

## On the Intrinsic Value of Consciousness

### [Bilincin Özünde Değeri Üzerine]

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Research Article

**Abstract:** Is there value in the instantiation of phenomenal consciousness? While consciousness seems obviously valuable and life without consciousness does not seem to have much meaning to it, further investigation proves otherwise. Some have argued that consciousness may not be as significant and valuable as it may seem. Lee (2019) e.g. endorses the neutral view and argues that consciousness is neither intrinsically valuable nor disvaluable. In this paper, first I critically examine Lee's (2019) argument for the neutral view. Then I suggest that in order to critically examine the question of whether consciousness is intrinsically valuable without confusing this question with the question of whether it is instrumentally valuable, value of consciousness needs to be considered as the value present in having a viewpoint. I then develop a way of understanding what having a viewpoint is. Lastly, I suggest that if consciousness or having a viewpoint has intrinsic value, it is of an epistemic kind.

**Keywords:** value of consciousness, phenomenal consciousness, intrinsic value, instrumental value, epistemic value, neutral view.

**Öz:** Fenomenal bilince sahip olmanın bir değeri var mıdır? Bir taraftan bilincin önemi bariz ve bilinçsiz bir hayat anlamsız görünse de bazı düşünürler bilince atfedilen değeri eleştirmiştir. Örneğin Lee (2019) nötr görüşü kabul etmiş ve bilincin özünde ne değerli ne de değersiz olduğunu savunmuştur. Bu çalışmada önce Lee'nin (2019) nötr görüş için sunduğu sebepleri inceliyorum. Sonrasında bilincin özünde değeri olup olmadığı sorusunu bilincin araçsal değeri olup olmadığı sorusuyla karıştırmamak için bilincin özünde değerini, bakış açısına sahip olmanın değeri olarak düşünmeyi öneriyorum. Bu çerçevede bakış açısına sahip olmanın ne anlama geldiğini ele alıyorum.

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ve eğer bilincin ya da bakış açısına sahip olmanın özünde bir değeri varsa, bu değer epistemolojik bir değer olduğunu öneriyorum.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** bilincin değeri, fenomenal bilinç, özünde değer, araçsal değer, epistemolojik değer, nötr görüş.

## 1. Introduction

One of the questions concerning consciousness is whether it is valuable. Most discussions on the value of consciousness concern phenomenal consciousness viz., that there is something it is like for a subject to be in a mental state when that mental state is conscious (Siewert, 1998, 2014, 2021; Levy, 2014; Lee, 2019; Kriegel, 2019; Shepherd, 2018). Strawson's description of phenomenal consciousness among various others resonates well with issues concerning the value of consciousness,

Anyone who has ever seen or heard or smelt or felt anything knows what it is – anyone who has ever been in pain or hungry or satiated or hot or cold or remorseful, amazed, dismayed, uncertain, or sleepy, anyone who has suddenly remembered a missed appointment. To have such conscious experience is to know – to be directly acquainted with – its intrinsic qualitative character as experience, its experiential “what-it-is-like”, simply in having it; and whatever else there is to know about it. (Strawson, 2018: 10)

Without consciousness in the way described above, one would not have felt anything or been in any way and that, in other words a life without consciousness as Siewert suggests, seems to be a life which is “... as little or no better than death” (1998: 329). Hence consciousness seems to be obviously valuable but as Siewert again suggests, in order to learn more about consciousness, one should approach the question of whether it is valuable in a way “that makes the answer less evident” (2014: 199).

Indeed, some are critical of the value conferred so readily on consciousness. A. Lee (2019) endorses what he calls the neutral view and argues that consciousness is intrinsically neither valuable nor disvaluable. Levy (2014) argues that phenomenal consciousness is not what particularly confers value on consciousness and that even our zombie twins would enjoy life as much as we do even if they lack phenomenal consciousness. Also, G. Lee says, “If reductive materialism is true, then being a zombie can be just as good as having consciousness (at least epistemically)” (2014: 222).<sup>1</sup>

In this paper, I focus on the intrinsic value of phenomenal consciousness and first critically examine Lee's (2019) neutral view. Realizing that there is a need to treat

