The Value of Consciousness: A Propaedeutic

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While we rehearse our measureless wealth, it is for thee, dear Mother!
We own it all and several to-day indissoluble in Thee;
—Think not our chant, our show, merely for products gross, or lucre
—it is for Thee, **the Soul**, electric, spiritual!
Our farms, inventions, crops, we own in Thee! cities and States in Thee!
Our freedom all in Thee! our very lives in Thee!

Walt Whitman, "Song of the Exposition"

Introduction/Abstract

Recent work within such disparate research areas as the epistemology of perception, theories of well-being, animal and medical ethics, the philosophy of consciousness, and theories of understanding in philosophy of science and epistemology has featured disconnected discussions of what is arguably a single underlying question: What is the value of consciousness? The purpose of this paper is to review some of this work and place it within a unified theoretical framework that makes contributions (and contributors) from these disparate areas more visible to each other.

Part I. Some Questions

What is the value of consciousness? In some, the very question is liable to conjure a warm and fuzzy feeling of meaningfulness and depth; in others, it might inspire a vague suspicion of irrational attachment to mystical or supernatural themes. But what does the question exactly *mean*? My goal in this first part of this paper is to 'factorize' the intimidatingly vague and profound-sounding question 'What is the value of consciousness?' into a substantial number of much more precise and more tractable sub-questions. I proceed by first highlighting certain ambiguities and uncertainties attending the relevant notions of (i) value, (ii) consciousness, and even (iii) having, then using corresponding disambiguations and precisifications to formulate questions about the value of consciousness more clearly amenable to theoretical treatment.

1. Three Kinds of Value: Epistemic, Ethical, and Aesthetic

There is a classical conception of philosophy that casts it as attempting to explain in a unified manner the true, the good, and the beautiful. The conception is familiar from Medieval Philosophy, with its theme of *unum, verum, bonum, pulchrum*. But even in traditional Hindu philosophy, for instance, 'the supreme one' is commonly characterized as *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* – truth, goodness, and beauty.

This formulation betrays an implicit commitment to monism about three kinds of value: truth monism about epistemic value, goodness monism about ethical value, and beauty monism about aesthetic value. Since none of these is *analytically* true, a more judicious formulation – if less pithy! – would be 'the epistemically valuable, the ethically valuable, and the aesthetically valuable.'

What I just called 'truth monism about epistemic value' is none other than the view often called in epistemology 'veritism' (Goldman 2001 Ch.3). We may formulate it as follows:

(TMEV) Truth is the only intrinsic epistemic value; all other epistemic value is merely instrumental.

The idea is that having true beliefs is the only thing epistemically valuable in and of itself. All other epistemic achievements are epistemically valuable only insofar as they are instrumental in bringing about true beliefs. This sort of veritism is widely defended in contemporary epistemology (especially by reliabilists, but not only). Still, other intrinsic epistemic values have occasionally been proffered, notably *understanding* (Kvanvig 2003). The idea is that understanding something is not analyzable in terms of having true beliefs, and even if understanding something is instrumental in bringing about true beliefs, the value of understanding is not *exhausted* by the fact that it is. Now, one might propose understanding (or some third epistemic good) as supplanting truth in an alternative version of monism about epistemic value; typically, though, understanding is cited as an element in a *pluralist* account of epistemic value. (Note well: I use the expression 'intrinsic' value to denote non-instrumental value, that is, value that does not accrue to something in virtue of its bringing about something else of value; I do *not* use it to denote a value that something has independently of *any* relations to other items. Another term often used for this is 'final value.')

Corresponding to the above formulation of veritism we may offer a parallel formulation of 'goodness monism about ethical value':

(GMEV) Goodness is the only intrinsic ethical value; all other ethical value is merely instrumental.

Here it is certainly possible to hear the claim as analytically true. But it is not mandatory. Thus, debates on the relationship between the right and the good (starting with Sidgwick 1874) are naturally taken to have implications for GMEV. Many philosophers – especially consequentialists – hold that an action is right just if the state of affairs it leads to, or is intended to lead to, is good. But someone who argues that an action's being right is not analyzable in terms of the goodness of its (intended) consequences may well go on to claim that the action's rightness is ethically valuable in and of itself, thus embracing pluralism about intrinsic ethical value.

