Many philosophers are keen on avoiding ontological commitment to absences in general, for reasons having to do with Ockam’s razor. Absences are associated with ways of nonbeing, while many ontologists think of ontology as a theory of what there is and how. Whilst I myself think that ontological commitment to absences is many times unavoidable<sup>4</sup>, we need not subscribe to the existence of silence as such in the perceptual case, but only to the truth of propositions of the form “I hear that there is silence”, which can be analyzed as a auditorily based knowledge to the effect that there is silence.

*B. Objectivity and Particularity.* Related to the previous point, we can avoid being committed to the existence of *particular* absences, except when there is a subjective, psychological expectation as to what should be present. The point can be extracted from a line of thought due to French existentialist philosopher Jean Paul Sartre (1969: 41). The absence of Sartre's friend, Pierre, from the café is not directly perceived by Sartre, but only makes sense as asserted within the context of a frustrated expectation that Pierre is to be found there. There is no reason, in other words, if we are committed to the objectivity of absences - and the argument in this paper presupposes objectivity of absences- to believe in the absence of a particular item (visual, auditory, tactile, etc.), because what our senses deliver are presences, and *any* such presence would count as the absence of *anything* particular that is distinct from it. It means then that we should focus on absences of a general kind, in our case the absence of whole quality spaces associated with sense modalities. As applied to hearing, for instance, we would not assert, while walking on the street and hearing the engines of cars, that we are witnessing the absence of piano sound, or that of a waterfall. What we can reasonably assert is the presence of some sound - we could only assert the absence of some sound if there is a complete absence of any sound.

*C. Representation.* As Sorensen points it out, it does make sense to talk of hearing silence, because hearing silence is a successful auditory representation of an absence rather than the absence of an auditory representation. The latter is how deafness could be characterized. Hearing silence also has evolutionary advantage. Think of gazelles in the savannah or rats in your kitchen that keep silent in order to avoid being auditorily detected. States of silence, using our terminology, are veridicality-apt, that is, apt to figure as veridicality conditions for auditory perceptions. Silence is a proper object of perception and hallucination<sup>5</sup>.

*D. Indistinguishability.* We get from the previous point the idea that there is a *prima facie* temptation to assimilate hearing silence to an absence of an auditory representation. That means that there is some similarity between hearing silence and being deaf, although they are radically different kinds: one is a successful representation, the other is no representation at all. It is intuitive that hearing silence is indistinguishable, or possibly indistinguishable, from not hearing anything. How could we formulate this indistinguishability thesis using our previous models when discussing perceptions and hallucinations of positive beings? Given what we have established about the lack of particularity of absences, we won't use particular absences of sound, as we did before, when we used particular perceptions and hallucinations. Second, since not hearing anything is the absence of an auditory representation, and, therefore, the absence of content, we won't be able to use veridicality and content conditions as straightforwardly as before. Given this, we could first formulate the indistinguishability definition:

(D4) Given an agent A, hearing the absence of any sound S by A is indistinguishable from A being deaf (not hearing any sound) iff for any possible world W, if W is included in the veridicality conditions of A hearing the presence of any sound S, then W is disjoint from the set of worlds that contain the truth-maker of the proposition that A is deaf.

Given D4 we can then assert that:

(P3) Hearing the absence of any sound S by A is indistinguishable from A being deaf.

D4 pairs the absences that are relevant to the quality space of the auditory modality (the absence of sound with the absence of auditory content); for instance, A being blind does not come out as indistinguishable from A hearing silence. But applying our recipe, being blind would come out as indistinguishable from seeing complete darkness.

If it does make sense to talk of hearing silence, then it should make sense of talking of hallucinating silence. Here is an example of Sorensen's (2008: 269):

"Consider a man who experiences auditory hallucinations as he drifts off to sleep. He "hears" his mother call out his name, then wait for a response, and then call again. The cycle of calls and silence repeats eerily."

Indeed, we can apply our model definitions from section 2:

(D5) Given an agent A, a perception of silence P by A is *indistinguishable-from-some-hallucination* iff there is a hallucination H such that for any possible world W, W is included in the veridicality conditions for P only if W is included in the content-conditions of H.

Then we can assert the proposition:

(P4) Any perception of silence P by A is *indistinguishable-from-some-hallucination*.

Finally, we can also assert that hallucinating silence is indistinguishable from being deaf, given the following definition:

(D6) Given an agent A, hallucinating the absence of any sound S by A is indistinguishable from A being deaf (not hearing any sound) iff for any possible world W, if W is included in the content conditions of A hearing the presence of any sound S, then W is disjoint from the set of worlds that contain the truth-maker of the proposition that A is deaf.