<sup>1</sup> Although I make a reference to both A. Lee (2019) and G. Lee (2014) in this paragraph, most of my discussions involve A. Lee's work and I will cite him as only Lee, without the first name and when I make reference to G. Lee (2014) I will keep his first name to avoid confusion.

intrinsic value of consciousness as such separately from the value of an instance of consciousness and also to stay on target with consciousness' intrinsic rather than instrumental value, I suggest that the intrinsic value of phenomenal consciousness can be assessed more efficiently if it is thought of as the value in having a viewpoint. After articulating what having a viewpoint is, I contend that whatever intrinsic value consciousness might have, if it has such value, consists in its epistemic value. Hence, I provide a different categorization of the value of consciousness than the one suggested by Kriegel (2019) who first divides value of consciousness into three categories - epistemic, ethical and aesthetic - and then introduces a distinction between intrinsic and instrumental value for each category. Although I don't yet provide an answer to the question of if phenomenal consciousness is intrinsically valuable, I contend that Lee's arguments for the neutral view cannot be endorsed for consciousness' epistemic value.

## 2. The Neutral View

When we think about the value of consciousness, we immediately think about instances of consciousness, i.e., experiences like the smell of a flower, experience of love and friendship, appreciation for an object of beauty, pleasure in listening to a particular song, etc. and how life would be dull and pointless without them. Hence, pre-theoretically it is a tenable thesis that value of consciousness resides in the value present in such experiences.

However, Lee argues that phenomenological features of experiences are commensurable in terms of "the degree to which an experience is pleasant or unpleasant," in other words in terms of their valence and that while there is such a symmetry; i.e., while there are both pleasant and unpleasant experiences, it is untenable to attribute any intrinsic value to consciousness itself (2019: 658). This leads him to the neutral view; that consciousness is neither intrinsically valuable nor disvaluable (p.656). While there may be ways of being conscious that are intrinsically valuable like the experience of happiness, this is not sufficient to attribute value to consciousness itself since there are also ways of being conscious that are intrinsically disvaluable, like the experience of pain. Thus, according to Lee some experiences are intrinsically valuable because of their phenomenal character but not in virtue of their being conscious (2019: 661). Then he uses a series of thought experiments to support this view.

In the thought experiments, Lee gives the example of two worlds; one where there is a single creature in constant pain and another one where there is a single creature with no consciousness, and argues that if consciousness were intrinsically valuable, the former world would be better but he sees no convincing reason why the former world consisting of constant pain and nothing else, would be better in virtue of there being

consciousness (2019: 663-65). In another thought experiment there is a world where there is a creature with an experience of slight brightness and another world with no consciousness. This time Lee contends that there is no obvious difference between the two worlds in terms of value (p.664).

Lee (2019) stipulates the thought experiments mentioned above so that the subjects involved have only a single experience. After all one might say that even though the subject is in pain, she might reflect back on her pleasant memories and find pleasure in this activity and that it would be of value to her that she is able to do that in virtue of consciousness despite the experience of pain. Lee is well aware of this and in order to avoid such complications, sets the thought experiment in a way that the subject "... is not suffering for the sake of anything, is suffering perpetually, and has none of the kinds of experiences we typically think of as valuable" (p. 665).

Yet one may still find a world where there is pain to be a better world than one with no consciousness in it. Firstly, even after excluding masochistic inclinations, pain can be a good experience to have phenomenally speaking. There are studies that suggest that people willingly opt for negative experiences out of boredom and lack of stimulus. For instance, during a study where subjects watched a monotonous boring film, they voluntarily self-administered electric shocks and when they watched a sad film, there was no such inclination (Nederkoon et al., 2015).<sup>2</sup> Such studies suggest that people choose to have unpleasant experiences in the absence of a stimulating experience. However, it should also be noted that such choices would depend on the level of unpleasantness. It wouldn't be normal if someone caused serious harm to herself just because she was bored except maybe as a case of psychopathology. Hence, it is understandable why as Lee (2019) suggests a world where there is only excruciating pain and nothing else is worse than a world with no consciousness in it.

