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MAXIM GORBACHEV*

THE RESULT OF CONSISTENT PHYSICALISM**

THE ILLUSIONISM OF KEITH FRANKISH

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INTRODUCTION

Since David Chalmers distinguished the hard problem of consciousness from easy problems (Chalmers, 1995), the discussion of the consciousness in philosophy acquired all the key features without that we cannot imagine it today. It found the central question to be answered in order to solve the hard problem: why is there subjective experience at all? Keith Frankish — an Honorary Professor in the Philosophy Department at the University of Sheffield, UK, a Visiting Research Fellow with The Open University, UK, and an Adjunct Professor with the Brain and Mind Programme at the University of Crete — makes an attempt in the book "Illusionism as a theory of consciousness" (Frankish, ed., 2017) to replace the hard problem with the illusion problem — the problem of explaining how the illusion of phenomenality arises. So, the main point of illusionists is that phenomenal consciousness is an introspective illusion. This approach is not a new one: the first wave of identity theorist favored it and now it is supported by such respectable philosophers of mind as Daniel Dennett, Derk Pereboom, Nicholas Humphrey and Georges Rey. However, it is still widely considered as a marginal position. Realist account is much more common for physicalist tradition (to which Keith Frankish belongs to).

The issue focuses on the target article written by Keith Frankish, in which he introduces illusionism. The rest of the book consists of commentaries on the target article. These commentaries are made by a wide range of researchers (I will name them in further parts of the present review) who

*Maxim Gorbachev, PhD Student, Visiting Lecturer; National Research University Higher School of Economics (Moscow, Russia), mgorbachev@hse.ru, ORCID: 0000-0002-8374-5889.

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take different positions on the illusionism. It allows exploring illusionism from different perspectives and focusing both on its strong and weak points. This exciting book will be interesting for all who find themselves concerned with the philosophy of mind. If there is a chance for illusionism to be true, we should take it seriously and consider all options it can offer.

ILLUSIONISM AS A THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Due to the book structure, I will start from the target article consideration and then I will move to commentaries.¹ Frankish defines the illusionist programme indicating the key ideas of it, outlines why it is the most preferable position among other options and defends it against some common objections.

Illusionism is one of three options to address the problem of phenomenal consciousness (PC). Two of them — conservative and radical realism — consider phenomenal properties of conscious experience to be real. Following the former includes preservation of current scientific paradigm. PC is expected to be explained within the terms and physics forces known to us. While the latter implies a significant shift in science and postulation of some forces radically different from that we are familiar with. The third option is to say that phenomenality is illusory. In this case, we deny that phenomenal experience is real — private, ineffable, intrinsic, qualitative — and focus on the explanation of its appearance (Frankish, ed., 2017). In other words, phenomenal qualities are misrepresentations of our physical states that are lack of phenomenality via introspective representational mechanisms. These physical states are experiences in a functional sense. Despite am not so physicalistically oriented as Frankish is, I am often ready to adopt his view. I agree with one of the core ideas that there is no phenomenality in physics. As well as I agree that the world is lack of many of those properties that we used to call phenomenal. However, I tend to think we really have these appearances. I admit preliminary the possibility of strong demand for the strong correspondence between PC and physical states to be the key reason for our possible disagreements. Further, I will probably focus more on the gaps and weaknesses of introduced illusionism, taking into account all its advantages as an option. It seems to me it would be more beneficial.

One of the most common objections to illusionism appears at this very level: is there a gap between reality and appearance while we speak about

¹I use an electronic version of the book which provides no possibility to verify the page number. It is still possible to navigate according to the author cited.

consciousness? I would even move the accent and ask, should we think of phenomenal experiences of phenomenal feels like there has to be something they actually are? Frankish would answer positively because he distinguishes these feels or what-it-is-likenesses, which are given to us via introspection, and experience. As Frankish puts it, he uses

term “experience” in a functional sense, for the mental states that are the direct output of sensory systems. In this sense, it is not definitional that experiences are phenomenally conscious (Frankish, ed., 2017).