Therefore, since the right-hand side is true:

(P5) Given an agent A, hallucinating the absence of any sound S by A is indistinguishable from A being deaf.

Given these four observations regarding silence, and absences in general, we can now move to the argument.

#### <4> The Argument

What the argument is intended to show is that indistinguishability between two subjective states is consistent with the states being radically different in kind, so that indistinguishability in itself is not sufficient to establish commitment to a common factor between those states. I will formulate it as follows:

1. Both hearing silence and hallucinating it are indistinguishable from being deaf. (*premiss*)
2. Being deaf is radically different in its nature from both hearing and hallucinating silence. (*premiss*)
3. Both hearing silence and hallucinating it are (a) indistinguishable and (b) radically different in their nature from being deaf. (*from 1. and 2*)
4. If two subjective states are indistinguishable, then it is epistemically possible for them to be radically different in their nature. (*from 3*)
5. Hearing silence is indistinguishable from hallucinating it. (*premiss*)
6. It is epistemically possible that hearing silence is radically different in its nature from hallucinating it. (*from 4. and 5.*)
7. It is epistemically possible for perception to be radically different in its nature from an indistinguishable hallucination. (*from 6.*)

Let us discuss each of the propositions 1.-7. in order to check for potentially implausible premises, or problems of validity.

*Proposition 1.* The truth of this premise has been established in the previous section. I proposed definitions (D4) and (D6), which are in line with the general framework for indistinguishability, based on possible worlds, that we encountered in section two; proposition 1 is the conjunction of propositions (P3) and (P5).

*Proposition 2.* The truth of this premise is intuitive: being deaf is not even a representational state, so it cannot have the same nature as perceiving or hallucinating.

*Proposition 3.* This proposition is the conjunction of 1. and 2.

*Proposition 4.* We introduce here the notion of epistemic possibility<sup>6</sup>. By saying that *p* is epistemically possible, we mean something like “consistent with what we know, *p* might be the case”. 4. follows from 3., as what it says is “consistent with what we know so far, namely, that there at least two pairs of states that are indistinguishable and different in their nature (<perception of silence-deafness> and <hallucination of silence-deafness>), we cannot rule out the same facts for any arbitrary pair of epistemic states”.

*Proposition 5.* The truth of this proposition is a consequence of the general conceptual framework for understanding indistinguishability of perceptions and hallucination, expounded in section 2. One might wonder whether the sense of indistinguishability used in this proposition is the same as that used in the first one of the argument. If it is not, then we have a case of equivocation between propositions 1. and 5. regarding the notion of indistinguishability. The criticism receives support from the fact that in these propositions the claims of indistinguishability are supported by different definitions; (D4) and (D6) support 1., whereas 5. is supported by a different definition,



namely, (D1). However, we needed different definitions whenever deafness was one of the relata of indistinguishability (i.e. in D4 and D6) only because deafness is a degenerate case, as it is contentless. The fact that it is a degenerate case essentially contributes to the conjunct “is radically different in nature from” in proposition 3. of the above argument rather than to that of “is indistinguishable from”. Intuitively, from the subject’s point of view, deafness, on one hand, and hearing or hallucinating silence, on the other, are indistinguishable in the very same way as hallucinating silence from hearing it. So there is no question of equivocation.

*Proposition 6.* This proposition follows from 4. and 5., by *modus ponens*.

*Proposition 7.* The final conclusion is a universal generalization of 6. – if indistinguishability is epistemically possibly compatible with difference in nature in the case of a particular kind of perception-hallucination pair, then the same should be epistemically possible regarding perception and hallucination in general. In other words, *as far as indistinguishability is concerned*, the case of hearing silence versus hallucinating it can be taken as simply an arbitrary particular perception-hallucination pair, so the case can be generalized.

The idea of subjective indistinguishability, an objection goes, is sometimes put in terms of phenomenal sameness, yet, there is nothing phenomenal about deafness, it is simply the lack of any auditory phenomenal properties, so to assert indistinguishability of deafness from hearing silence looks like a category mistake.

There is a lot of theory in the conception of indistinguishability as sameness of phenomenal properties. It is better to use a more intuitive, pre-theoretical conception, and that is what my assertion to the effect that hearing silence is indistinguishable from deafness is based on: we can imagine a series of seamless transitions from deafness to hearing silence, then to hallucinating it, and vice versa. It is intuitive that they are indistinguishable.