Secondly, pain may be seen as an evolutionarily advantageous property allowing us to take better care of ourselves and attend to our injuries more promptly so again it may be considered as a good thing to have.<sup>3</sup> However unlike the first reason mentioned above, the value of having pain in such a context does not reside in its phenomenal feel per se but rather in what it is good for hence it is irrelevant to the discussion at hand. Therefore, Lee's point about the two worlds stands.

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<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Hatice Uysal for bringing this study to my attention. There is a further, more recent study where the causal effect of boredom on self-injury again by means of administering electric shocks is examined (Yusoufzai, M. K. et al., 2022). Similar results were found.

<sup>3</sup> Thanks to Dr. Elif Kırmızı Alsan for bringing this to my attention.

Lee's (2019) discussion shows us two things; firstly, there is positive bias towards value of consciousness due to experiences with positive valence. In other words, we primarily think of pleasant experiences in thinking about value of consciousness so our folk-psychological way of thinking about intrinsic value of consciousness is misguided since there are clearly unpleasant experiences as well. Whatever intrinsic value is granted to consciousness, it could be undermined by phenomenal features that are unpleasant enough.<sup>4</sup> Therefore – and this takes us to the second point, one which is not intended by Lee – to undermine the neutral view, one must treat intrinsic value of consciousness independently from the value in phenomenal features of experiences. In the next section I try to articulate what the distinction between the two can be and why there is a need to consider the value in experiences and the value in phenomenal consciousness separately for a proper assessment of the intrinsic value of consciousness.

### 3. Equivocation in the Neutral View

I contend that Lee's argument for the neutral view can be put as a conjunction of two *modus tollens* in the following way;

1st *modus tollens*:

- (1) If consciousness is intrinsically valuable, any of its instances would be valuable.
- (2) Some of the instances of consciousness, like being in pain, is not valuable.
- (3) Therefore, consciousness is not intrinsically valuable.

2nd *modus tollens*:

- (1) If consciousness is intrinsically disvaluable, any of its instances would be disvaluable.
- (2) Some of the instances of consciousness, like being happy is not disvaluable.
- (3) Therefore, consciousness is not intrinsically disvaluable.

These arguments lead to the neutral view that consciousness is neither valuable nor disvaluable.

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<sup>4</sup> This is reminiscent of Benatar's (2006) asymmetry argument according to which the asymmetry between pain and pleasure is such that the absence of pain is better even if the only way to achieve it is by way of a person not existing. Thanks to one of the anonymous reviewers for bringing this work to my attention.

However, it is not clear what the relation between value of consciousness and value of an instance of consciousness<sup>5</sup> is and the truth of the first premise in both arguments can be called into question depending on this relation. The distinction introduced by Kriegel between value of consciousness as such and value of species of phenomenal consciousness is helpful in understanding the difference (2019: 505). The value of an instance of consciousness has to do with the value of there being something it is like to be in *a particular* conscious mental state, viz. the value in some particular phenomenology arising from some instance of consciousness. Put simply, if you're in pain, typically that is not a valuable experience and if you're happy, again typically that's a valuable experience. The value of consciousness on the other hand has to do with the value of there being something it is like to be in *a* conscious mental state, *any* conscious mental state, whatever the particular phenomenology of the conscious mental state is. That is the value of consciousness as such rather than the value of some instance of consciousness. The following discussion from Nagel sheds light on this type of value;<sup>6</sup>

There are elements which, if added to one's experience, make life better; there are other elements which if added to one's experience, make life worse. But what remains when these are set aside is not merely neutral: it is emphatically positive. Therefore, life is worth living even when the bad elements of experience are plentiful, and the good ones too meager to outweigh the bad ones on their own. The additional positive weight is supplied by experience itself, rather than by any of its consequences. (Nagel, 1979: 2)

Naturally the distinction between the two types of values would be relevant only if there is a meaningful distinction between an instance of consciousness and consciousness. For expository reasons, I will refer to this as the distinction between phenomenal features and consciousness as such. Since there is no phenomenal consciousness where there are no phenomenal features and there are no phenomenal features where there is no phenomenal consciousness, it may at first seem difficult to shed light on the distinction. Hopefully the discussion below will be helpful.