However, it seems puzzling as I am not sure I understand correctly what allows us to name such states as mental. If mentality does not imply at least an appearance of phenomenality, then it can mean that a robot vacuum cleaner has experience. But I would suppose Frankish didn't mean it. Instead, he meant that experiences do not need to be phenomenally conscious or to have phenomenal properties to seem to us as they are and they have. Despite I got the idea I can hardly see what a real phenomenality would be. If PC is an introspective illusion, which is made because of distorting introspective mechanisms (ibid.), we should explain what PC is but an illusion before trying to explain our disposition to consider our experiences as phenomenal. In other words what is phenomenal consciousness, if it is not illusive? It seems to me like Frankish does not give an answer. The lack of it has consequences across the whole book as numerous misunderstandings and objections to illusionism are based on the differences in the very first step to the problem of PC: if one treats PC as an appearance then it can hardly turn out to be illusive. And Frankish himself, I guess, is not in favor of postulating of another level of illusion: the illusion of illusion of phenomenality. Nevertheless, clarifications on the very notion of PC seem not sufficient and even the commentators use it differently, as we will see further.

Besides phenomenal properties that illusionism considers as not real, Frankish introduces quasi-phenomenal ones that are physical properties we misrepresent through introspection as phenomenal. Probably it contributes to clarifying what PC need to be to be non-illusive: those physical properties themselves have to possess phenomenal, qualitative side. Although it sounds like a variation of panpsychism, which is not suitable not only for Frankish but also for many those who stick to the realist position in terms of PC.

As an analogy to illusion of PC Frankish suggests Humphrey's Gregudrum (Humphrey, 2011). It looks like an ungainly construction from most perspectives, but from the right angle it looks like a solid Penrose triangle, which is an impossible object. This curious analogy aimed to show that if

we are able to be mistaken in such cases, we can also be mistaken about our phenomenal experience. Though this and other analogies clarify the illusionist position that introspection delivers “partial, distorted of view of our experiences, misrepresenting complex physical features as simple phenomenal ones” (Frankish, ed., 2017), I find the range of examples quite limited as there are no such about those experiences that are not bounded to the external world. Presumably the analysis of such examples as having a desire, an image of a lemon or thinking about democracy would lead Keith Frankish to the same conclusion — we misrepresent the states of our brain as phenomenal what-it-is-like to have a desire, an image or to think. Still, the analogies introduced in the target article bring us also to the important thought that PC illusion is so strong that we do not cease making all those phenomenal judgements if we admit that they have an illusive nature. Like with Müller-Lyer illusion: we continue to be under it even if we know its nature.

Frankish stresses that we should distinguish illusionism from outward-looking illusionism, grand illusion and eliminativism. First, he insists we misrepresent our *experience* as having phenomenal properties via introspection not external objects. However, he emphasizes we definitely implement the result of that misrepresentation on these objects. Second, illusionism concerns the nature of conscious experience not its extent. Third, illusionists do not deny the existence of conscious experience; they deny the existence of its phenomenal properties.

One of the key part for understanding illusionism connected with zombie argument and what-it-is-likeness. If the only thing zombies lack of is PC, Frankish says, we are zombies technically (ibid.). However, taking into account that we are phenomenal zombies according to illusionism and that we still have a kind of inner life, Frankish concludes it is not obvious that zombies will lack of inner life as they have the same introspective mechanisms and sensory systems as we are (ibid.). The one step which allows comparing us with zombies is shifting the what-it-is-like talk from the experience itself, which is like something because of phenomenal properties it has, to functional sense. Experience is like something for a creature if it is aware of them in a functional sense. From this perspective zombies have PC, which is illusory as ours, as they have all those functional mechanisms that are dependent on physical structure. It is not easy to prove this shift as well as the way Frankish tries to fight the zombie argument. That is why he introduces the problem of explanation of the very possibility of phenomenality illusion and mechanisms involved in the positioning us in such a disposition to

judge we are phenomenally conscious calling it the illusion problem. And—as he reasonably emphasizes—“it would be begging the question against illusionism to assume it cannot be solved” (Frankish, ed., 2017).