Of the three monisms presupposed in 'the true, the good, and the beautiful,' beauty monism about aesthetic value is by far the most contentious (see Danto 2002 for review). Indeed, its rejection has become something of an orthodoxy in contemporary aesthetics. The view may be formulated as follows:

(BMAV) Beauty is the only intrinsic aesthetic value; all other aesthetic value is merely instrumental.

The idea here is that a novel's being delightfully perceptive, a landscape's being sublime, and a painting's being compelling are all aesthetically valuable only insofar as they contribute (whether causally or constitutively) to the novel's, landscape's, or painting's beauty. This is vehemently rejected by a majority of contemporary philosophers of art; a bountiful pluralism of intrinsic aesthetic values reigns instead.

It is not the choice between monism and pluralism in each of these areas that concerns me here. What I want to highlight is just that they are three *distinct* areas – they concern different *kinds* of value. These three values are fundamentally different and incommensurable: one may find a certain quantity Q of epistemic value more valuable than some quantity Q* of epistemic value, but when considering a quantity Q of epistemic value and a quantity Q* of ethical value, no meaning attaches to the question of which is more valuable *simpliciter*.

The distinctions between (a) epistemic, ethical, and aesthetic value and (b) intrinsic and instrumental value mean that the question 'What is the value of consciousness?' folds within it the following six distinct questions:

- What is the intrinsic epistemic value of consciousness?
- What is the intrinsic ethical value of consciousness?
- What is the intrinsic aesthetic value of consciousness?
- What is the instrumental epistemic value of consciousness?
- What is the instrumental ethical value of consciousness?
- What is the instrumental aesthetic value of consciousness?

Thus we can already factorize our original question into six separate and more precise questions.

In fact, however, the sub-questions about ethical value can be further factorized. At a most basic level, we engage in ethics to answer the following simple question: How should I live? To answer this question, it is useful to address separately three issues about the good life:

1) What makes a life good *for the one who lives it*?
2) What makes a life *morally* good?

3) What is the relationship between a morally good life and a life good for the one who lives it?

Let us say that that which makes life good for the one who lives it has *prudential value*, while that which makes life morally good has *moral value*. Then we should really distinguish *eight* sub-questions about the value of consciousness: concerning epistemic, prudential, moral, and aesthetic value – intrinsic or instrumental.

It is important to appreciate that questions about intrinsic value call for a different kind of answer from questions about instrumental value. To answer the question 'What is the intrinsic epistemic value of consciousness?,' for instance, we would have to say which of the intrinsic epistemic values is had by consciousness (where 'none' counts as an answer). In contrast, to answer the question 'What is the instrumental ethical value of consciousness?,' we would have to say in what way consciousness is instrumental to the promotion of (which) intrinsic ethical value(s).

2. Varieties of Consciousness

Like the term 'value,' the term 'consciousness' introduces potential ambiguities. Most famously, Ned Block (1995) warned against conflating 'phenomenal' and 'access' consciousness. The basic idea is that a mental state can be said to be conscious, in one sense, because it is something the subject experiences (there is something it is like for her to be in that state), and in another sense, because it is functionally highly integrated and influences information processing across many parts of the cognitive system. It is an open question, of course, what the ultimate relationship between the two is, but there is no question that they are *conceptually* distinct. Accordingly, questions about the value of phenomenal consciousness are distinct from questions about the value of access consciousness. (Compare: the question 'Does the morning star twinkle in the morning?' is different from the question 'Does the evening star twinkle in the morning?' – even though they must receive the same answer.)

Given this, each of the eight questions distinguished in §1 could itself be factorized into two sub-questions. For instance, the question 'What is the instrumental prudential value of consciousness?' should give way to:

- What is the instrumental prudential value of *phenomenal* consciousness?
- What is the instrumental prudential value of *access* consciousness?

We are thus led to *sixteen* distinct questions about the value of consciousness (and perhaps more, in case there are other notions of consciousness besides phenomenal and access consciousness).