In the Norwegian movie *Den brysomme mannen* translated as *The Bothersome man* (2006), the main character Andreas finds himself in a city where phenomenal consciousness is missing. Everything else seems to be the same. He goes to his job, attends dinner parties, has relationships etc. but there is no experiential what-it-is-likeness that

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<sup>5</sup> To repeat, the subject matter of this paper is intrinsic value of phenomenal consciousness and even though I use the term consciousness as a short cut at times, I'm really referring to phenomenal consciousness unless noted otherwise.

<sup>6</sup> Lee too refers to this passage but only as an example of what he calls the positive view that consciousness is intrinsically valuable (2019: 656). I, on the other hand, want to use this description to emphasize the distinction made by Kriegel between value of consciousness as such and the value of species of consciousness (2019: 505).

accompanies his life. Basically, the city is a zombie city, i.e. zombie in the sense it is used in philosophy of mind to refer to hypothetical beings that are physically and functionally exactly like us, behave in the same way as us but don't have phenomenal consciousness (Chalmers, 1996).<sup>7</sup> Craving for any phenomenally conscious experience, – or perhaps to end his life if he is not to have any such experience for the remainder of his life – Andreas throws himself in front of a train but 'alas' feels no pain despite all the appalling sounds the viewers hear. He finds himself cured the next morning only to continue this dull and bland life. Finally, one day he has an olfactory sensation, and we watch Andreas go to extreme lengths and put his life at risk just to find the source of this sensation and have the experience as much as he can. It's the smell of a pie.

Now even though a pie smell is undoubtedly pleasant, it'd be reasonable to predict that had the smell been that of rotten eggs, Andreas still would have tried to find its source and done everything he could to have the experience of smelling something – anything, really. It is not the pleasantness of the smell that Andreas is after. Similarly, it is not this or that phenomenal feature that he is seeking but rather *any* phenomenal feature. In Andreas' frustration and what is missing in his life, one observes the value of consciousness as such and not particularly the value of some phenomenal feature, nor the positive valence of a phenomenal feature.

Granted then that there is a difference between value of consciousness and value of an instance of consciousness, the truth of the first premise in the above argument is not guaranteed. The distinction between the values reflects the distinction between consciousness as a property/ability on one hand and the phenomenal features one gets to experience in having a phenomenally conscious experience on the other. Normally in our lives we take consciousness for granted and as a consequence the value attributed to consciousness shifts to particular phenomenal features and in turn the pleasantness of experiences but in Andreas' life where phenomenal consciousness is missing, the value shifts to consciousness as such, the mere ability to have a phenomenally conscious experience. The particular phenomenal feature or the resulting pleasantness of experiences are no longer relevant. For Andreas, the so-called pleasantness of an experience in this zombie world is found in the ability to have a phenomenally conscious experience and not in the particular phenomenology of the experience as can be seen in his attempt to throw himself in front of the train just to feel something.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> There are undoubtedly many issues surrounding the topic of zombies such as the conceivability of zombies, whether conceivability implies possibility of zombies and what the possibility of zombies implies for the physicalist theses, etc. but these are not relevant here.

<sup>8</sup> There are a few things to be addressed concerning Andreas' frustration with the zombie city. Andreas feels out of place in this city since he knows what it is like to have phenomenal consciousness from his life before

While value in phenomenal features may be restricted to concepts such as pleasure and happiness, value in consciousness as such requires a more neutral and a more comprehensive concept. That is why in the next section I suggest another way of thinking about the intrinsic value of consciousness, viz. as the intrinsic value of having a viewpoint but before that there is one last remark to be made concerning the neutral view.

Lee contends that if one were to choose the world with only pain in it over a world with no consciousness in it, she might be confusing preferential intuitions with evaluative ones (2019: 666). He says that in assessing the intrinsic value of consciousness, the right question should not be about which world one would prefer but that it should be about which world one would evaluate to be better, and he finds it absurd that anyone would evaluate the world with pain and only pain in it to be better than a world with no consciousness in it. While it might be true that evaluative intuitions should prevail in deciding on a matter like the intrinsic value of consciousness, it is actually more conceivable, contrary to what Lee suggests, that one *evaluates* a world with consciousness in it to be better despite pain and yet does not *prefer* such a world.