Further, there is a dilemma that we could put forward. To assert that the case of deafness versus hearing silence is not appropriate to be included in cases of indistinguishability is to presuppose a thick conception of phenomenality, where the phenomenal field is taken as synonymous with a field of sense-data. This would beg the question against disjunctivism. So the opponent has a dilemma: either she uses an acceptable, thin, pre-theoretical conception of phenomenal sameness, in which case my argument applies, or she uses a thick conception of phenomenality, in which case the notion of indistinguishability in the premises of the argument from hallucination is synonymous with that of a common, sense-datum like factor between perception and hallucination.

My argument is effective, I believe, against other versions of the argument from hallucination as well. Howard Robinson (1994: 151) offers the following improvement of the original argument from hallucination:

1. It is theoretically possible to artificially induce a hallucination indistinguishable from a veridical perception, via stimulation of the brain.

2. Therefore, it is necessary to give the same account of the nature of the object of awareness in both perception and hallucination, as they have the same proximate neural cause.

3. Therefore, since the nature of the object of awareness in hallucination is internal, the nature of the object of awareness in perception is internal too.

First, let us note that the stimulated brain state is not a cause of the hallucinatory experience, but rather the realization, or material underpinning of it. So Robinson's second premise would relate, *by necessity*, the sameness of neural underpinning with the sameness in nature of perceptions and hallucinations, as far as their object is concerned. But why should one believe this premise? My argument could equally well be taken as a counterexample to Robinson's thesis: the material underpinning of both hearing silence and being deaf is a neural state – the absence of neural activity in the relevant brain area. Yet, we know independently that they are radically different states by their nature – one is a successful representation of an absence, the other is the absence of a representation. The same could be the case for hallucinating versus hearing silence, so for hallucination and perception in general.

#### <5> Conceptual Indiscernibility and Negative Epistemics

We have earlier asserted that both hearing silence and hallucination are (a) indistinguishable from deafness and (b) radically different in nature. Point (b) is problematic for the <hallucination of silence – deafness> pair. Ian Phillips (this volume, section 2) thinks that an acceptance of the idea that we cannot distinguish between deafness and silence from the inside, combined with an attempt to allow for hallucinations and, more generally, experiences of silence commits us to regarding a profoundly deaf person as perpetually hallucinating silence. This is, admittedly, quite counterintuitive. On the disjunctivist view, having an experience as of silence means “either hearing or hallucinating silence”. So hallucinating silence comes out as a kind of experience as of something by virtue of the disjunctive account of “experience as of ...”. On the other hand, deafness would be the lack of an experience. The problem emerges once we consider the disjunctivist account of hallucination. The so-called negative epistemic criterion due to Martin (2002: 402) states that hallucination is the state that is not grounded in external object and is indistinguishable from perception. So it seems that once we know that a putatively experiential state is not grounded in the perceptual relation to an external object, indistinguishability is sufficient for that state to count as a hallucination. This makes profound deafness come out as perpetual hallucination: we know it is not a perception and we know it is indistinguishable from hearing silence. But we also know it is *not* an experiential state.

So it seems that if we want to keep committed to hearing silence, hallucinating silence, and the indistinguishability of these from deafness, we have to question the negative epistemic criterion. The issue is complicated by a few empirical facts about the application of the concepts of deafness and hallucination.

First, deafness is a medical condition of relative gravity. Hearing loss is qualified from mild to profound, according to the level of sound intensity, measured in decibels, needed for the patient to become aware of a sound. If that is the case, then we talk about deafness-of-degree-X, where X is proportional to the level of sound intensity. But if this is the criterion, why wouldn't we consider auditory hallucination as such (whether of silence or of some sound) as the same as deafness-of-some-degree? It makes indeed sense to think that while auditorily hallucinating something, we fail to hear some other sounds that are present in the environment, because they don't reach a certain level of intensity.

Second, there is evidence that a certain proportion of people who suffered serious hearing loss, usually during adulthood, do have hallucinations. Some of these are musical hallucinations, when the patient seems to hear music perpetually<sup>7</sup>. So it seems that the concept of hallucination is not incompatible with that of deafness: these patients are hallucinating while deaf.

Third, it makes sense to talk about temporary deafness, even deafness for a very short period of time, say, 10 minutes. But if we consider hallucination of silence for 10 minutes versus being deaf for 10 minutes, it is hard to discern them conceptually. The fact that we here another sound after ten minutes does not change this fact, *pace* Phillips (this volume: section 3)<sup>8</sup>. Consider this statement: "You were deaf yesterday between 10 and 10:10". And compare it with "You were immortal yesterday between 10 and 10:10". To understand immortality in the latter sentence as the property of *living forever* would be nonsense: "You lived forever yesterday between 10 and 10:10". In order to make sense of it, we have to interpret the sentence as "You were, yesterday between 10 and 10:10, such that whatever would have normally caused you to die in those circumstances could not have actually caused you to die". Now, by analogy, "You were deaf yesterday between 10 and 10:10" would have to be taken not as "You were permanently deaf yesterday between 10 and 10:10", but as "You were, yesterday between 10 and 10:10, such that whatever would have normally caused you to hear in those circumstances could not have actually caused you to hear anything". Again, auditorily hallucinating something between 10 and 10:10 can equally serve as a truth condition of this last sentence.

