Does Negative Epistemic Disjunctivism Solve the Screening Off Problem?

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Abstract: Current orthodoxy in the perception literature is that the only way for disjunctivists to resolve the 'screening off' problem they face is to embrace a radical form of disjunctivism known as *negative epistemic disjunctivism*. What makes the view so radical is its commitment to the claim that the psychological nature of hallucinatory episodes can be characterised wholly in negative epistemic terms: having an hallucinatory experience, according to the view, is nothing more than being in a state reflectively indiscriminable from some corresponding perception. The paper argues that on closer inspection, this view fails to adequately resolve the screening off problem. It thus concludes that current orthodoxy must be revised: in order to adequately solve the screening off problem, disjunctivists must locate an alternative strategy.

1 Introduction

Metaphysical disjunctivism is the view that perceptual experiences have different natures to hallucinatory ones. The most common (though not the only) reason for adopting this view is acceptance of *naïve realism* (cf. Martin 2004, 2006). According to naïve realism, perceptual experiences consist in the relation of acquaintance obtaining between a subject and external items. Since hallucinatory experiences do not have such a nature, naïve realism implies the (metaphysical) disjunctivist thesis that perceptual and hallucinatory experiences have different natures.

It is also part of the naïve realist view that the phenomenal character of a perceptual experience is constitutively explained by the external items it presents. It is therefore common for naïve realists to embrace, not only metaphysical disjunctivism, but also phenomenal disjunctivism, i.e. the thesis that the phenomenal character of perceptual experience requires a different explanation to the phenomenal character of hallucinatory experience. In perceptual cases, the phenomenological facts are explained by reference to the kind of experience the subject enjoys, which constitutively involves external items. In the hallucinatory case, no experience of this external-object-involving kind is present. Therefore, hallucinatory phenomenology must be explained by reference to a different kind of experience, i.e. the kind involved in hallucination, whatever nature such events turn out to have.

In what follows, I shall describe as 'disjunctivists' anyone who accepts both metaphysical and phenomenal disjunctivism in the above senses. Again, accepting naïve realism is the most common reason for embracing such a position. But it is not the only possible reason, and the discussion that follows should apply equally

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(with a few modifications here and there) to those who embrace disjunctivism on one of the alternative available (non-naïve-realist) grounds.[2]

Disjunctivists are officially agnostic about the nature of hallucinatory episodes. It is common, however, thanks primarily to two highly influential articles by Martin (2004, 2006, cf. also his 2013), for disjunctivists to adopt a particular theory about the nature of the hallucinatory case. Martin argues that to avoid the *screening off problem*, disjunctivists must embrace a radical account of hallucinatory experience, namely the *negative epistemic account*, on which hallucinatory experiences are nothing more than states *reflectively indiscriminable* from perceptions. In his own words, the idea is that disjunctivists must accept the 'surprising' claim that 'when it comes to the mental characterisation…of hallucinatory experience, nothing more can be said than the relational and epistemological claim that it is indiscriminable from [some corresponding] perception' (Martin 2004: 72).

Let us refer to the resulting view, which combines a naïve realist account of perception with the negative epistemic view of hallucination, as *negative epistemic disjunctivism*.[3] Over the last two decades, there has been much discussion of this view, and it is fair to say that it has become orthodox among disjunctivists. (Some disjunctivists who explicitly adopt the view include Brewer 2011; Campbell 2002, 2014; and Fish 2009). Indeed, it is even common for opponents of disjunctivism to assume that all disjunctivists must be negative epistemic disjunctivists, and then to argue against disjunctivism in general by attacking negative epistemic disjunctivism in particular.[4] Yet, there has been rather little discussion of how exactly negative epistemic disjunctivism is meant to solve the screening off problem, and whether it succeeds. Instead, discussion has mainly focused on the details of its account of hallucination, and whether that account is defensible. The present paper fills this lacuna by looking at how negative epistemic disjunctivism is meant to solve the screening off problem. It also argues that on closer inspection, negative epistemic disjunctivism does not so much solve the screening off problem as 'move it down a level'. That is, I argue that negative epistemic disjunctivism at best shifts the bulge in the carpet, rather than resolving the screening off problem in full.

Thus, I will conclude that current orthodoxy in the perception literature must be revised. If disjunctivists are to resolve the screening off problem, they must locate an alternate response to the one negative epistemic disjunctivists provide.[5,6]

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[2] Recent defences of naïve realism include Brewer (2011); Campbell (2002); Fish (2009); Martin (2004, 2006). In addition to naïve realist disjunctivism, there is also room for a broadly intentionalist form of disjunctivism, on which perceptual experiences involve object-dependent contents that could not be instantiated in hallucination (see e.g., Logue 2015; McDowell 1982. 1994; Pautz manuscript; Schellenberg 2010, 2014; Soteriou 2016; Tye 2007, 2009, 2014).

[3] Martin (2013) refers to the view as *evidential disjunctivism*. But here I will use the label that appears more commonly in the literature, namely, *negative epistemic disjunctivism*.

[4] See e.g. Byrne & Logue (2008); Farkas (2006); Johnston (2004); Hawthorne & Kovakovich (2006); Pautz (2011); Siegel (2004, 2008) Smith (2008); Sturgeon (2008). Cf. Moran (2019).

[5] As we will see, this might not involve rejecting negative epistemic disjunctivism outright. For instance, a revised version of that view may well be available in a 'restrictivist' setting (see §6). The main conclusion here is just that negative epistemic disjunctivism, at least in the form endorsed by Brewer, Campbell, Fish, Martin, and others, fails to solve the screening off problem in full.

[6] Below, I suggest that the same basic problem as the one pressed here against negative epistemic disjunctivism arises for a whole range of structurally similar disjunctivist views, including in particular those proposed by Conduct (2012), Johnston (2004), and Logue (2013). See fn. 24.

The paper is structured as follows. §2 sets out the screening off problem. §3 then sets out the negative epistemic disjunctivist answer to it (as I shall understand it here).[7] §4 argues that negative epistemic disjunctivists still face a version of the screening off problem, albeit one that occurs at the physical rather than the mental level. §5 considers some replies that negative epistemic disjunctivists might make to my argument, and shows that none of these ultimately helps. §6 concludes.

2 Screening Off

It is (nomically) possible for there to be perceptual experience and a corresponding hallucinatory experience whereby *what it is like* is the same in both cases. E.g., Tom is perceiving a red round tomato, while Tim is hallucinating a red round tomato, whereby what it is like for Tom is exactly the same as what it is like for Tim. Borrowing terminology from Pautz (2010), we can capture this by saying that Tom and Tim share an *appearance property*, where this is, roughly, the property of having an experience with such-and-such a qualitative character, namely the character that perceptual experiences of red round tomatoes in normal conditions generally have.

In the language of appearance properties, the disjunctivist position can be described like so. Let P be the appearance property of having an experience with phenomenal character C, namely, the character that experiences as of red round tomatoes generally have. When Tom has P, Tom has P in virtue of having an experience of kind Kp—that is, an experience consisting in acquaintance with a red round tomato. Meanwhile, when Tim has P, he has it in virtue of having an experience of some other kind, Kh, namely whatever kind of experience is involved in hallucinatory cases. (E.g., having an experience of kind Kh might involve awareness of sense-data, or sensory representation. Disjunctivists are officially agnostic.)