In the discussion above I have provided a critical assessment of the neutral view. Having noticed a need to treat the value of consciousness as such independently from the value of instances of consciousness, in the next section I suggest that this can be done if value of consciousness is considered as the value in having a viewpoint. I believe that this approach will also help with staying on target with consciousness' intrinsic value rather than its instrumental value.

#### 4. Value of Consciousness Revisited as Value in Having a Viewpoint

Siewert says "... consciousness is that through which we know what's around us, what's on our minds, and what we mean; it is that by which we have minds at all; and it lies at the heart of our concern for ourselves and for others" (2014: 200). These seem to be perfectly good reasons to confer value on consciousness as such and Lee is well aware of them, but he is dismissive of such reasons since according to him, they are mostly about what consciousness is necessary or sufficient for and the question of whether consciousness is necessary or sufficient for intrinsically valuable things is different from the question of whether consciousness itself is intrinsically valuable (2019: 659). For instance, having ethical concerns might be intrinsically valuable and

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and is deeply missing it but if Andreas was a zombie and had no recollection of his earlier life, and started to have phenomenally conscious experiences for the first time by smelling the pie, would he again go after this smell in the same passionate way? Would it change his life as drastically as it does in the movie? It's hard to give an answer and while these are questions worth pursuing, I cannot undertake them here.



consciousness may be necessary for it but the intrinsic value in having ethical concerns is not thereby transferable to the value of consciousness as such. At best one may say that consciousness is instrumentally valuable since it enables ethical concerns.

Granted that the value in things that consciousness may be necessary and/or sufficient for does not render consciousness intrinsically valuable but rather instrumentally valuable, I suggest that thinking about consciousness as having a viewpoint might help with staying on target with its intrinsic value. The value of having a viewpoint would not be instrumental since having a viewpoint is not something that consciousness enables but rather what consciousness amounts to. Having a viewpoint is not a feature that consciousness is necessary or sufficient for but rather what consciousness is. Having a viewpoint may be a broader concept than consciousness since there is a sense in which having a viewpoint may be attributed to machines or even things like thermometers<sup>9</sup> but this problem can be avoided if consciousness is considered as having a viewpoint in virtue of the experiential what-it-is-likeness which a thermometer clearly lacks. In addition, a viewpoint in this context should not be understood primarily as a point of view directed at the world. Having a viewpoint is to be equated with a point of view directed primarily to a subject's inner world and its subject matter is mainly about how things seem to the subject.

Thinking about value of consciousness as value of having a viewpoint gives one the opportunity to consider the question at hand in terms of degrees and not as an all or nothing issue and thus providing more practical ways for its assessment, e.g. one wouldn't be forced into a comparison between a world with consciousness and one with no consciousness. Instead, one could make a comparison between worlds with subjects with one viewpoint, two viewpoints, three viewpoints and so on and see if there is a corresponding increase in value. At this point, a theory of what distinguishes having one viewpoint from having two viewpoints is not needed but roughly speaking, sensory perception in its different modes may be taken to provide subjects with a viewpoint, whether it be five viewpoints corresponding to five different modes or one viewpoint collectively. It is worth repeating here that the viewpoint is not about e.g. a blue ball that is out there in the world that one gets to see but rather about the perception as a mental state. Instinctive or emotional insights may or may not count as additional viewpoints. It doesn't really matter for my present purposes. All that is needed is the acknowledgement of a spectrum of viewpoints according to which on one end there is something with no viewpoint like a stone and on the other hand there are other beings with possibly varying viewpoints, like a virus, a slug, a bee, a bat, a dolphin, a chimpanzee, a human, an entity with four-dimensional perception and so

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<sup>9</sup> Here I'm referring to Armstrong's (1973) discussion of the thermometer model.

on. Given the spectrum, the question of if consciousness is intrinsically valuable may alternatively be thought of as the question of if there is value in the fact that the ways in which a subject's connection to her inner world increases.