Nevertheless, what is done with zombie argument by illusionism is not a counterargument as I see it. The argument is built on the basis of the assumption that such creatures can exist. Illusionists make an opposite assumption, which is a part of their argumentation but contributes little to denying zombie argument.

Motivating illusionism Frankish shows its advantages over radical and conservative realism. So, the first one brings the need for significant shifts in science and we do not actually know what should be the content of these shifts. Moreover, in terms of radical realism, consciousness is in danger of being an epiphenomenon as faced with inability to explain its effectiveness in the world closed under causation. Though the reason to adopt the argument explicitly connected to the appearance that our world is really closed under physical causation, it can be an advantage of illusionism.

The second one can easily collapse into illusionism if it does not suggest a notion of phenomenality stronger than quasi-phenomenality proposed by Frankish, which is misrepresented as having phenomenal qualities. It seems to be a task which is hardly can be managed without going back to radical realism. I would say at this stage illusionism is the best option for conservative realists as probably they are actually illusionists. Such thought is the consequence of the vague notion of phenomenality suggested in the target article and the lack of explanation of what it is to be non-illusory for PC. Probably what is real for a conservative realist is illusion for illusionist because illusion is real.

In addition, there is a puzzling claim—according to Frankish

it may be true that perceptual awareness of the physical vehicles of experience would create the sense that experiences have an intrinsic quality. But this is an explanation of quasi-phenomenal properties, not phenomenal properties (ibid.).

It is puzzling in a double sense. First, it seems again that he calls quasi-phenomenal properties what conservative realists call phenomenal, as he implicitly introduces very high requirements to the latter. Second, I and probably many others would say the mentioned perceptual awareness is actually PC, which also allows us to be acquainted with those phenomenal appearances that do not have to be more real and more physical to be phenomenal ones.

In a couple of passages in favor of illusionism Frankish argues

if people's claims and beliefs about something (God, say, or UFOs) can be fully explained as arising from causes having no connection with the thing itself, then this is a reason for... regarding the thing as illusory (Frankish, ed., 2017).

The claim is reasonable but what allows me to have a belief at all? Or claims and beliefs are understood in a functional sense as some physical states and mechanisms? Unfortunately, we are left with no answer.

Another argument consists of the statement that our representations are non-veridical as we have no instruments for checking accuracy of our introspection (*ibid.*). This becomes the reason to place the possibility of the illusory nature of PC. Even so, I have a strong intuition that illusion is illusory compared to the reality of physical states veridicality of which can be verified with third-person perspective. In terms of such comparison, phenomenal properties are illusory. But I am not sure the lack of such accessibility is enough to make such a strong statement which — if is done without some clarifications — sounds stunning.

Then the target article moves to respond to some common objections to illusionism, among which there are some of proposed here earlier. These are denying data, no appearance-reality gap, the audience of an illusion and what is represented as phenomenality if there is no one. The first presents PC as data itself, which is unreasonably denied by illusionists. Defending his view from this objection, Frankish mentions that illusionists agree that the existence of phenomenal properties as intentional objects is a datum (*ibid.*). However, these objects are not real as properties of brain states and if a realist is to maintain PC is a datum, she has to postulate a special kind of access to it, which would justify the inability to make an error. I find this passage promising as it shows that Frankish would admit phenomenal properties are real if they were real properties of our brain states. At the same time, many PC realists could agree with presenting phenomenality as something which is lack of such reality. Here Frankish notes the significant difference between introspective subjectivity — introspective awareness of our experience generated with representational mechanisms (illusionists accept it) — and intrinsic subjectivity — “subjective dimension that is not the product of introspective mechanisms but arises simply from our being the things we are” (*ibid.*). The latter is, Frankish claims, mysterious and not easier than illusionism to explain.