The disjunctivist view therefore exhibits the following structure (cf. Pautz 2010: 260ff). The perceiving subject Tom and the hallucinating subject Tim both instantiate appearance property P. However, they have this property for different reasons. Tom has P in virtue of undergoing an experience of the perceptual kind Kp—one that consists in acquaintance with a red round tomato. Meanwhile, Tim has P in virtue of having an experience of the hallucinatory kind Kh (such that whatever else is true of it, it does not involve acquaintance with external things).[8]

Note that so far, I have been helping myself to the 'in virtue of' locution, which I will continue to do throughout. This is, I take it, the converse of the notion of 'grounding', which I shall understand here as an explanatory relation between facts (without taking a stance on what 'facts' are). Note that I have in mind a fairly mild or deflationary notion of grounding, somewhat along the lines of Dasgupta (2017).

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[7] Note that this paper is not an exercise in Martin exegesis. Rather, my strategy will be to set out what I take to be an important and genuine version of the screening off problem, and then to reconstruct, from Martin (2004, 2006), what I take the negative epistemic disjunctivist's answer to that challenge to be. I then attempt to show that ultimately, this solution does not succeed.

[8] Cf. Snowdon (1990: 129), who notes that on a disjunctivist view '...the claim that it looks to P as if R should be treated as being true in virtue of two distinct sorts of states of affairs: either there is an object which looks to be an oasis to P (this is the case where an object is seen), or it is to P as if there is something of that sort happening (P is hallucinating an oasis). It is allowed that the two cases which are described in the same way – or which ground the same description – might be quite different in nature'. Cf. here Martin (2002: 329) and Millar (1996: 76).

The idea is simply that one fact grounds another (that one fact holds in virtue of another) just when one of these facts constitutively (rather than causally) explains the other. It is in just this sense, I take it, that the naïve realist claims that perceptual experiences have their phenomenal characters in virtue of presenting such-and-such external objects, manifesting such-and-such qualitative properties.[9]

So far, then, so good. As Martin (2004, 2006) emphasises, however, the following argument generates trouble for the disjunctivist view. We have supposed that things are phenomenally the same for Tom and Tim, although the former is perceiving while the latter is hallucinating. Suppose further that Tom and Tim are perfect intrinsic duplicates, so that whatever total (narrow) brain state Tom is in, Tim is in too.[10] Next, consider the following supervenience principle:

Narrow Supervenience: Necessarily, if x and y are in the same total (narrow) brain state, then if x is having an experience of kind Kh, so too is y.

We can remain neutral about the force of the term 'necessarily'. If one's motivation for **Narrow Supervenience** is some version of the 'same proximate cause, same effect' principle, as in Martin (2004, 2006), then the kind of necessity in play will be nomological. Here the argument for **Narrow Supervenience** turns on two ideas: that (i) when a person has an experience of kind Kh, the proximate cause will be a narrow brain state of a certain kind, and that (ii) in general, like proximate causes produce like immediate effects (at least in all worlds with the same causal laws as ours).[11] If, however, one thinks that the brain state instead serves to *ground* or *constitute* the subject's hallucinatory experience, as in Johnston (2004), the kind of necessity in play will be the stronger, metaphysical kind. Here the argument for **Narrow Supervenience** instead relies on the ideas that (i) when a person has an experience of kind Kh, this is grounded in the person being in a certain brain state, and that (ii) grounding conditions necessitate the conditions they ground, so that anyone in that same brain state, as a matter of metaphysical necessity, also has an experience of the hallucinatory kind.

Both arguments are underpinned by the thought that having an experience of the hallucinatory kind is a local matter. As Martin (2004) puts it, the idea is that hallucinatory episodes are 'inner states', with no substantial background conditions on their instantiation. Contrast the perceptual case. For naïve realists, perceptual experience occurs only when a suitable external object exists and is available to be perceived. Thus, for naïve realists (and disjunctivists in general), the analogue of **Narrow Supervenience** for perceptual experiences is false (cf. Campbell, 2010: §§3–4; Nudds, 2013: 274–275; Langsam, 1997: 42–46; Martin, 2004: 56–58, 2006: 268–371). According to Martin (2004: 58), however, we intuitively think of hallucinatory experiences as such that no further conditions, beyond the right kind of local brain state, must be met for one of them to be produced (cf. Snowdon

[9] Note that unless otherwise indicated, I have the notion of full rather than partial grounding in mind.

[10] I'll grant for the sake of argument (and in line with the wider perception literature) that this assumption is in good order. For a recent challenge to that idea however see Masrour (2020).

[11] Various 'causal arguments' for **Narrow Supervenience** can be found in Fish (2009); Foster (1986, 2000); Martin (2004, 2006); Moran (2019); Robinson (1985, 1994); Snowdon (2005).

2005: 288). If this is right, then in contrast to the perceptual case, all that is needed for an hallucinatory experience to occur is the right kind of local brain state.

Narrow Supervenience is widely endorsed in the perception literature, by both disjunctivists and their opponents (see, e.g., Fish 2009; Foster 1986, 2000; Johnston 2004; Nudds 2013; Robinson 1985, 1994; cf. Moran 2024: 133). If true, however, it can be used to generate a serious problem for the view.

Consider once more Tom and Tim. Since they are both in the same narrow brain state, **Narrow Supervenience** implies that Tom undergoes an experience of the hallucinatory kind as well as Tim. By itself, this does not mean that disjunctivism is false. For it might be that Tom is undergoing *both* an experience of the perceptual kind *and* an experience of the hallucinatory kind. Admitting this, however, though strictly speaking logically coherent, raises a pair of issues.

First, there is the challenge of making metaphysical-cum-phenomenological sense of the situation. One might grant that it is logically coherent to suppose that in cases of perception, the subject undergoes two fundamentally different sorts of experience simultaneously. But can we really make phenomenological sense of this? As Snowdon (2005: 303) emphasises, the view seems 'dubiously coherent'. There is also a related question about the metaphysics of the situation (cf. Johnston 2004: 117-118; Martin 2004: 59-60). Should we think that in cases of perception, the subject undergoes two wholly distinct experiences at once? Is one experience somehow a proper part of the other? Or does the subject undergo just one experience, which somehow falls under two distinct experiential kinds?

The more fundamental challenge, however—viz., the screening off challenge proper—is this. Consider first the hallucinatory case. Again, Tim instantiates appearance property P, in virtue of undergoing an experience of kind Kh (that is, the hallucinatory kind of experience). But now, from the above 'narrow supervenience argument', we it follows immediately that *Tom* is also undergoing an experience of kind Kh. In turn, this suggests that Tom instantiates P in virtue of undergoing an experience of that same kind. Indeed, this follows from the following plausible principle governing constitutive explanation, which we might call:

Generality: If some (possible) object *a* is F fully in virtue of being G, then, if any (possible) object *b* is G, *b* is F fully virtue of being G.