To better understand what an increase in viewpoints amounts to, consider as an example the main character in Luc Besson's movie entitled *Lucy*, who under the influence of a drug that enters her blood stream, starts experiencing the world in a different way. For instance, when Lucy looks at a tree, her perceptual experience includes things like water's movement from the roots of the tree to its leaves. Also, her past experiences become as immediate and unmediated as her current experiences. We on the other hand do not experience water's movement in the tree in the way Lucy does or have the unmediated experiential what-it-is-likeness of past memories like Lucy has so loosely speaking Lucy can be thought of as a human with more viewpoints than a regular person. Similarly, a blind person lacking the ability of phenomenally conscious visual experiences would be a person with less viewpoints than a regular person.

Lee does consider thinking of consciousness as there being a point of view and thereby enabling subjectivity (2019: 662). He likens a world with no consciousness to a world with no point of view and comes close to thinking about the value of consciousness as the value of having a viewpoint; however, instead of elaborating on what the value of having a point of view might consist in, he turns to an argument from analogy where he compares light to consciousness and the analogy is too literal and irrelevant to be useful. A world with no consciousness is not like a world with no light but a world that is not experienced. Lee's discussion falls short of addressing what the value of having a viewpoint might consist in. He says:

Perhaps consciousness is intrinsically valuable because it enables subjectivity. Without consciousness, there are no points of view—a world without consciousness is a world full of darkness... As an analogy, consider light... light is what enables us to see at all, even if some things we see are ugly or bad. ... And a world without light is—literally—a world full of darkness. By appeal to these facts, this theorist ... tries to elicit the intuition that light is intrinsically valuable. But this seems clearly mistaken. Even though light enables certain significant properties and even though it might be mysterious and marvelous, there is little reason to think that it's intrinsically valuable. But then the question is why these kinds of factors should have a different justificatory status in the case of consciousness. (Lee, 2019: 662)

If the question of intrinsic value of consciousness is to be reframed as the value of having a viewpoint and by asking if there is value in having more viewpoints, it is possible to contend that whatever intrinsic value consciousness might have, if it does have one, is of an epistemic nature. There are a few things that need to be addressed here. It may seem that by suggesting that the intrinsic value of consciousness is of an

epistemic nature, I may be putting the cart before the horse especially given Kriegel's (2019) distinctions. Kriegel starts out by noting that there are three different kinds of value that are "fundamentally distinct and incommensurable" viz., epistemic, aesthetic and ethical value of consciousness and for each kind he introduces a further distinction between intrinsic and instrumental value (2019: 504). Hence, on one hand there is intrinsic epistemic value of consciousness and on other hand there is instrumental epistemic value of consciousness and similarly for the other categories too.

According to what I suggest however, the intrinsic value of consciousness consists just in its epistemic value. Both ethical and aesthetic value of consciousness seem to fall under the domain of instrumental value of consciousness. Take the ethical value of consciousness as an example. Having a viewpoint does not by itself amount to being ethically-minded or for having ethical concerns. To have such concerns, one needs to be aware of further facts like right and wrong or that there are other minds. Similarly, one needs to have a conception of beauty for being aesthetically-minded. Strictly speaking there is nothing about having a viewpoint in and of itself that is of an ethical nature or an aesthetic nature. However, there is something about having a viewpoint in and of itself that is of an epistemic nature.

When a mental state is conscious, there is something it is like for the subject to be in it, providing her with a viewpoint and the subject knows immediately what it is like to be in it. In other words, the subject has a connection to her mental state in virtue of consciousness which can best be described as an epistemic connection since in virtue of consciousness the subject is *acquainted* with her inner world and the mental state she is in.<sup>10</sup> Thus, whatever intrinsic value consciousness may have, I suggest that it is of an epistemic nature.<sup>11</sup>

It should be noted that the epistemic nature that I refer to here is not a full-blown epistemic property such as knowledge about the world but a more modest one such as belief formation, i.e. beliefs about oneself or as suggested above merely an acquaintance with the mental states one is in. This is mainly due to the fact that consciousness has to do with how things seem to a subject and not about how things are (Rosenthal, 2000: 237). The subject knows what it is like to be in a mental state when it is conscious, but

<sup>10</sup> This may or may not in turn provide the subject with an epistemic relation to the world.