It is widely thought that phenomenal consciousness is a generic property that admits of several species. Perceptual phenomenal consciousness is one species (which incidentally divides into several *subspecies*: visual, auditory, etc.). Algedonic phenomenal consciousness is another species (itself dividing into pleasure and pain subspecies). There may be other species, corresponding to so-called cognitive phenomenology, agentive phenomenology, and so on (see Kriegel 2015). This genus-species structure may introduce another ambiguity in the question 'What is the value of consciousness?' To see why, suppose that fish and birds are valuable but amphibians, reptiles, and mammals are not. If someone asks whether animals are valuable, in one sense we should answer positively, since fish and birds are valuable; but in another sense we should answer negatively, since being an animal is not as such valuable. Thus when we ask about the value of a genus, we must distinguish two interpretations of the question: one about the existence of a valuable species and one about the value of the genus as such. Since phenomenal consciousness is a genus, then, the question of its value is ambiguous as between a 'generic' and a 'specific' reading:

- What is the value that phenomenal consciousness *as such* has?
- What is (or are) the value (or values) that any *species* of phenomenal consciousness has (or have)?[1]

It is an open question which of readings is the more significant, or indeed whether both are genuinely significant (see Lee 2018 for an argument that the second is not and only leads to conceptual confusions). But it is worthwhile to draw the prima facie distinction between them. If we do, our eight questions about the value of phenomenal consciousness become sixteen questions. With the eight questions about the value of *access* consciousness (which is not in any obvious way a genus), they make up *twenty-four* different elaborations of 'What is the value of consciousness?'

3. The Having of Value by Consciousness

An assertion of the form 'Consciousness is V' (where V stands for a value property) has a subject-predicate structure. This structure may suggest that 'consciousness' denotes a substance (Descartes' *res cogitans*?) and 'V' a first-order property instantiated by that substance. But this cannot be right, since one need not believe in consciousness as a substance to find consciousness valuable. Many philosophers take the noun 'consciousness' to denote a property – the property of being conscious. These philosophers, too, should be able to make claims about the value of consciousness.

If the term 'consciousness' denotes a property, then the form 'Consciousness is V' can still be apposite, namely if 'V' denotes a *second*-order property that consciousness instantiated. But this too is problematic. At least for some substitution instances of V, properties will just not be the right kind of things to have V. Consider truth, an intrinsic epistemic value. It would be incoherent to say that this value is instantiated by the property of being conscious, given that properties are not truth-apt entities. Many putative entities are: beliefs, judgments, propositions, statements, assertions, and more. But a property is not the kind of thing that can be true or false. So this interpretation of 'Consciousness is V' is unsuitable as well.

How *should* we interpret such assertions? I propose that we see 'Consciousness is V' as claiming that anything that instantiates the property of being conscious will perforce also instantiate the property of being V – and will do so *because* it instantiates the property of being conscious. On this interpretation, the 'deep grammar' of 'Consciousness is V' is this:

- For any *x*, if *x* is conscious, then (i) *x* is V and (ii) *x* is V in virtue of *x* being conscious.

Suppose I claim that phenomenal consciousness has instrumental aesthetic value. Then what I am asserting is really this: Anything which is phenomenally conscious has, in virtue of that fact, instrumental aesthetic value. Accordingly, the question 'What is the value of consciousness?' really comes to the following: What are the value properties

V_1, …, V_n, such that for any *x*, if *x* is conscious, then (i) *x* has V_1, …, V_n and (ii) *x* has V_1, …, V_n in virtue of being conscious?

There is still an ambiguity in this question, however. The question is effectively about grounding: about what holds in virtue of what. In the theory of ground, a distinction is sometimes drawn between *full* and *partial* grounds (Fine 2012). For when we say that *p* grounds *q*, this may mean either (a) that *q* holds *in part* because *p* holds or (b) that *q* holds *entirely* because *p* holds. In (a), a full specification of *q*'s ground would have to cite some *r* that, when combined with *p*, ensures that *q*. In (b), it is *p* by itself that ensures that *q*. For instance, we may say that knowledge is grounded in belief, meaning that belief is a *partial* ground of knowledge. But we may also say that belief is grounded in tracking relation R and mean that R is the *full* ground of belief. Thus when we ask whether one thing is grounded in another, we must specify whether we are asking about full or partial grounding.

This distinction is relevant in our case, because an item's being conscious may serve as a mere *component* of the grounds for that item's value, or it may constitute those grounds *all by itself*. Accordingly, when we ask whether an item is valuable in virtue of being conscious, we must specify whether we mean 'in part in virtue of being conscious' or 'entirely in virtue of being conscious.'

I closed §2 by noting twenty-four different questions folded into 'What is the value of consciousness?' If claims about the value of consciousness are really grounding claims, and grounding claims can be either full- or partial-grounding claims, then in each case we may ask either about consciousness' role as full ground or about its role as partial ground. Thus the formulation 'What is the value of consciousness' hides at least *forty-eight* different questions – each of capital importance in its own right.

