
Qualia and teleological explanation: a solipsistic account of action.

Pietak Christophe*¹

¹Université de Varsovie, École doctorale des humanités – Pologne

Résumé

The purpose of my presentation is to show what are the implications of a plausible interpretation of the current debate in philosophy of mind revolving around the ontological status of qualia for the philosophy of action.

In the first part, I will briefly present the core of the narrative according to which there are only two acceptable alternatives regarding qualia: illusionism and property dualism (Frankish 2017, 14-49). If it is true we have either to deny the existence of qualia or accept a robust account of qualia incompatible with the ontological commitments of physicalism. Therefore, if we don't want to deny what seems to be obvious, we should use the thesis about the existence of qualia as a starting point for arguing in favor of a metaphysical worldview constituting an alternative to physicalism.

In the second part, I will try to illustrate the conclusion of my first point by combining the robust account of qualia with a teleological account of action. According to the view emerging from this combination, qualia are teleological reasons for a certain kind of action. This kind of action inherits all the properties of qualia understood in the robust sense: they are irreducibly subjective and unexplainable from a third person point of view. I will further argue that this kind of action ought to be identified with what we usually mean – in a non-technical sense – when we call some actions "idiosyncratic" or "irrational".

In the third part, I will show how this account of action: a) could help to clarify some ambiguities in Donal Davidson's account of irrational actions (Davidson 2004, 169-189) b) provide a theoretical basis for David Chalmers's proposition that qualia are explanatory, but not causally irrelevant to actions (Chalmers 1996, 150-161) c) provide a theoretical basis for a new account of free will grounded on the concept of a "causation without laws" recently developed in the context of studies on Henry Bergson (Dolbeault 2016, 317-341).

References:

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*Intervenant

Mots-Clés: qualia, illusionism, rationality