Title: Perception can of course come in degrees, but so what?

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Abstract: 1.25

For any question of the form ""Does perception have X feature?"", that question can either mean:

a. Must perception, in any conceptually possible creature, have feature X?

b. Do humans, in fact, have a perceptual system such that it has feature X?

And so with respect to such a feature X (usually something having to do with representational format or representational content), we have four possible positions:

1. Perception always has X.

2. Perception has X in (conceptually possible) non-humans, but not in humans.

3. Perception has X in humans, but not in non-humans.

4. Perception never has X.

To prove claims like (1), (2), or (4), your argument can't rely on empirical data about humans. If it just happens to be the case that human perception has (or does not not have feature X), that can't establish anything about perception in other creatures, or about perception *in general*.

If you want to prove a claim like (3), there are two important things notice:

i. (3) is not a claim about the nature of perception itself, and so is less interesting than we might have thought.

ii. To argue for (3), you *still* need some non-empirical, a priori criterion for distinguishing the truly perceptual brain states from the non-perceptual (pre-perceptual or cognitive) brain states. But if we already have such an a priori criterion, we must also already be in a position to know the answer about ""the nature of perception itself""!

And so debates about perceptual content or perceptual format that rely on empirical data are methodologically confused.