

## Imperfect perception

In this programmatic talk, I outline an approach to modelling perceptual diversity. My starting point are sensory dysfunctions and impairments, such as vision loss and colour-blindness, but also less well-known conditions such as hyperacusis, which causes sounds to be experienced as unbearably loud, and parosmia, where familiar things smell distorted and disgusting. Experiences resulting from these conditions may be significantly different in qualitative character from those typically enjoyed by perceivers we consider normal. However, like 'normal' perceptual experiences, they involve a perceptual connection to the sensible environment – they are often neither mere absences of perception nor hallucinations. Appealing to two case studies from different sense modalities, I will argue that they are not best understood as illusions either, but are often instances of genuine perception.

If experiences arising from sensory dysfunctions and impairments are genuine perceptions rather than non-perceptual or illusory experiences, how can we explain their difference from the widespread, non-dysfunctional, subtle perceptual variations we find within normal perception? On the model I sketch, perceptual experiences involving a connection with the environment belong to a spectrum from paradigmatic 'normal' perception to experiences due to non-dysfunctional variation (e.g. mild myopia, or slight differences in olfactory sensitivity) to some of the experiences arising in severe sensory impairments.

We can classify some of the experiences on the spectrum as deficient, distorted, illusory, or otherwise inferior with respect to the norm, but an explanation of this classification is not to be found in the metaphysics of perception. Appealing to ideas from the philosophy of disorders and disabilities, I will propose that our classifications are context- and interest-dependent rather than tied to the metaphysics of experience, and are variably used to mark the epistemic import of an experience, its affective dimension, its harmful impact, or simply its difference with respect to the subject's past experiences or those of perceivers classified as normal.