



Colloquium lecture by Dr. Krzysztof Dołęga

What makes perception hot?

A growing body of work within psychology suggests that perceptual experiences can not only produce emotional responses or evaluative judgements, but are themselves affectively colored or valenced. In other words, our perceptual experiences are not neutral, but laden with varying degrees (and perhaps kinds) of value.

Most authors try to capture this affective aspect of perceptual phenomenology in intentional terms and assume that perceptual valence result from differences in the *contents* of perceptual experiences. However, proponents of the content view disagree whether the affective character of experiences depends on representations with *evaluative* content (Bain 2013; Carruthers 2018) or representations with *imperative* content (Klein 2015; Barlassina & Hayward 2019; Martínez 2022). The view also suffers from a fairly obvious objection: two subjects can accurately represent the same object yet have opposing experiences in regard to its valence. A food item that looks tasty and enticing to me can seem disgusting and off-putting to someone else, suggesting that what distinguishes the two experiences is not a difference in *what* is perceived, but in *how* it is perceived. This argument motivates the competing view, according to which differences in valence of perceptual experiences result not from differences in content, but from additional *attitudes* which are bound or fused with sensory representations (de Vignemont 2021; Jacobson 2021). However, the downside of this position is that it is committed to claim that perceptual valence is a *sui generis* modality that is distinct, yet inseparable, from the contents of perceptual experiences.

In this talk, I aim to motivate a novel and yet unexplored alternative to the received accounts. This radical version of the attitude approach to perceptual valence proposes that the affective character of experiences is identified with the *causal-functional properties* of the *vehicles* of perceptual representations, and not with additional attitudes layered onto such representations. This view is not only supported by growing empirical literature favoring modality specific encodings of perceptual valence, but is also compatible with prominent conceptual proposals about the nature of phenomenal properties (Block 1996; Pappineau 2014) and the function of conscious experience more generally (Cleeremans & Tallon-Baudry 2022). Finally, identifying perceptual valence with the properties of the vehicles of perceptual content is well poised to stimulate empirical research, as it suggests that the same content can be represented by functionally and effectively different assemblies of brain networks to opposing behavioral effects.

Dr. Krzysztof Dołęga

Université Libre de Bruxelles



**This lecture takes place at Liebiggasse 5, 1010 Vienna,
Lecture Hall G 2nd floor and will be streamed.**

Thursday, October 12, 2023; 3pm