If **Generality** is true, as it appears (cf. Rosen 2010), we must conclude that Tom instantiates P fully in virtue of undergoing an experience of the hallucinatory kind. The disjunctivist, however, wanted to say that Tom has P fully in virtue of undergoing an experience of the distinctively perceptual, naïve realist kind, which has no echo in the hallucinatory case. We therefore have a problem of explanatory exclusion or 'screening off'. Given that the appearance facts (that Tom has P) can be explained fully in terms of Tom's instantiation of the hallucinatory kind Kh, what need there to appeal to a distinctively perceptual kind of episode as well?

One way to see the force of the problem is to contrast the disjunctivist view with the rival 'conjunctivist' picture. On conjunctivism, there is one basic kind of experience common to perception and hallucination. The conjunctivist can thus unproblematically accept that the hallucinatory kind of experience narrowly supervenes (cf. Johnston 2004). The reason she will not end up with a screening off problem is that she does not think that in the perceptual case, there is a distinctive

experiential kind explaining the appearance facts (i.e. a kind of experience that appears only in perception and never in hallucination). The disjunctivist, however, seemingly has to say that in the perceptual case, the appearance facts are explained twice over: once by the fact that the subject is undergoing the common, hallucinatory kind of experience, and once again by the fact that she is undergoing the distinctively naïve realist kind of experience. Clearly, the disjunctivist picture looks far less attractive than that of her conjunctivist rival. The former view apparently implies that we have widespread and systemic constitutive overdetermination of the appearance facts in perceptual cases. The latter view does not.

Disjunctivists can avoid commitment to constitutive overdetermination, but only, it would seem, by giving up the central thought that the appearance facts are grounded, in good cases, in facts about the distinctively naïve realist type of experience the subject undergoes (cf. Byrne & Logue 2008).[12] As Martin (2004: 64) emphasises, however, this not a happy place for disjunctivists to end up, since it involves abandoning the central claim that the conscious character of perceptual episodes is constitutively explained in terms of perceived external items.[13]

This, then, is the screening off problem that disjunctivists face. In the following section, I consider how negative epistemic disjunctivists might answer that problem (§3). I then argue that this response does not succeed (§§4-5).

3 The Negative Epistemic Response

How might adopting negative epistemic disjunctivism resolve the screening off problem? To answer this, we should say more about the negative epistemic account of hallucination (which, again, combines with naïve realism about perception to yield the negative epistemic disjunctivist theory of sense-experience as such).

Let us begin with an important distinction between *having an experience of the hallucinatory kind* on the one hand, and *undergoing an hallucination* on the other. The distinction is important because (in principle, at least) it should be possible to undergo *the kind of experience* involved in hallucination—i.e. to undergo *the hallucinatory kind of experience*—even in a non-hallucinatory case (cf. Johnston 2004: 115). The negative epistemic account of hallucination is an account *what it is to have an experience of the hallucinatory kind*, rather than an account of *what it is to undergo an hallucination*. In particular, the central claim is that to have an hallucinatory experience is simply a matter of being in a certain sort of negative epistemic state. On the account, having an hallucinatory experience *just is* a matter of being in a condition such that it cannot be known of that condition, in some suitably impersonal sense of 'knows', and just by means of introspective reflection, that it is not a case of perception. Thus, if I hallucinate a red round tomato, the experience I have just is, in its nature, a state with the following negative epistemic property, *viz.* that of being such that one cannot tell of it that it is not an experience of the specific naïve realist kind that actually does consist in acquaintance with a red round tomato. Let us say that any experience with this property is 'reflectively

[12] There is, admittedly, a reading of Martin (2004) available on which jettisoning **Generality** is precisely the recommendation he makes. I turn to that interpretation in §5.3 below.

[13] Analogue problems can be posed in a non-naïve-realist context. E.g. the disjunctive intentionalist either ends up with overdetermination or is forced to abandon her distinctive claim that perceptual phenomenology is grounded in some singular content not present in hallucination.

indiscriminable' from the corresponding perceptual experience. The negative epistemic view can then be stated as the claim that hallucinatory episodes are mere negative epistemic states reflectively indiscriminable from certain perceptions. To have an experience of the hallucinatory kind consists in nothing more than being in a state reflectively indiscriminable from some corresponding perceptual state.

Recall now the good case of Tom having a perceptual experience of some particular red round tomato. For the naïve realist, this experience consists in Tom's acquaintance with an actual red round tomato. Accordingly, to be an experience of the kind Tom is having—namely kind 'Kp'—is to be an experience that consists in its subject being acquainted with a red round tomato. But we also know that according to the negative epistemic account, to be an experience of the corresponding hallucinatory kind, Kh, and hence an experience of the sort that Tim, in the corresponding bad case, is undergoing, is nothing more than being an event reflectively indiscriminable from an experience of kind Kp. Obviously, this entails that the particular experience Tom is having (in the perceptual case) falls under both experiential kind Kp and experiential kind Kh. For any event that really does consist in acquaintance with a red round tomato is also reflectively indiscriminable from an event that does so. (Reflective indiscriminability is reflexive.[14])

The situation is therefore as follows. In the hallucinatory case, Tim has an experience of kind Kh; that is, he is the subject of an event reflectively indiscriminable from an experience of the perceptual kind Kp. In the perceptual case, meanwhile, Tom also has an experience of kind Kh. But in this case, the reason Tom has an experience of kind Kh is because he is having an experience of the distinctively perceptual, naïve realist kind Kp. The difference is that at the psychological level, there is no deeper reason why Tim has an experience of kind Kh—the fact that he is in a condition reflectively indiscriminable from the perceptual kind is the end of the explanatory story, at least at the mental level of description. But though Tom is also in the same negative epistemic state, there is a deeper psychological explanation as to why, namely, that he is undergoing the naïve realist kind of experience.

(It is worth emphasising here that in the good case, the fact that Tom is having an experience of kind Kh is not merely *entailed* by his having an experience of kind Kp. Rather, the fact that Tom is having an experience of kind Kp is the reason, or ground, of the fact that he is having an experience of kind Kh. After all, to have an experience of kind Kh is to be in a state reflectively indiscriminable from undergoing an experience of kind Kp. Therefore, given that reflective indiscriminability is reflexive, the fact that Tom is having an experience of kind Kp is the ground of the fact that he is having an experience of kind Kh. In other words, it is because Tom really is having an experience of kind Kp that he is also in a state which is reflectively indiscriminable from that of having an experience of kind Kp.)

The negative epistemic disjunctivist can thus make ready sense of the idea that perceiving subjects simultaneously undergo experiences of two different kinds. Moreover, it seems that she can also answer the screening off problem. Let us work presently through the details. Begin with the following fact about the hallucinatory case (read 'A ← B' as the claim that 'A is fully grounded in B', as in Rosen 2010):

[14] One way to see this is to note that knowledge is factive. A state X is reflectively indiscriminable from some Y-type state just in case you cannot know, just on the basis of reflection, that X isn't a state of type-Y. Therefore, whenever X really is a state of type-Y, the factivity of knowledge will automatically ensure that X is reflectively indiscriminable from a state of type Y.

(1) Tim has appearance property P ← Tim has an experience of kind Kh.