All this is evidence that, in fact, hallucination and mere lack of perception are conceptually indiscernible. But this is not so bad, after all, given that some disjunctivists are keen on only providing for content in the case of perception (where the content is the object perceived, which is thus constitutive part of the experience), and avoiding such commitment in the case of hallucinations. If hallucination and mere lack of perception are conceptually indiscernible, then it is true that indistinguishability from perception does not come out as sufficient for something to qualify as hallucination, but, more importantly for the disjunctivist, it becomes indeterminate whether hallucination *per se* is a kind of experience or a kind of non-experience. Since perception is a kind of experience, the phrase we used to analyze "having an experience as of O", namely, "seeing O, or hallucinating O", will now serve a view that I would call "radical experiential disjunctivism"<sup>9</sup>; the formula would be something like:

(\* ) It appears as if S has an experience as of O =<sub>def</sub> Either S sees O, or S hallucinates O

Hallucinating O implies indistinguishability from seeing O, and this fact explains the temptation to believe in a common factor. On the other hand, given the conceptual indiscernibility pointed out above, it is indeterminate whether hallucinating O is metaphysically distinct from a non-experience, and this fact explains why it can serve as a disjunct in (\*): we know that seeing O is an experience, but if it is indeterminate whether hallucinating O is one, there is an acceptable supposition to the effect that O is not an experience<sup>10</sup>. If this is right, again, we get as a conclusion the epistemic possibility of difference in nature between perception and hallucination, now at the level of their higher-order properties, those of *being an experience* and *being a non-experience*, respectively<sup>11</sup>.

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> It is sometimes combined with a causal account of perception, or, as Howard Robinson does (1994: 151), with a causal argument for sense data. My argument will have effect, I believe, on these modified versions too – see section 4.

<sup>2</sup> For a classification of types of disjunctivism see Adrian Haddock and Fiona Macpherson (2008: 1-24). For a discussion of the origins and development of disjunctivism, especially in Michael Hinton's work, see Paul Snowdon (2008: 35-56).

<sup>3</sup> Alex Byrne pointed out to me that my talk of content-conditions comes close to intentionalism, a common-factor theory, according to which what perceptions and hallucinations have in common when they are indistinguishable is intentional content. First, I deliberately use "content-conditions" rather than "content", in order to avoid this apparent commitment to a common content. More correct would be to say that content-conditions are conditions in virtue of which hallucinations are contentful, *if they have content*, indeed. First, supposing they do have content, my analysis here does not imply that they have the same content as perceptions, but the opposite: veridicality conditions and content conditions are distinct sets. Second, the discussion in section 5 makes it clear that hallucinations turn out to be conceptually indiscernible from non-experiences, so it becomes indeterminate whether they really have content.

<sup>4</sup> Causal explanation is a good example, as many times we have to explain the occurrence of an effect by the absence of another – e.g. the occurrence of brain death by the absence of oxygen in the blood. Also cases of causation by disconnection (Jonathan Schaffer 2000) are cases of absences that are causally relevant for the occurrence of some effects - the occurrence of brain death by the disconnection of blood flow from the heart to the brain.

<sup>5</sup> Ian Phillips (this volume: section 4.2: fn 20) asserts that it is hard to make sense of disjunctivism about hearing silence, as disjunctivism requires an object in the case of perception, whereas there is no object whatsoever in the case of perceiving silence. In reply, as Tim Crane (2001: section 5, and this volume) points out, in this context we use the word "object" as it is used in the phrase "object of discussion" or "object of attention", where it clearly does not mean "particular thing" or "material thing". As Crane pointed out to me (personal communication), this sense of "object" derives from its etymology: *ob* + *jacere*, that is, lying/thrown against. So there is no real problem about making sense of disjunctivism in the context of hearing silence.

<sup>6</sup> We need to avoid the use of the notion of metaphysical possibility, and state the argument in terms of the weaker, epistemic notion, because the notion of the nature of something is synonymous with that of the essence of that thing, which is necessary for the existence of that thing; if we asserted the metaphysical possibility of different natures for hallucination and perception, we would have opened the way to a straightforward inference, in modal logic system S5, to the actuality of such a difference, and this would be unwarranted and question-begging against our opponent.

