Review of: "A Calculus of Qualia"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This is an interesting idea. There are nonetheless two difficult and crucial issues that are simply not addressed. Further, if there are considered, there is no easy way to dismiss the problems qualations would have to face.

First, are qualia properties or tropes (abstract particulars)? Eros Carvalho and me have argued that they are qualitons, tropes (Acta Analytica, 2012). If they are, qualations make little sense as the very identity between qualia cannot be established by qualia themselves. However, if qualia are properties, as often they are conceived to be, they appear in qualations only by means of symbols such as those red and blue squares. Those squares are not properties (qualia), they can at most express or denote properties; as symbols, they don't have the quale of the sensation and the difficulties pointed out in section 2.1 of the papers (in sentences (1) to (4)) quickly reappear. It seems to me that there is no room for qualations either if qualia are tropes or if they are properties. In the latter case, properties as such cannot genuinely appear in a qualation.

Second, could sensations really be manipulated in a way similar to that we use to manipulate symbols? What could it mean to have a red square multiplied by a blue square? There could be a truthful answer to this questions only to the extent that blue and red are concepts - but I understand that the idea of a qualation is that their components escape conceptualization. If they are not concepts, apart from the risk that qualations fall in the myth of the Given, anything could result from a multiplication (or any operation) between a red and blue square. A sensation (or a quale) is entailed by nothing - as a warm day is not entailed by a preceding cold day, no matter how many times this sequence of days take place. Perhaps there is a way to derive a logical calculus from the concepts of colors, from a logic space of colors - and even from the logical space of sensations. This would not be done through qualations, but through ordinary equations (or well formed formulae of a symbolic system). What is more, such a calculus would also have to face nontrivial difficulties related to the remarks Wittgenstein makes concerning sensations and rules in the Investigations. Ironically, I reckon this second issue is hinted at by the first sentence of comment 2.E in the paper that reads: “The *copyright* of this paper must include actual red.”