Given **Narrow Supervenience**, and from the fact that by stipulation, Tim is having an experience of kind Kh and is in the same narrow brain state as Tom, we get:

(2) Tom has an experience of kind Kh.

By **Generality**, therefore, we can infer from (1) and (2) that:

(3) Tom has appearance property P ← Tom has an experience of kind Kh.

The disjunctivist, however, claims that:

(4) Tom has appearance property P ← Tom has an experience of kind Kp.

Yet, the conjunction of (3) and (4) looks like problematic constitutive overdetermination. Granted, there can be cases of constitutive overdetermination that are unproblematic, as when a thing has a disjunctive property in virtue of having both disjuncts. However, if (3) and (4) are both true, then in general, appearance facts in perceptual cases are constitutively overdetermined. That kind of systematic overdetermination, however, looks hard to live with, especially when we compare the resulting disjunctivist theory with the simpler conjunctivist account.

This is simply a repetition of the initial screening off problem. What the negative epistemic disjunctivist can say in response, however, is that the conjunction of (3) and (4) does not really classify as one of constitutive overdetermination, given that there is a grounding relationship between the fact that Tom has an experience of kind Kh, and the fact that he has an experience of kind Kp. For, she can claim that the nature of the grounding relationship here (between the allegedly overdetermining facts) means that rather than being a case of constitutive overdetermination, what we really have is an unproblematic grounding chain. Suppose we said that Tom has moral status in virtue of having the capacity for consciousness, and that he has the capacity for consciousness in virtue of his intrinsic physical make-up. Is the fact that Tom has moral status constitutively overdetermined by his having the capacity for consciousness *and* by his having a certain intrinsic physical make-up? No, because the fact that he has the capacity for consciousness itself is grounded in the fact that he has the intrinsic physical make-up the does.

With that in mind, note again that negative epistemic disjunctivism implies:

(5) Tom has an experience of kind Kh ← Tom has an experience of kind Kp.

Given this, (3) and (4) do not constitute a case of overdetermination. Rather, (3), (4) and (5) together constitute a harmless grounding chain. Tom has appearance property P in virtue of having the (negative epistemic) kind of experience Kh, which he in turn has in virtue of having the (naïve realist) kind of experience Kp.[15]

[15] Thus, we cannot say that in general, A is constitutively overdetermined (or over-grounded) by B and C whenever: (i) A ← B, (ii) A ← C, and (iii) B ≠ C. Rather, we have to say something like this: A is constitutively overdetermined (or over-grounded) by B and C whenever: (i) A ← B

Of course, Martin himself does not speak in terms of grounding, constitutive over-determination, and grounding chains. However, the above answer to the screening off problem flows naturally from his negative epistemic account. Moreover, this reading also helps make sense of Martin's somewhat cryptic talk of the important role supposedly played by the fact that the negative epistemic kind of experience Kh is 'explanatorily dependent' on the naïve realist kind of experience Kp. Martin emphasises that the key to resolving the screening off problem is to note that given negative epistemic disjunctivism, the hallucinatory kind Kh has a merely derivative or dependent explanatory role in perceptual cases, insofar as it could not play the explanatory role it does unless the naïve realist kind Kp played *its* explanatory role (Martin 2004: 70; cf. Fish 2009). One way of making sense of this is by interpretating the negative epistemic disjunctivist solution to the screening off problem as above. On that reading, the fact that Tom has an experience of kind Kh does not 'screen off' the fact that he has an experience of kind Kp from explaining why he has appearance property P precisely because the former condition is explanatorily dependent on the latter in the precise sense that it is only thanks to undergoing the perceptual kind of experience (and thanks to that kind of experience having a certain explanatory relationship to the appearance property, P) that Tom's having the hallucinatory kind of experience can also play a role in explaining why Tom instantiates that same appearance property.

Unfortunately, however, elegant though it may be, I'll now argue that this answer to the screening off problem does not ultimately succeed.

4 Screening Off Again

Contrast again the perceptual situation and the hallucinatory one. For the negative epistemic disjunctivist, the story is this. In the perceptual case, Tom has the negative epistemic kind of experience (i.e. the common, hallucinatory kind) in virtue of having the naïve realist kind of experience (i.e. the distinctively perceptual kind). In the hallucinatory case, meanwhile, while Tim also has the negative epistemic kind of experience, he does not have this experience in virtue of having the naïve realist kind of experience. In fact, there is nothing deeper, at the psychological level, in virtue of which Tim has the negative epistemic kind of experience. It is true that Tim is in a certain negative epistemic condition, one that is reflectively indiscriminable from the corresponding good case. And it is true that this is *what it is* for Tim to be having an experience of the hallucinatory kind (at least according to the negative epistemic account). But that is all there is to say about the situation.

Thus, the negative epistemic disjunctivist thinks that the obtaining of the negative epistemic condition *in bad cases* is psychologically primitive. Crucially, however, she also faces pressure to allow that the condition is not entirely brute. This is because, plausibly, there will be some more basic physical condition in virtue of which the negative epistemic condition obtains. In particular, it is plausible to think that there will be some narrow or intrinsic physical state of the subject—

(ii) $A \leftarrow C$, (iii) $B \neq C$, (iv) $\neg (B \leftarrow C)$ and (v) $\neg (C \leftarrow B)$. (Keep in mind here that we are working with the notion of full rather than partial ground.)

perhaps that of being in a certain narrow brain state—such that the subject is in then negative epistemic condition in virtue of being in that physical state.[16]

Notice that saying this is not yet to commit ourselves to anything as strong as physicalism about the mental in general. For instance, for all that has been said, the obtaining of the relevant narrow brain state—which I have called and will continue to refer to as the 'narrow physical condition'—might itself obtain in virtue of certain non-physical facts, perhaps facts involving conscious fundamental particles, as the panpsychist might have it (cf. Goff 2017) or facts involving subjects and their mental states, as certain idealists might insist (cf. Foster 1982). Moreover, given the fairly weak notion of grounding and 'in virtue of' in play (cf. §2 above), it might well be that while experiential states in general are grounded in certain (fairly high-level) physical states, the kind of grounding involved is not sufficient to ensure that those experiential states are themselves physical states, or even physicalistically acceptable. It is consistent with what I have said so far, for example, that the negative epistemic state, and maybe experiential states in general, are only naturally rather than metaphysically grounded in underlying physical states, in something like the sense of Fine (2012). But this would lead, not to a form of physicalist negative epistemic disjunctivist, but rather to a kind of negative epistemic disjunctivism combined with a form of property dualism (which Fine himself inclines towards).

In short, while the argument to follow assumes that experiential states, such as the negative epistemic state that constitutes the subject's hallucinatory experience in the bad case, are grounded in (obtain in virtue of) certain more basic (but also high-level) physical states, it does not thereby assume that physicalism is true. The objection that the argument to follow only applies to forms of negative epistemic disjunctivism that embrace a controversial physicalism thus gets no traction.[17]

(Note that while I will generally refer to the underlying states in which the relevant experiential episodes are putatively grounded as 'physical', this description is meant to leave open whether states are themselves grounded in something physical or else non-physical, and hence whether the states themselves are ultimately physical. Compare here the debate between the idealist or the panpsychist as against the physicalist: all sides might agree that there are certain high-level physical facts, involving subjects and brains say, but they will disagree as to whether those high-level physical facts are themselves grounded in certain mental ones.)