This factorization of our original question into forty-eight is obtained by applying a series of disambiguations: (a) intrinsic vs. instrumental value, (b) epistemic vs. prudential vs. moral vs. aesthetic value, (c) phenomenal vs. access consciousness, (d) genus vs. species, and (e) full vs. partial ground. I leave it as an exercise to the reader to formulate explicitly all forty-eight questions. What I would like to suggest is that a comprehensive theory of the value of consciousness would consist in the conjunction of answers to all forty-eight questions!

Some value claims are more ambitious than others. A full-ground claim is more ambitious than a partial-ground claim, an intrinsic-value claim is more ambitious than an instrumental-value claim, and so on. Particularly ambitious are claims to the effect that not only does consciousness have value V, it is the *only* thing that has V. It is one thing to say that species S of phenomenal consciousness has value V; it is another to say that the only way for V to show up in our world is thanks to S. This kind of 'unique ground' claim is particularly ambitious. And when philosophers have claimed that all value is grounded in consciousness (Seager 2001), what they have asserted is that for any value V, consciousness is the unique ground of V. Here we come close to the most ambitious thing that can be said about the value of consciousness.

PART II. SOME (POTENTIAL) ANSWERS

Moving forward I will ignore access consciousness and focus entirely on phenomenal consciousness. The next three sections are dedicated to airing some theses of potential interest, and sketches of potential defenses of them, concerning the epistemic, ethical, and aesthetic values of (various species of) phenomenal consciousness.

4. The Epistemic Value of Consciousness

The epistemic value of consciousness has been the most explored among philosophers.[2] I In particular, there is a lively debate about the role of perceptual phenomenology in providing a special kind of epistemic justification. James Pryor and Michael Huemer have argued, influentially, that perceptual experience provides immediate (roughly: belief-independent) prima facie justification for perceptual beliefs. (This is what they call 'dogmatism' and 'phenomenal conservatism' respectively.) Both have also made the additional claim that it is an aspect of the *phenomenal character* of perceptual experiences that confers on them this epistemic significance. Moreover, they seem to have roughly the same phenomenal feature in mind – what Pryor (2000: 547 fn37) calls 'phenomenal force' and Huemer (2001: 77) calls 'forcefulness.' This is a feature external to the experience's content and is the phenomenal analogue of assertoric force: it presents the content of the experience as real or obtaining.

This is not the place to consider the full case for such a claim, but for a taste of the type of consideration relevant, consider the following scenario.

> (*Dark Room*) You wake up from a groggy, unexpected nap and find yourself in a pitch-dark room that feels unfamiliar. A warm voice greets you and asks you whether you (a) believe that there is a chair in the room, (b) disbelieve that there is a chair in the room, or (c) suspend judgment about whether there is a chair in the room. After you answer, the lights come on, and you have a vivid perceptual experience as of a chair in front of you. The warm voice comes on again and asks whether you (a) believe that, (b) disbelieve that, or (c) suspend judgment about whether there is a chair in the room.

Intuitively, the doxastic attitude it is most rational – most prima facie justified – for you to take the first time around is suspending judgment; but once the lights come on, it is more rational for you to believe. Just as choosing to believe while lying in unfamiliar pitch dark seems like a case of epistemic irrational exuberance, choosing to suspend judgment when experiencing a chair lying right there before your wide-open eyes seems like perverse cautiousness (McGrath 2013). The rationality in question is clearly epistemic, in any case, since what you are asked to do is make up your mind about *what is true*.

What explains the difference in which doxastic attitude is rational for you before and after the lights come on? One natural explanation is that after the lights come on you enjoy a phenomenology as of perceiving a chair – and it is the onset of this phenomenology that rationalizes your adoption of the chair belief.[3] If this explanation of the difference in which doxastic attitude is rational is better than all alternative explanations, that would constitute a strong argument for an epistemic value proper to perceptual consciousness.

One alternative explanation might be that your chair belief is justified by the reliability of your perceptual mechanisms, at least as far as visual chair-detection in welllit rooms is concerned. And reliability, it might be argued, has nothing to do with consciousness (though see Dretske 1996). The problem with this, however, is that the intuition about the change in which attitude is rational does not disappear when we run (*Dark Room*) with a brain in a vat (Smithies 2014). Certainly an envatted phenomenal duplicate of you who came to believe that there was a chair in the room after the lights came on would be epistemically blameless in a way an envatted duplicate who believed in the chair *before* the lights came on would not. Yet the duplicate's chair-detection mechanism is entirely unreliable (leading as it does exclusively to false beliefs), and is equally so when the duplicate has a phenomenology as of perceiving a chair and when it has a phenomenology as of pitch dark.