This brings us to the second objection — there is no gap between reality and appearance in terms of consciousness (Searle, 1997). On the one hand, illusionists can admit that there is no subjective difference between veridical

and non-veridical introspective representation (Frankish, ed., 2017). On the other hand, they admit the very possibility of a mistake just because phenomenal feels are the result of implementing distorting introspective representational mechanisms on our experiences that are understood in a functional sense what assumes them to be a kind of physical states. Unfortunately, this argument is affected by the lack of various examples of what we used to call phenomenal feels. I find it crucial here to consider such experiences as “I like this song”, “I am frightened of this dog” or “I imagined a red car”. One can hardly identify the borders of illusionism without applying to such cases.

Thirdly, one might ask who is under illusion. Illusionists do not need to posit a Cartesian theater as an “arena where PC illusion is represented” (ibid.). They can introduce something like an inner display composed of some physical processes representing non-phenomenal states as phenomenal ones. Though it is an option, this respond misses the importance of what allows us to have — illusory or not — what-it-is-like experience. If illusionism offers to replace the hard problem of consciousness with the illusion problem, it should notice the content of the hard problem more precisely. I would claim the main question to answer is not whether phenomenal qualities are actually misrepresented physical ones or how our experiences are accessible to us. As I see the hard problem, its main part is to explain why I am aware of anything. This can be argued but I would say there is a flow of PC besides specific phenomenal experiences — contrary to what Hume claimed (Hume, 1896) — which is the very thing that makes it possible to have particular experiences considered as phenomenal — illusory or not.

Illusionists replace the hard problem with the illusion problem, which anticipates the fourth objection.

If there are no phenomenal properties, how do we represent them? How do we acquire phenomenal concepts, and how do these concepts capture the richness of phenomenality? (Frankish, ed., 2017).

They can be the result of simple physical properties acquired via introspection or a mixture of such acquiring with theorizing about it depending on individual theoretical concepts, culture and etc. involved in phenomenality concept construction.

Summing up, the view on the nature of PC introduced by Keith Frankish is definitely worth exploration and development. The target article offers another perspective to consider consciousness and we should take it into account to take consciousness seriously. Illusionism has some advantages

over realism about PC as well as it has some points which seem puzzling and hard to admit. We should also remember that the very possibility of illusionist theory arises from the same reasons as the mentioned zombie argument: it is possible that phenomenal properties are illusory ones. That is why we need to work on this option.

Nevertheless, the target article overlooked some crucial points. First, it has not offered a clear and grounded notion of phenomenality and PC. Without such clarifications, some key points look like ad hoc hypothesis –if these points are at least understood. It feels sometimes there is an implicit understanding of PC, which influences the reasoning of the author without being presented — and therefore reasonable — for the audience. So, one might think the ground for possible objections can be partly explained by the use of words difference as some important words are not clear enough.

Second, I would like to see a bigger variety of examples used to demonstrate position and arguments. Most of them concentrate on phenomenal properties that are usually implemented on external world. It is easier to make an analogy in such cases; however, this undermines the value of analogy-based arguments as they seem to be successful in a limited range of examples. The article would win if turned to emotions, desires or not the phenomenal properties themselves but thinking of them as a particular type of what-it-is-likeness. Some of the arguments introduced by Frankish would sound less attractive in front of these experiences and it encourages me to make an attempt to consider illusionism in another context.

However, the book consists of commentary articles as well and we can expect them to fulfill these gaps and open other potentials and limitations of illusionism. I will try to overlook briefly some of the key points made by commentators without giving their argumentation in detail.

ADVOCATES

I will follow Keith Frankish and group commentaries according to the type of contribution they make to the issue. The members of the first group offer their arguments in support of illusionism.

Daniel Dennett has been in favor of illusionism for a long time. In this book he suggests taking illusionism introduced by Frankish as the frontrunner among theories of consciousness and abstaining from rejecting it due to its counter-intuitiveness. It is a significant note but at the same time Dennett claims realist theories “are largely driven by folk intuitions” (Dennett, in Frankish, ed., 2017). Though the same argument is suitable

for these intuition-driven theories — we should not reject them due to their intuitiveness.