Now, so far, no trouble has been caused for the negative epistemic disjunctivist. After all, she can allow that Tim's being in the negative epistemic condition is psychologically primitive, without saying that this fact is primitive simpliciter.[18] The

[16] Notice that, in effect, this is simply a strengthening of the natural idea that the negative epistemic condition will locally supervene on some underlying brain state. Note too that it is hard to see why one would grant the widely held supervenience claim unless one thought it to be backed by some kind of grounding claim, given the plausible general presumption against brute supervenience (cf. Horgan 1993), and given that grounding relations, as Bader (2017) emphasises, are precisely the sorts of relations in terms of which supervenience relations can be justified and explained.

[17] And this is important, for in the recent literature, a number of naïve realists have explicitly formulated versions of naïve realism in non-physicalist terms, see e.g. Langsam (2011); Yetter-Chappell (2024). Some have even argued directly that naïve realism and physicalism look incompatible (Allen 2021). So, it is important that my argument does not only target physicalist views.

[18] N.b. Martin himself appears to hold a view along these lines. As he puts it: 'We should not want the obtaining of the negative epistemic condition…to be entirely brute. [For] this condition is one which can obtain in virtue of the normal operation of sensory areas of the human cortex in

problem, however, is that once this much is conceded, the negative epistemic disjunctivist ends up facing a 'revenge' screening off problem, which I will set out presently. As we will see, the core of the problem is that the phenomenological facts (instantiations of appearance properties) end up being constitutively determined in good cases once more, albeit this time not by independent psychological grounds, but rather by distinct (high-level) physical grounds located 'one level down'.

We know already that in the hallucinatory case, Tim has appearance property P in virtue of instantiating the negative epistemic kind of experience Kh. Thanks to our further assumption, therefore—namely, that there is some higher-level physical state in virtue of which the negative epistemic condition obtains—we know also that in the hallucinatory case, Tim has the negative epistemic kind of experience Kh in virtue of being in some underlying physical state. Again, this underlying physical state will likely be a *narrow* physical state (e.g. a brain state of a certain kind), whereby all that it takes to be in that kind of state is to be in the right sort of intrinsic physical condition. Indeed, this flows from our previous assumption that hallucinatory episodes are 'inner events', which 'demand nothing of the external world in order to be instantiated' (cf. §2). For ease of presentation, let us assume that this narrow intrinsic state is a brain state of a certain sort.

Recall now that Tom, in the perceptual case, is in the same intrinsic physical state as Tim in the hallucinatory case. This means that by re-applying **Generality**, we can now tell a *narrow physical story* as to why Tom (in the perceptual case) has the hallucinatory kind of experience: Tom has that experience in virtue of being in narrow brain state B. Crucially, however, it is also plausible to think that we can tell a *wide physical story* as to why Tom has the hallucinatory kind of experience in the good case. After all, Tom is also undergoing the *perceptual* kind of experience. But just natural as the assumption that hallucinatory episodes are grounded in narrow physical conditions is the parallel assumption that perceptual episodes are grounded in certain wide physical conditions. (Again, naïve realist experiences constitutively involve acquaintance with external items. Plausibly, therefore, the high-level physical grounds of Tom having the perceptual kind of experience will involve extrinsic relations between Tom (or his brain) and the external world.)

Let 'X' name whatever wide physical condition must be met for Tom to have the naïve realist kind of experience (the perceptual kind). Then recall that in the perceptual case, Tom instantiates the hallucinatory kind of experience Kh in virtue of instantiating the perceptual kind of experience Kp. The transitivity of grounding now implies that Tom instantiates the hallucinatory kind of experience in virtue of being in the wide physical condition that we are calling 'X'.

It is at this point that the screening off worry re-emerges. For we can now tell two distinct explanatory stories as to why Tom instantiates the hallucinatory kind of experience. On the one hand, he does so in virtue of being in the narrow physical state, namely in brain state B. On the other hand, however, he also does so in virtue of being in wide physical state X. The fact that Tom instantiates the hallucinatory kind of experience therefore appears to be overgrounded, albeit now just at the 'next level down'. Accordingly, since grounding is transitive, and since Tom instantiates the appearance property P in virtue of instantiating the hallucinatory

visual cognition…[So] one would hope that, for at least some such cases, why this condition obtains should be open to suitable explanation by further facts concerning the operation of the human visual system.' (2013: 46).

kind of experience, it follows that Tom's instantiation of the appearance property P is also overgrounded at that level, and by exactly the same physical states. Once more, therefore, Tom's instantiation of P looks constitutively overdetermined.[19]

A little bit more formally: Given the assumption that mental events have certain high-level physical grounds (an assumption, once again, which does not entail anything as strong as physicalism), we can say not only that Tim has appearance property P in virtue of instantiating the negative epistemic kind of experience Kh (as represented by claim (1) of the original argument in §2), but in addition that:

(6) Tim has an experience of kind Kh ← Tim is in narrow brain state B.

But now recall that Tom and Tim are in precisely the same intrinsic physical state. It follows that Tom, like Tim, is in narrow brain state B. Thus, we now get:

(7) Tom is in narrow brain state B.

By **Generality**, therefore, from (6) and (7) we get:

(8) Tom has an experience of kind Kh ← Tom is in narrow brain state B.

This is the *narrow physical story* as to why Tom has the hallucinatory kind of experience: Tom has that experience in virtue of being in narrow brain state B (and the same is true of Tim in the hallucinatory case). This narrow physical story, moreover, is *complete* in the following sense: the fact that Tom is in narrow brain state B serves to *fully ground* the fact that he is having an experience of kind Kh.

If naïve realism is true, however, it would appear that we can also tell a *wide physical story* as to why Tom has the hallucinatory kind of experience. Let us continue to let 'X' name whatever wide physical condition must be met for Tom to have the perceptual kind of experience. We then get:

(9) Tom has an experience of kind Kp ← Tom is in wide physical state X.

Recall now, however, that negative epistemic disjunctivism implies:

(5) Tom has an experience of kind Kh ← Tom has an experience of kind Kp.

Since grounding is transitive, from (5) and (9) we can infer:

(10) Tom has an experience of kind Kh ← Tom is in wide physical state X.

This is where the screening off problem re-emerges. The initial worry was that the conjunction of claims (3) and (4) represent a problematic case of constitutive overdetermination, with the fact that Tom has appearance property P being grounded

[19] Note too, whilst I'm calling the narrow and wide explanatory stories *physical*, it is quite compatible with all I'm saying that physicalism is false, and that instead some sort of idealism or panpsychism is true. Again, this all depends on what the ultimate grounds of the (so-called) physical facts involved in the narrow and wide physical explanatory stories turn out to be. The worry thus applies to negative epistemic disjunctivists whether physicalists or no.

twice over, once by the fact that he has the hallucinatory kind of experience, and then again by the fact that he has the perceptual kind of experience. The negative epistemic disjunctivist answered that worry by pointing out that given (5), we do not have constitutive overdetermination, but rather a harmless grounding chain. At this point, however, the problem of constitutive overdetermination has seemingly reappeared. For if both (8) and (10) are true, then the fact that Tom has the hallucinatory kind of experience is constitutively overdetermined at the physical level: it is explained once by Tom's being in narrow brain state B, and then again by his being in wide physical state X.[20] That is, (8) and (10) seem to give us:

(11) The fact that Tom has an experience of kind Kh is constitutively overdetermined by the distinct physical grounds that (a) Tom is in narrow brain state B and that (b) Tom is in wide physical state X.