Another alternative explanation might appeal not to the reliability of your chair-detection mechanisms, but to your (justified) *belief* in the reliability of these mechanisms – a (justified) belief that your envatted duplicate shares. The problem here is that the reliability belief is present even before the lights come on; so clearly, it is not *sufficient* to rationalize a chair belief. The reliability belief seems to be 'epistemically charged' (like a battery is charged) throughout the scenario, but to become epistemically *operative* only when plugged into the phenomenology of perceiving a chair. Thus this 'alternative' explanation seems to invoke perceptual phenomenology too; it just avails itself of an *additional* element in the explanation, namely, the reliability belief. This addition may diminish, but does not vacate, the epistemic value of perceptual phenomenology. More precisely, it appears to 'downgrade' perceptual phenomenology from full to partial ground of epistemic value (but not to *remove* perceptual phenomenology from the ground).

There are probably other alternative explanations that a thorough argument for the epistemic value of perceptual phenomenology would have to address. Still, the above discussion provides a sense of the kinds of consideration that support the attribution of epistemic value to consciousness.

The epistemic-value claim made here is already controversial, as the immense literature on dogmatism and phenomenal conservatism attests. But even if we grant it, it is noteworthy that the claim is limited in at least two ways. First, it concerns the epistemic value not of phenomenal consciousness as such, but merely of one species of it – the perceptual species. Secondly, by the lights of most views, it concerns only *instrumental* epistemic value. Certainly veritists will claim that epistemic rationality is valuable only insofar as it is instrumental in promoting true belief; but even such proposed alternative intrinsic values as understanding go beyond epistemic rationality.[4] Now, the fact that the relevant value is merely instrumental, and attaches only to perceptual consciousness, does not by itself mean that it is inconsequential. Pautz (2017), for instance, argues that this alone shows that most versions of physicalism are false (roughly: because they cannot explain how physical properties that differ in the physically tiniest ways can differ so dramatically in terms of value). Still, it would be interesting to consider whether more ambitious epistemic-value claims could be made on behalf of consciousness.

As far as generalizing from the perceptual case, one general strategy is to push broadly perceptual models of certain mental phenomena and then use them to extend perceptual phenomenology's epistemic role to other species of phenomenal consciousness. Thus, philosophers who hold that emotional experiences are value perceptions may claim that some value beliefs are prima facie justified by emotional phenomenology in the same way some empirical beliefs are prima facie justified by perceptual phenomenology (cf. Elgin 2008); philosophers who endorse a perceptual model of intuition, and hold that intuition exhibits a kind of cognitive phenomenology, may claim that some (e.g.) mathematical beliefs are prima facie justified by the phenomenology of intuition in the way empirical beliefs are prima facie justified by perceptual phenomenology (Chudnoff 2011); and so on. Similarly, it is possible to hold that the phenomenology of episodic memory provides prima facie justification for beliefs about the past, the phenomenology of imagination prima facie justification for modal beliefs, and so on. If every type of phenomenal consciousness could be shown to exhibit some kind of epistemic value, and if some such kind could be shown to be exhibited by *all* species of phenomenology, that value could be seen as belonging properly to phenomenal consciousness *as such*.

Even then, of course, this would still be merely instrumental value. What are prospects for finding some *intrinsic* epistemic value in consciousness? One option here is to argue that epistemic rationality or prima facie justification is epistemically valuable in and of itself. But this is highly dubious, and anyway it would be far better, from a dialectical standpoint, to argue that consciousness is implicated in more independently motivated and widely recognized intrinsic epistemic values, notably truth and/or understanding.

According to veritism, recall, only truth is intrinsically valuable. Suppose one holds that the only non-derivative bearers of truth are beliefs, and also that all beliefs are conscious (Strawson 2005, 2008). Then it would follow that everything (non-derivatively) true is conscious. This might seem a very direct line to a veritistic epistemic value for consciousness. But bracketing the contentiousness of the claim that all beliefs are conscious, it would still not be *in virtue of being conscious* that the true conscious beliefs would be true. Plausibly, we have no doxastic or otherwise truth-apt state in our psychological repertoire such that its being conscious guarantees its being true.