<sup>11</sup> There are many issues concerning the nature of the contribution of consciousness to a subject's beliefs about or her acquaintance with the world and herself. I address these issues in another work tentatively entitled "Epistemic significance of consciousness" (forthcoming). Some of the questions of interest are if consciousness provides a unique justification for one's beliefs, whether understanding necessarily involves consciousness, etc. See e.g. G. Lee (2014), Chudnoff (2011, 2012) and Siegel and Silins (2014, 2015) for a discussion. For my purposes here, it is sufficient to note that whatever significance or value consciousness might have, it is of an epistemic kind.

obviously that does not directly translate into knowledge about the world since the consciousness of the mental state doesn't provide its subject with the truth of what the mental state is about. There is even a controversy about whether it guarantees the truth of the mental state that one is in (Block, 2011a; Block 2011b; Rosenthal, 2011; Weisberg, 2011).<sup>12</sup> Also, even if the subject's cognitive skills are not sufficient to form beliefs, consciousness would at least provide the subject with some acquaintance with herself and that is an epistemic property.

Despite its epistemic nature, the intrinsic value of phenomenal consciousness or of having a viewpoint should not be taken to reside in knowing something about the world or in being a truth conducive process for the reasons discussed. It should be taken to reside in a much more basic and naïve level such as acquaintance and essentially directed at one's inner world. I contend that in the context of the intrinsic value of phenomenal consciousness one's relation to the external world in virtue of consciousness is not really fundamental but incidental. Although it seems that we form reliable beliefs about the external world in virtue of consciousness, first and foremost consciousness is that by which we get to be acquainted with our own mental states.

The examples that I used in articulating what having a viewpoint is may involve perceptual experience of the external world such as Lucy's additional sensory perception of the water moving up from the roots of the tree to its leaves, but strictly speaking, neither this example nor any other example I gave here concerning phenomenal consciousness is fundamentally about what is out there but rather about the subject's experience or what the subject represents to herself to be out there and as such her experience would still be relevant even if there was no external world. So, in asking about the intrinsic value of having a viewpoint and turning the question to a question of whether there'd be an increase in value when there is an increase in viewpoints, what we are really asking is if it matters that a subject's acquaintance with the mental states that she is in increases. For instance, consider two subjects, one deaf and the other who isn't. For the former there is nothing it is like to hear things and obviously that makes life more difficult and the subject more prone to dangers. The more important question, however, is what the value would be in there being something it is like to hear things even if we were brains in a vat and there was no external world. I contend that whatever answer is given to this question is precisely what the intrinsic value of phenomenal consciousness lies in, and the answer will

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<sup>12</sup> I discuss this issue elsewhere in detail (Elkatip Hatipoglu, 2022) and it concerns an objection brought up against higher order theories of consciousness.

necessarily involve the subject's acquaintance with her mental states – though she may be a brain in a vat – and that's why it will be a value of an epistemic status.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, after providing a critical assessment of Lee's (2019) neutral view that consciousness is neither intrinsically valuable nor disvaluable, a need to treat the value of consciousness as such separately from the value of an instance of consciousness arose. To do that and to stay on target with consciousness' intrinsic value rather than its instrumental value, I suggested that one needs to think of the value of consciousness as the value in having a viewpoint. Then, I suggested that whatever intrinsic value consciousness might have, if it has such value, consists in its epistemic value since having a viewpoint primarily involves a subject's acquaintance with her inner world.

Now whether it is indeed valuable for one to be acquainted with her mental states is yet to be answered. Lee formulates the intrinsic value of consciousness in terms of things being "... in general ... better in virtue of a creature being conscious ..." but does not articulate what is meant by 'things being better' (2019: 658). Neither did I. Surely this is one venue in which further work is necessary to provide an answer to the question of whether phenomenal consciousness is intrinsically valuable. I have suggested however that if phenomenal consciousness has intrinsic value, it resides in its epistemic value. Also, Lee's arguments (2019) for the neutral view are not applicable to the intrinsic value in having a viewpoint since the value in having a viewpoint as discussed here is stripped off of phenomenal features. Nevertheless, I don't want to exclude the possibility of other viable reasons for the neutral view and leave it as an open question. All I can say for now is that consciousness' epistemic value is essential to it in a way its aesthetic and ethical values aren't and there is good reason to think that its intrinsic value lies with its epistemic value.<sup>13</sup>

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