Grounding, however, is transitive. Accordingly, given:

(3) Tom has appearance property P ← Tom has an experience of kind Kh.

...we can infer from (11) that:

(12) The fact that Tom has appearance property P is constitutively overdetermined by the distinct physical grounds that (a) Tom is in narrow brain state B and that (b) Tom is in wide physical state X.

The screening off worry has thus returned, albeit now at the 'next level down'. Negative epistemic disjunctivism, therefore, does not really solve the problem. It merely moves the bump in the rug (bumping it 'down a level').[21]

It might be thought that the negative epistemic disjunctivists can respond here just by insisting, as with the first screening off argument, that we do not really have constitutive overdetermination, but rather a harmless grounding chain. For could she not insist that Tom is in narrow brain state B *in virtue of* being in wide physical state X? In that case, we a have a grounding chain instead of overdetermination: Tom has appearance property P in virtue of being in narrow brain state B, and is in narrow brain state B in virtue of being in wide physical state X. This move, however, is not going to work, due to the fact that intrinsic properties cannot have

[20] These physical grounds are independent in that they are not themselves connected by a grounding relation. It may be true that being in narrow brain state B is a proper part of what it takes for someone to be in wide physical state X. (Brain states, after all, are partial enablers on naïve realist experiences occurring, as emphasized in Campbell 2010.) But this does not help undermine the sense that the conjunction of (8) and (10) results in troublesome constitutive overdetermination.

[21] The operative assumption here is that mental states are in general *fully* grounded in underlying physical states. A referee points out that certain 'hylomorphic' theories of the mind-body relation might agree that mental states are partially grounded in physical states while denying that any mental state is very fully grounded in some physical states, on the basis that each mental state is also partly grounded in some abstract or non-concrete entity (a "form"). Maybe so: but this is not going to help the negative epistemic disjunctivist. We'll still end up with the problem that good-case phenomenal character facts are overgrounded—explained one time by a wide physical story, and again by a narrow physical story. It's just that the wide physical story and the narrow physical story will also involve mention of abstract "formal" parts.

extrinsic grounds. Consider the property of *being in narrow brain state B*. Since B is a narrow brain state, this property is an intrinsic property. But *being in wide physical condition X* is a clearly an extrinsic property: to instantiate it, you have to stand in the right kinds of relations to items in the external world. Intrinsic properties, however, are never grounded in extrinsic properties; any property grounded in an extrinsic property is itself an extrinsic property (cf. Bader 2013). This move is therefore not available to the negative epistemic disjunctivist.[22]

Of course, as before, the negative epistemic disjunctivist could also try to avoid commitment to constitutive overdetermination by abandoning the idea that the perceptual kind of experience plays any role in explaining good case appearance facts. The whole explanatory story, even in the perceptual case, would then just be the 'narrow' story that goes as follows: Tom is in narrow brain state B, in virtue of which he is in the negative epistemic state, in virtue of which things appear to him as they do. Accepting this picture, however, would be tantamount to giving up on the central naïve realist commitment to the effect that in perceptual cases, the contours of consciousness are constitutively explained by acquaintance relations to external things. Again, that is not a happy place for the naïve realist to end up.[23,24]

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[22] What if we said that being in narrow state B is a partial ground of being in wide state X? I want to say that we would still end up with constitutive overdetermination. Indeed, this flows from the plausible idea that overdetermination occurs just when A is fully grounded in B and A is fully grounded in C, whereby neither B fully grounds C nor C fully grounds B (cf. fn. 13 above).

[23] The revenge screening off problem, in certain ways, resembles the traditional worry underlying the so-called causal argument, insofar as both rest on the observation that the same narrow brain state could be involved in both perception and a matching case of hallucination. There are however important differences. The casual argument aims to show that even in perception, one undergoes *only* the kind of experience involved in hallucination, since it would not be possible for the same narrow brain state to produce different effects across the cases. The revenge screening off problem, however, takes a different form. Here the worry is that we will end up with the relevant phenomenal fact (the instantiation of the relevant appearance property) being constitutively overdetermined at the physical level, thanks to the presence of both a narrow and a wide physical ground. (Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing me to clarify the difference between these two issues.)

[24] Note that the same basic problem here seems to arise for a range of structurally similar disjunctivist views, including those of Conduct (2012), Johnston (2004), and Logue (2013). Consider first Logue's (2013) view. In place of the negative epistemic view of hallucination, Logue recommends a representationalist view, on which hallucinatory experiences are representational states. In the bad case, the subject is in a certain representational state, and this fact is psychologically brute. In the perceptual case, meanwhile, the subject is also in that same representational state, but now in virtue of being in the more basic non-representational state that naïve realists take to constitute cases of genuine perception. Substitute in Logue's view of hallucinatory kind of experience for Martin's, therefore, and one arrives at the same problem as above. Likewise if one adopts the sort of view defended in Conduct (2012) and Johnston (2004). Like Logue and Martin, Conduct and Johnston accept that even in the perceptual case, one undergoes an experience of the hallucinatory kind. In the hallucinatory case, one's awareness is of a complex (structural) universal, and this awareness is psychologically brute. But in the perceptual case, this is not so, since the subject stands in the relation of acquaintance to the structural universal in virtue of being acquainted with the whole state of affairs of which it is part. Thus, in the perceptual case, one has the hallucinatory kind of experience in virtue of undergoing the perceptual kind of experience. Conduct and Johnston thus face precisely the same problem as Martin and Logue: all of these views, it seems, will have the implication that in in the good case, the relevant appearance fact is constitutively overdetermined at the physical level, once by the narrow physical story, and then again by the wide physical story.

Note too that, as before, the problem is going to arise not only in a naïve realist setting, but also for other disjunctivist views (e.g. disjunctivist intentionalism).

5 Replies

I now want to consider a few things the negative epistemic disjunctivist might say in response. Ultimately, I will argue that none of these responses really helps.

5.1 Rejecting the grounding assumption

One response available here is just to reject the grounding assumption in play, to the effect that the relevant experiential states have certain high-level physical grounds. In particular, if the negative epistemic disjunctivist were to insist that the negative epistemic condition, at least in bad cases, is entirely (not just psychologically) brute, she could block the revenge screening off problem at its source.