In his contribution he denies that PC just as a famous trick's lady-sawn-in-half is a datum (Dennett, in Frankish, ed., 2017). I suppose it is another demonstration of notions confusion. I suppose many realists would just accept to consider lady-sawn-in-half as a datum. The shift to phenomenality/external world comparison, which is peculiar to the target article, also influenced Dennett's contribution: "There is no red stripe anywhere. There is a representation of a red stripe" (Dennett, in *ibid.*). Still, it is much easier to admit the illusion of a red stripe in front of me than an image of it "inside me" or, for example, envy feel. Nevertheless, it is hard to reject the possibility drawn by Dennett in his conclusion: having belief could be caused "by mere neural representations lacking all 'phenomenal' properties" (Dennett, in *ibid.*).

Jay Garfield concentrates on demonstration of inability to prove the real existence of phenomenal properties due to limitations of introspection via which we come to a belief about PC formed as a cognitive illusion (Garfield, in *ibid.*). Along with some arguments with the slope in correspondence between PC and external world consideration (apparently, even what-it-is-like to be and to be me has to have a kind of a *direct* equivalent in the physical world) he introduces a version of illusionism from Buddhist theory (Garfield, in *ibid.*). It is a good step in order to defend illusionism from the objections based on its scientist preferences.

However, as the next advocate shows, such a step is rather an exception. Georges Rey places two different concepts of consciousness: a weak one — could be run on a desktop — and a strong one, which, as many believe, we possess (Rey, in *ibid.*). Strong concept — though it is important for our everyday practice as this illusion is somehow connected to our introspective representational mechanisms — cannot be sufficiently included in science practice (Rey, in *ibid.*). I am not sure it can be easily included or even included at all. As I see it, Rey demonstrates another crucial problem for illusionism and even other theories of consciousness: they are too dependent on a number of assumptions about the world. Trivially, the zombie argument is accepted or rejected simply because of these assumptions about the role of physics.

Amber Ross considers assumptions — or beliefs — the very reason for us being illusioned (Ross, in *ibid.*). Realism places a problem of mistakes explanation — if phenomenal properties are real, they are independent of our beliefs and we have to clarify how we make mistakes about phenomenal

properties. Illusionist avoids the problem as these phenomenal properties are a kind of mistakes, which can be sometimes veridical. It looks like what is “real” for illusionist is not the same for realist. I think a realist could admit that phenomenal properties are fallible in terms of their correspondence to the world. At the same time, they are independent of our beliefs as, for example, a belief is independent. So, if I have a belief — fallible and non-veridical — I still have it and its epistemological status is different in terms of being aware of its being for me — not correspondence to something outside.

In this regard, James Trtaglia made a significant contribution defending non-physicalist illusionism. As Frankish admits despite the fact that he introduces illusionism as a conservative and physicalist position it does not entail physicalism (Frankish, ed., 2017). Tartaglia’s one of the main points is that we have little chance to explain our manifest situation of, for example, seeming coffee tastes like something if we are physicalist illusionist (Tartaglia, in *ibid.*). We cannot avoid this situation denying the real — whatever reality is in this case — existence of it as phenomenal property. Seeming seems to be out of physicalist metaphysics, which is an essential assumption in order to be conservative illusionist. I think it is one of the most contributing commentary and the limitations and perspectives of such non-physicalist illusionist should be definitely considered. Another crucial meta-philosophical remark made by Tartaglia turns us to the very role of science and scientism in modern philosophy. He notes reasonably that science should not capture the field of philosophy. The latter should be a separate discipline which is able to offer new decisions. It has to take science into account but does not have to be its mouthpiece.

EXPLORERS

The group includes those commentators who notices some key illusionism difficulties and suggest ways of overcoming them.