<sup>7</sup> The interested reader should perform a search of “musical hallucination in deaf”, on *Pubmed* ([www.pubmed.gov](http://www.pubmed.gov)). Similar facts are established regarding visual hallucinations in visually impaired -see Dominic H ffytche (this volume), on the Charles Bonnet syndrome.

<sup>8</sup> Phillips writes: “In order to distinguish hallucinating silence from the mere absence of experience, we appeal to the experience of surrounding sounds. In other words, to temporally extended experience. Because the fundamental explanatory unit is our experience over some period of time, this unit can include our experience of the separated sounds. Thus, in virtue of these, we hear or hallucinate the interleaved silence.”

<sup>9</sup> As it is a radical version of what Haddock and Macpherson (2008: 2-4) call “experiential disjunctivism”, attributed to Paul Snowdon (1980-1). Snowdon’s disjuncts are both kinds of experiences (only one of them counts as perceptual, because it intrinsically involves concrete objects), because their disjunction is supposed to exhaust the notion of an experiential state, whereas in my radical version one is definitely an experience, the other is indeterminate with respect to whether it counts as an experience, as their disjunction is supposed to exhaust the notion of, say, the appearance of an experiential state, or a quasi-experiential state; Snowdon’s formula is: It looks to S as if there is an F =df Either there is something which looks to S to be an F, or it is to S as if there is something which looks to S to be an F.

<sup>10</sup> It is normally hard to see how it could just *appear* as if one has an experience as of O, without one having an experience as of O. But the case of silence is, again, telling. Thus Sorensen (2008: 268), in another context, offers the example of a wounded soldier wondering whether he has gone deaf, while being neutral on whether he is hearing silence or not. We can take the example as showing that one can wonder whether one has an experience as of O, not just whether one’s experience is as of O or not.

<sup>11</sup> I would like to thank the participants of the conference on hallucination, organized by Fiona Macpherson and Dimitris Platchias, which took place in Rethymno, Crete, between 11 and 14 September, 2008, especially Alex Byrne, Tim Crane, Katalin Farkas, Benj Hellie, and Jessica Wilson. I’m also grateful to Bill Wringe for feedback on a penultimate version.

## References

- Byrne, A. (this volume) ‘Hallucination and Imagery’.  
Crane, T. (this volume) ‘Awareness of Properties’  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2001) *Elements of Mind*, Oxford University Press.  
Farkas K. (this volume) ‘Philosophical Hallucinations and Real Hallucinations’.

- Fish, W. (2008) 'Disjunctivism, Indistinguishability, and the Nature of Hallucination', in A. Haddock and F. Macpherson (eds.) *Disjunctivism: Perception, Action, Knowledge*, Oxford University Press.
- Ffytche, D. H. (this volume) 'The Hallucinating Brain'.
- Haddock, A. and F. Macpherson (2008) 'Introduction', in Haddock and Macpherson (eds.) *Disjunctivism: Perception, Action, Knowledge*.
- Martin, M. G. F. (2002) 'The Transparency of Experience', *Mind and Language*, 17: 376-425.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2004) 'The Limits of Self-Awareness', *Philosophical Studies*, 120: 37-89.
- McDowell (1982) 'Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 68: 455-79. [Reprinted in his *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.]
- Phillips, I. (this volume) 'Hearing and Hallucinating Silence'.
- Robinson, H. (1994) *Perception*, London: Routledge.
- Sartre, J. P. (1969) *Being and Nothingness*, trans. H. E. Barnes, New York: Washington Square Press.
- Schaffer, J. (2000) 'Causation by Disconnection', *Philosophy of Science*, 67: 285-300.
- Snowdon P. (2008) 'Hinton and the Origins of Disjunctivism', in Haddock and Macpherson (eds.) *Disjunctivism: Perception, Action, Knowledge*.
- Sorensen, R. (2008) *Seeing Dark Things: The Philosophy of Shadows*, Oxford University Press.
- Sturgeon, S. (2008) 'Disjunctivism About Visual Experience', in Haddock and Macpherson (eds.) *Disjunctivism: Perception, Action, Knowledge*.
- Williamson, T. (2000) *Identity and Discrimination*, Oxford: Blackwell.

### **Information about the author**

István Aranyosi is Assistant Professor in Philosophy at Bilkent University, Ankara. His recent publications address problems related to the metaphysics and perception of shadows. His current research interests lie in the metaphysics of properties and the philosophy of consciousness.