There are three points I want to make. The first is to stress that the relevant grounding assumption here really is a rather weak. We are not saying that mental events *are* physical events, or can be reduced to such events. We are saying only that mental events have certain high-level physical grounds, whereby those grounds may yet in turn have certain further grounds, perhaps on physicalist or else perhaps on idealist or on panpsychist lines. To deny this assumption, therefore, is to go for the rather radical view that hallucinatory experiences are simply ungrounded, and hence are fundamental ingredients of reality. This is of course a view that one can take, but I imagine it will not be attractive to many. It would moreover be a serious cost to the theory if negative epistemic disjunctivism could solve the screening off problem only by requiring us to treat mental events as fundamental in this way.[25,26]

The second point is that even if negative epistemic disjunctivists reject the grounding assumption, they still appear to be in trouble. Suppose that there is no underlying brain state in virtue of which Tim, in the bad case, has an experience of the hallucinatory kind, Kh. It presumably follows that there is no deeper fact whatsoever in virtue of which Tim has this experience; that is, the fact that Tim is in the relevant negative epistemic state will be fundamental or brute. However, there will at least be a physical *cause* of this brute experiential state, namely, the narrow brain state that we have been calling B. But now consider the familiar 'same cause, same effect principle', encountered already in §2. On the present response, we know that B causes, in the bad case, a *fundamental instance* of hallucinatory kind Kh, i.e. a token experience of that type that is ungrounded. Given that Tom in the good case is in the same local brain state as Tim in the bad case, an application of our principle will therefore seemingly imply that Tom, too, is caused (by local brain

[25] Cf. Martin's (2004: 43) remarks about adopting transcendental idealism means of answering the causal argument against naïve realism. Moves like these are of course available, but they are costly, and one could be forgiven for thinking that disjunctivists should rather look elsewhere.

[26] Schaffer (forthcoming) describes property dualism as the view that mental states and events are wholly ungrounded and hence fundamental (cf. Moran 2023a, 2023b). But this is arguably too strong: a property dualist need only insist that mental events and states, while being grounded in the physical, are not themselves physical events, and do not reduce to or consist in physical events. Cf. here Bader (forthcoming), Blaesi (2022); Goff (2017: ch. 1); Nida-Rümelin & O'Conaill (manuscript); Rhydén (2022). (Compare the situation in the analogous meta-ethics debate. Both naturalists and non-naturalists end to agree that then normative is grounded in the natural. The question is about how exactly the details go, and whether the way in which the normative is grounded in the natural entails that normative facts in some sense just are mere natural facts.)

state B) to instantiate *a fundamental instance of kind Kh* (i.e. an instance of Kh that is ungrounded). We also know, however, that Tom instantiates a non-fundamental instance of kind Kh, namely a token experience of kind Kh instantiated in virtue of the more basic perceptual (naïve realist) kind of experience. But now, we end up with *two* instances of the hallucinatory kind of experience in the perceptual case: one which is fundamental and ungrounded, and one which is grounded. But that means we have twice as much material as we need to explain the relevant phenomenological facts. So once again, a screening off worry rears its head.[27,28]

We might note also a further difficulty, and this is the third point I want to make. As we have seen, if one denies that in the hallucinatory case, the fact that Tim has an experience of kind Kh is grounded in anything physical, one seems forced to say that this fact is ungrounded. But we know that in the good case, Tom's possession of that same experiential kind is not ungrounded, since he instantiates that kind in virtue of instantiating the perceptual kind. Yet one might wonder if this is a coherent position. For it is a plausible general principle that a given experiential kind is either fundamental or it isn't. In general, when it comes to properties, relations and kinds, either the instances of the relevant predicable are fundamental and ungrounded, or they are not. It cannot be, therefore, that some instances of kind K are fundamental whereas others are non-fundamental. If one instances of K is fundamental, then it lies in the nature of that kind that its instances will be that way, and hence all of its instances must be fundamental.[29] Consequently, it is doubtful whether the negative epistemic disjunctivist, if she pursues the strategy that we are considering, really ends up with a coherent view.

5.2 Identity not ground?

The second response involves objecting to my starting assumption that negative epistemic disjunctivism implies that in hallucination, the relevant appearance properties are *grounded* in facts about the kind of experience the subject undergoes. Focus again on our example involving Tim. I said that:

(1) Tim has appearance property P ← Tim has an experience of kind Kh.

But this assumes that on negative epistemic disjunctivism, bad case appearance facts like the one on the 'left' of (1) are distinct from, but *grounded in*, negative epistemic facts, such as the fact on the 'right'. It might be said, however, that this is not the view, since, for negative epistemic disjunctivists, the claims on the 'left' and the 'right' of (1) are actually (reductively) identical. That is, it might be said that on that view, *what it is* to have an experience of such-and-such a character *just is* to be in a state reflectively indiscriminable from a corresponding case of perception (this

[27] Thanks to a referee for pointing out an argument along these lines. Cf. also Ivanov (2022).

[28] Might it not be replied that although narrow brain state B causes a fundamental instance of experiential kind Kh in the bad case, it only causes a non-fundamental instance in the good case? The trouble here is that this begs the question: if B was causally sufficient to produce a fundamental instance of Kh in the bad case, why should it not be so in the good case as well?

[29] The issues here get rather complicated rather quicky. For arguments to the effect that universals (kinds, properties) cannot be variably fundamental see Bader (2017) and Wildman (2018).

being what Martin's claim that on his view, the account of *experience in general* is to be given in negative epistemic terms, really comes down to).

I grant that there is some textual basis for this reading. I grant also that this version of the view also answers the screening off problem, at least in its original form, or rather prevents it from arising. For on this version of the view, it isn't that we have a single type of appearance fact explained in the good case by the naïve realist type of experience and in the bad case by the negative epistemic condition. Rather, the appearance fact is *analysed* as the obtaining of the negative epistemic condition. In the good case, the obtaining of this condition is then explained in terms of the subject having the naïve realist kind of experience, i.e. in terms of acquaintance with external things. In the bad case, meanwhile, the obtaining of the negative epistemic condition (which, once more, is on the present view identical with the appearance fact) is then left as (psychologically) brute.

What I deny, however, is that this helps remove the 'revenge' problem explicated in §4. This can be seen if we work through the details like so.

Begin with:

(1') Tim has appearance property P = Tim has an experience of kind Kh.

...where (1') holds because:

(1*) Having appearance property P *just is* having an experience of kind Kh.

Recall now that we also get, from **Narrow Supervenience**, the following, namely, that even in the perceptual case, Tom has an experience of the hallucinatory kind:

(2) Tom has an experience of kind Kh.

Importantly, what we do *not* now get is:

(3) Tom has appearance property ← Tom has an experience of kind Kh.

For, previously, we reached this conclusion by drawing on (1) and (2) together with **Generality.** However, since grounding is irreflexive, claim (1') above implies:

¬ (1) Tim has appearance property P ← Tim has an experience of kind Kh

Therefore, the screening off problem does not arise, even despite the naïve realist's commitment to:

(4) Tom has appearance property P ← Tom has an experience of kind Kp.

Again, the screening off problem, as originally presented, was the problem that (3) and (4) *taken together* give rise to problematic overdetermination. Since we no longer have claim (3), it is clear that this problem, at least, has disappeared.

The trouble, however, is that nothing in the rest of the argument from §4 changes, except that we can simply skip the final step. To see this, note that the current understanding of negative epistemic disjunctivism still implies:

(5) Tom has experience of kind Kh ← Tom has an experience of kind Kp.