François Kammerer focuses on the unique nature of phenomenality illusion. Attempts to explain the PC illusion in terms of our regular understanding of illusion fail because phenomenal properties are more effective and appear to us in more specific way compared to perceptual illusions, which Frankish uses as examples (Kammerer, in *ibid.*). Although Kammerer tries to cover the gap I mentioned earlier — the lack of examples for the PC case — his contribution is quite limited due to being just a possible option to think of the nature of illusion. He offers a hypothesis that we have a naïve theory (a kind of theory theory approach) which has an epistemological value within the process of introspection and is the reason for PC power. In other words

such a theory provides a mental tool to think about appearances, which is though distorting (Kammerer, in Frankish, ed., 2017).

Derk Pereboom addresses another problem and concentrates on the anti-physicalist view according to which illusionists introduce quasi-phenomenal properties only in a functional way making their nature wholly dependent on the relations they are involved. He argues illusionism does not have to adopt a functionalist view and we are able to make it more attractive regarding quasi-phenomenal properties as possessing — at least partially — intrinsic content, which form a basis for physical causal powers (Pereboom, in *ibid.*). Nevertheless, Pereboom does not consider it as the only possible option, which is by the way hardly suitable for Frankish. That is why his contribution can be seen as useful but not crucial.

The next two commentators attempt to make illusionism more preferable in terms of physicalism, suggesting the ways of identification and explanation of the processes that constitute PC illusion. Michael Graziano describes attention schema theory. Nicole Marinsek and Michael Gazzaniga consider a split-brain research. Both comments are made within the physicalist scheme and intuitions. Both of them take consciousness — or at least some of its aspects — functionally. According to Graziano PC is the result of caricaturing awareness of one's own states produced by the attention scheme (Graziano, in *ibid.*). Marinsek and Gazzaniga give an interesting example of psychological unity illusion (Marinsek and Gazzaniga, in *ibid.*). Despite Frankish admits some useful points introduced by these commentators, I am quite skeptical about it. Their accounts are followed by too far going conclusions that seem to be rather assumptions in which results functional view on consciousness. So, Graziano's approach is limited if we do not implement it on AI what would be doubtful. The split-brain case itself posits so many problems that it becomes not so obvious to decide how we should interpret it and consequently how we can use it in terms of illusionism.

Summing up the explorers' comments, I would notice that they are more likely to bring new challenges to illusionism than to solve existing problems. This is both the advantage and the disadvantage of these contributions.

SCEPTICS AND OPPONENTS

In my paper I combine these two groups as both of them focuses — to varying degrees — on difficulties and weaknesses of illusionism. I will not provide an account to all of these groups' members but will try to mention the key ones understanding that all of them are worth considering.

Susan Blackmore — shifts the attention from illusion problem to explaining some delusions — wrong beliefs about consciousness. Her contribution can be considered as skeptical one as she implicitly denies the existence of illusion presented in the target article. She replaces it with the illusion made of inaccurate theorizing, which disappears if explored carefully (Blackmore, in Frankish, ed., 2017). If I read her right she is in favor of the view that there is no at all what we used to misrepresent as PC because there is no the stream of PC which provides us to have no darkness inside. The arguments she introduces do not seem to me convincing. But what is more important I doubt we can move to delusion problems from illusion one: they are from different levels. That is why the latter can be lost considering the former, what results in losing the core idea of illusionism as the questioning alternative to hard problem one.

Nicholas Humphrey proposes a more attractive shift: phenomenal properties should be considered not as non-existing ones but surrealistic ones (Humphrey, in *ibid.*). Therefore phenomenal redness is redder than red: we misrepresent our experiences taken in physical and functional sense, our introspection is distorting and still our fallible, non-veridical feels are real (Humphrey, in *ibid.*). He backs it up with good examples focused not on the experiencing of external objects but on internal feels such as emotions. I think it is a promising view as it is still compatible with an illusionist option because PC can be surrealist in one sense and illusory in another. Moreover, this approach is friendlier, lacking of some puzzling aspects that can keep potential contributors away.