On some views of consciousness, however, every conscious experience involves a built-in awareness of its occurrence. If one held that the relevant awareness is for some reason guaranteed to be veridical (Kriegel 2009 Ch.4, Kidd 2011), this would cast conscious experience as veritistically valuable after all: the occurrence of every conscious experience brings with it the occurrence of a veridical representation.

In addition, it is noteworthy that although the broadly Cartesian idea that all introspection is infallible is roundly rejected in contemporary philosophy, several philosophers have argued that there exists a restricted *type* of introspection which is in principle immune to error (Gertler 2001, Chalmers 2003, Horgan and Kriegel 2007, Giustina forthcoming). If this is right, and if phenomenally conscious states are the only things at which the relevant type of introspection can be directed (as all these authors will accept), then a mental state's being conscious is a precondition for its being infallibly known. This is something a veritist could appreciate.

At the same time, it is not clear that this would cast consciousness as really *intrinsically* epistemically valuable. Suppose God made sure that we could not misperceive or misjudge about zebras, though elsewhere we be thoroughly fallible. That would not quite give *zebras* intrinsic epistemic value. It would rather be zebra perceptions and judgments that would be intrinsically valuable. Zebras would have *instrumental* value insofar as they *enabled* infallible perceptions and beliefs, but it would be the relevant perceptions and beliefs that would be intrinsically epistemically valuable.[5]

A more promising approach, I suspect, might be found outside the veritistic fold – in particular, in the idea that there is a kind of intrinsically valuable form of *understanding* that is fully or partially grounded in conscious experience. An argument to that effect is provided by Bourget (2017).[6] The argument proceeds in two steps. The first notes a common theme in theories of understanding within epistemology and philosophy of science, namely, that understanding requires *grasping*. Opinions differ on just what grasping is, and what exactly needs to be grasped for something to be understood; but they agree that without grasp there is no understanding (Gordon 2017). Bourget gives the following illuminating example: when told by trustworthy authorities that the sun is approximately 1,300,000 bigger than the earth, we believe this (correctly) but in a sense have no grasp of what this really means; when later we are told that that is like the difference between a basketball and an apple seed, something happens with us which can rightly be described as an epistemic achievement. But the achievement is a peculiar one: we have not acquired any further *evidence* for the proposition that the sun is approximately 1,300,000 bigger than the earth. Rather, we have gained a measure of insight into what it really means that the sun is approximately 1,300,000 bigger than the earth – we *grasp* the fact in a way we did not previously. The second step of Bourget's argument is to ask what distinguishes believing that *p without* grasping *p* and *with* grasping *p*, and argue that the difference has to do with phenomenal consciousness: we believe *with* grasping when our belief is accompanied by a phenomenal experience with the content *p*; we believe *without* grasping when our belief is not so accompanied. Bourget argues that this explanation is better in various respects than functionalist and other explanations.

One limitation of Bourget's discussion is that he does not tell us what kind of experience makes for grasping, and indeed seems to suggest that *any* experience would – something which is rather implausible. (If I believe that the weather is nice while phenomenally experiencing a hope that the weather is nice, that does not seem to make for grasping of the weather's niceness.) But we may find help on this point in Chudnoff's (2012) notion of *presentational phenomenology*: a kind of phenomenal characteristic whereby a mental state not only represents *p* but also makes it seem to the subject that she is aware of the *truthmaker* of the proposition *p*. Importantly, for

Chudnoff presentational phenomenology can occur in a variety of conscious experiences, including perception, episodic memory, introspection, and intuition. The difference is just in the kind of awareness of the putative truthmaker involved: while a perceptual experience of *p* may make one seem to be sensorily aware of the truthmaker, an intuition that *p* may make one seem to be intellectually aware of the truthmaker. Using this notion of presentational phenomenology, we may surmise that the difference between believing that *p* with grasping and without grasping is that although both beliefs represent *p*, only the former involves a presentational phenomenology whereby the subject seems to be aware of the truthmaker of *p*.

Bourget and Chudnoff are concerned with propositional grasping, but in certain areas much emphasis has been put on grasping the *natures* of certain things (often: of properties). To appreciate the idea, consider the curious case of Unlucky Luke:

> (*Unlucky Luke*) Luke is a guy like you and me, but his life thus far has suffered from a double misfortune. First, whenever Luke has come across red objects, it was through a thin mist that made them appear pink to him. Second, whenever Luke has come across a pink object, there was a strong red light shining on that object, unbeknownst to Luke, that made it look red rather than pink to Luke.