Next, note that we can now go on to reason, exactly as we did before, from (6) to (7) to (8), and then from (9) to (10), and then from (8) and (10) to:

(11) The fact that Tom has an experience of kind Kh is constitutively overdetermined by the distinct physical grounds that (a) Tom is in narrow brain state B and that (b) Tom is in wide physical state X.

Previously, we got from (11) to the final claim, (12), via relying on the transitivity of grounding. In the present context, however, this step is not required. This is because, given claim (1') (and Leibniz's Law), claim (11) immediately implies:

(12) The fact that Tom has appearance property P is constitutively overdetermined by the distinct physical grounds that (a) Tom is in narrow brain state B and that (b) Tom is in wide physical state X.

Yet, this is precisely the problematic conclusion that constitutes the revenge screening off problem set out in §4 above. Accordingly, no progress has been made.

5.3 Rejecting Generality?

In §4, I represented the negative epistemic disjunctivist as accepting this principle:

Generality: If some (possible) object *a* is F wholly in virtue of being G, then, if any (possible) object *b* is G, *b* is F wholly virtue of being G.

I also claimed that, partly for this reason, the negative epistemic disjunctivist will accept the following stage of the first screening off argument, which moves from:

(1) Tim has appearance property P ← Tim has an experience of kind Kh.

...via **Narrow Supervenience**, to:

(2) Tom has an experience of kind Kh.

And then, via **Generality**, to:

(3) Tom has appearance property P ← Tom has an experience of kind Kh.

Again, it is (3) that generates the screening off problem, given the naïve realist's commitment to:

(4) Tom has appearance property P ← Tom has an experience of kind Kp.

For again, it appears (prima facie) that (3) and (4) combined constitute a problematic case of constitutive overdetermination.

However, there is textual basis for thinking that Martin, at least, rejects **Generality**, and that this is key to understanding his position. I have in mind the following passage discussing a supposedly analogous case of pre-emption:

> If my bullet pierces the [victim's] heart before yours, then the victim is killed by me, even if in a parallel case without my bullet but still with yours, the victim would still have died. The fact that your bullet is present in both cases where the same effect occurs does not show that it must be the cause in both. Our present example indicates that there are parallel cases to pre-emption in the case of explanation...[W]hat seems key is the thought that the explanatory properties of the common property are derivable *a priori* from the special property. We can tell that the common property must be correlated with the outcome just from knowing what the special property can otherwise explain....So we may conclude that, as with cases of pre-emption, cases of inherited or dependent explanatory potential offer us exceptions to the general model of common properties screening off special ones. (Martin 2004: 70)

There, the central idea appears to be that even if the hallucinatory kind of experience plays an explanatory role in the hallucinatory case, its presence in the perceptual case does not entail that it plays any role there in explaining phenomenology. *The hallucinatory kind might be present in both cases, but it performs an explanatory role in relation to phenomenology only in one of them.)

In other words, the suggestion appears to be this. Grant that (1) is true: things appear to Tim (in the hallucinatory case) as they do because he is in the negative epistemic condition. And grant that (2) is true: Tom (in the perceptual case) is also in that same negative epistemic condition (i.e. the same negative epistemic state as Tim). On the present view, while (1) and (2) are both the case, it does not yet follow that things appear to Tom as they do *because* he is in that negative epistemic condition. Things appear to Tom as they do, as per (4), because he is acquainted with a real tomato. While the hallucinatory kind of experience is *present* in the good case, it plays, in that context, no explanatory (grounding) role. So (3) does not in fact follow from (1) and (2), and therefore **Generality** (in this instance) is false.

If this is the right way to understand the negative epistemic disjunctivist, then it seems clear that the 'revenge' screening off problem is not going to arise. The problem, however, is that this interpretation of the negative epistemic disjunctivist does not leave us with a compelling answer to the first screening off problem.

First, **Generality** seems extremely plausible, and so the present response to the seems very hard to swallow.[30] Second, accepting negative epistemic disjunctivism, contrary to what the above-mentioned passage from Martin might suggest, does not seem to make the rejection of **Generality** any more palatable. Grant that the explanatory potential of the hallucinatory kind of experience (of the negative epistemic condition) is 'dependent' on the perceptual kind of experience (on the naïve realist condition) having the explanatory powers it does, in that if the naïve realist experience lacked the power to constitutively explain appearance properties like P, then the hallucinatory kind of experience would also lack that power. It is, I submit, entirely opaque why this claim should make it any more plausible to think that the relevant instance of **Generality** is false, i.e. to claim that (1) and (2) are true but (3)

[30] Various authors in the grounding literature have emphasised that constitutive explanation appears to involve precisely the robust kind of generality that **Generality** predicts. See for example Audi (2012: 103-104); deRosset (2010, 2013); Rosen (2010, 2015); and Wilsch (2015). That said see Moran (2018, 2022) for an attempt to explain how **Generality** might be rejected.

is not. I conclude, therefore, that this alternate response to the screening off problem, which involves rejecting the move from (1) and (2) to (3), and so rejecting **Generality**, is problematic, not because it faces a 'revenge' screening off problem, but rather because does not provide a satisfactory answer to the original screening off problem in the first place.

6 Conclusion

Martin's case for negative epistemic disjunctivism has been enormously influential in the perception literature, so much so that current orthodoxy has it that disjunctivists must be negative epistemic disjunctivists if they are to resolve the screening off problem and end up with a coherent view. However, the present paper establishes that negative epistemic disjunctivism does not in fact solve the screening off problem, at least not in its full generality: while it might solve the problem in its original form, it faces a 'revenge' screening off problem that is equally as troubling. In particular, the negative epistemic disjunctivist still ends up with the worry that the appearance facts in good cases are constitutively overdetermined, albeit at the physical rather than the mental level. The result, therefore, is that current orthodoxy in the perception literature must be revised. Adopting negative epistemic disjunctivist not the answer to the screening off problem, and hence disjunctivists must find a different strategy for dealing with that challenge.

As for the right way to solve the screening off problem, this is left open here. My own view is that disjunctivists should re-examine their commitment to **Narrow Supervenience**, and look instead to adopt a 'restrictivist' form of disjunctivism, according to which experiences of the hallucinatory kind never occur in the perceptual case.[31] This would then enable disjunctivists to cut off the screening off argument at its source. Developing and defending this style of response, however, is a project to be pursued elsewhere. Our conclusion here is only that negative epistemic disjunctivism fails to adequately solve the screening off problem, and hence that disjunctivists must look elsewhere if they are to resolve that issue.[32]

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[31] Views on these lines have been advocated by Ivanov (2022), Johnston (manuscript), and Moran (2019, 2024). Cf. Foster (2000); Pautz (manuscript); Pitcher (1979: 18); Snowdon (2005).

[32] Perhaps it would even be possible to modify the negative epistemic disjunctivist account of hallucination, so that the resulting view is compatible with restrictivism. In that case, our argument here does not even imply that negative epistemic disjunctivism must be wholly rejected, but rather only that it does not seem to have the resources to solve the screening off problem in full.

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