Eric Schwitzgebel is another commentator who tries to overcome some stunning features of illusionism. He suggests a neutral explanandum for theories of consciousness introducing his definition by example for PC (Schwitzgebel, in *ibid.*). The definition is aimed at succeeding in bringing views together. As I mentioned in this paper, illusionism offered in the book is likely to follow an implicitly strong notion of phenomenality that fails to fulfill requirements for being real, non-illusory. This very fact implies limitations to illusionism — it saves its core idea if it takes quite physicalist notion of PC reality. So, Schwitzgebel's approach can become a starting point for the discussion.

Katalin Balog, Jesse Prinz and Martine Nida-Rümmelin demonstrate more sharp rejection of illusionism, contributing to the target article from a realist position. Generally speaking, their main point stresses that PC and phenomenal properties are something which cannot be misrepresented as they are not representations (Balog, in *ibid.*; Prinz, in *ibid.*; Nida-Rümmelin,

in Frankish, ed., 2017). As I see it, phenomenal realism seems to be more attractive because it covers the given and its nature as givenness. While illusionism goes further and attempts to explain the ungiven nature of the given. This is the reason why I still would claim illusionism can be actually compatible with realism. It can just because of different approaches to the reality of PC. Probably what it is to be real for realists is not enough to be real for illusionists.

Philip Goff attacks illusionism from radical realist position. He stresses the compatibility of such an approach with third-person science (Goff, in *ibid.*). The specific option here is Russelian monism, which assumes postulating special entities as a kind of ground for physical ones. Therefore, it is still possible to take PC as real one consisting of these special properties and at the same time have a third-person science talk. Frankish argues it is a fifth wheel strategy and I think it is a reasonable claim. However, I am not in favor of rejecting or supporting any position just because of the number of ontological requirements. If such realism can be true, we should consider it.

CONCLUSION

As a result, Keith Frankish offers an important book for modern philosophy of mind and philosophy as a whole. He introduces an account for one of the most mysterious and complex questions—hard problem of consciousness. Moreover, he attempts to make it less mysterious and more solvable one considering phenomenal consciousness and properties as illusion produced by our introspection mechanisms within the process of misrepresentation of quasi-phenomenal properties, which are not phenomenal at all, as phenomenal ones. The target article of the issue itself provides a wide range of reasons in support of illusionism. The view seems attractive due to a number of advantages it has—especially explanatory ones. In addition, the target article is complemented with contributive commentaries which develop illusionism and fulfill some of its weaknesses and gaps.

However, there are some crucial points left unconsidered. I mentioned the lack of a sufficient notion of phenomenality, broader exemplifications or the grounds for taking some assumptions needed for illusionism worthy. These and others disadvantages are aggravated by those commentators who are skeptical about illusionism. Their contributions save all those problems as a snowball what makes the objections to illusionism double powered. So, there is a need for further development to have a fully clarified illusionism which can be puzzling or stunning precisely because of its key idea but not due to the lack of clarity.

Another remark I make here is not precisely on illusionism but on the way we lead the discussion on consciousness and the hard problem as well. As I see it most of the theories addressing the hard problem are based on a number of assumptions. Illusionism relies partly on physicalist intuitions; panpsychism requires anti-physicalist ones. Consequently, the success of a theory depends on the attractiveness of assumptions behind them. Therefore, I would be glad to see a theory, which avoids making assumptions. It would bring some limitations, as we have less to say about consciousness without saying something ad hoc. However, such a theory would show us the borders of what is known and what is not.

The illusionist option — how puzzling it can sometimes seem — it is worth consideration as well as it is worth development. We are not ready to adopt illusion problem instead of hard problem but it demonstrates us the prospects of the former, which should be taken into account by all those who are interested in consciousness in order to take it seriously.

I conclude by thanking Diana E. Gasparyan for helping me to get the book reviewed.

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НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКИЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ «ВЫСШАЯ ШКОЛА ЭКОНОМИКИ» (МОСКВА);

ORCID: 0000-0002-8374-5889

РЕЗУЛЬТАТ ПОСЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬНОГО ФИЗИКАЛИЗМА

ИЛЛЮЗИОНИЗМ КИТА ФРЭНКИША

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