Unlucky Luke has a massively wrong conception of the extensions of red and pink: he thinks fire engines are pink and ballet shoes are red. At the same time, there is a sense in which Luke's grip on *what red is* and *what pink is* is as good as yours and mine. He has the same grasp of the *nature* of red and pink as you and I. This is the kind of grasp that Frank Jackson's (1982) Mary, for instance, lacks. Despite her flawless conception of the extensions of red and pink, the intuition is that Mary has no grasp of the natures of red and pink (Conee 1994).

Arguably, this grasp of natures requires conscious experience as well. If we suppose that upon release it turns out that Mary is blindsighted for red, such that her visual system can unconsciously process information about red objects but she can never enjoy a conscious perceptual experience as of red, then the intuition persists that she still does not grasp the nature of red.

I belabor these points because they sketch a potential non-veritistic defense of consciousness' intrinsic epistemic value. If (a) understanding is an intrinsic epistemic value, (b) grasping is an ineluctable component of at least certain types of understanding, and (c) presentational phenomenology or some such phenomenal feature is necessarily involved in grasping, then (d) there is a species of phenomenology that partially grounds intrinsic epistemic value.

5. The Ethical Value of Consciousness

In §1, I distinguished between prudential and moral value, as two kinds of ethical value. This particular bookkeeping regime is not what matters here. What matters is that when we describe a life as a good life, we may have in mind a life good for the one who lives it, or a life that is morally good. Colloquially: either the life of a *happy* person or that of a *good* person. The relationship between these two notions may be intimate (Annas 1993), but they are clearly conceptually distinct. The contemporary literature on well-being could be seen as addressing the question of what makes life good for the one who lives it, while the vaster literature on moral philosophy, featuring notably consequentialist, deontological, and virtue-ethical theories, addresses the question of what makes a life morally good. Our question is: What is the role of consciousness in each?

5.1. The prudential value of consciousness: Consciousness and well-being

A common if unloved classification divides theories of well-being into three types: hedonist, desire-satisfaction, and objective-list theories. In what follows, I consider the role consciousness might play in grounding prudential value within each approach – or rather within *plausible versions* of each approach.

According to hedonism, well-being is determined by the distribution of hedonically valenced experiences, that is, pleasure and pain: the more pleasure and the less pain, the better the life for the one who lives it. To understand the view, however, we must distinguish two uses of the terms 'pleasure' and 'pain.' In a narrow use, they denote specific *states* of the subject – typically punctate bodily sensations, though sometimes also more 'spiritual' or 'intellectual' states. This is the use in place when we say 'I have a pain in my knee' or 'My pleasure lasted almost six seconds.' In a wider use, however, these terms denote rather *properties* of mental states – any mental states that can be described as pleasant or unpleasant. In this wider use, the whole panoply of hedonically valenced experiences in our psychological repertoire are concerned, including emotional experiences and moods.[7] (Indeed, moods may be specially significant for the hedonist, due to their unique temporal and intentional profile. They last much longer than typical experiential episodes – often many hours rather than a few second. At the same time, they are directed not at specific objects but at the world as a whole, or everything indiscriminately, and thus paint in their flattering or unflattering colors much wider subject matters than this or that specific event.)

Hedonism paves the way to an intrinsic prudential value for consciousness fairly straightforwardly. All we must add to it is that pleasure and pain contribute to well-being *in virtue of their phenomenal character* – what it is like to experience them (Bramble 2016). We could then argue as follows:

1) The goodness of a life is grounded in the distribution of pleasure and pain in it;
2) Pleasure and pain determine life-goodness in virtue of their phenomenology; therefore,
3) The goodness of a life is grounded in phenomenology.

On its face, the second premise is antecedently plausible. Imagine a functional duplicate of yours with the following peculiarity: its mental states that play the pleasure role always lack phenomenology, while its mental states that play the pain role are phenomenally experienced just as yours are. From a hedonic standpoint, this ill-fated duplicate seems to lead a rather sorrowful existence, and certainly not to live a life as good as yours.[8]

The second premise may be resisted on the grounds that what makes our pleasure of value to us is not simply that pleasure *has* a certain phenomenology, but that we *like* this phenomenology and *want* to experience it. Indeed, Heathwood (2007) has argued that pleasure is in fact *nothing but* a compound mental state involving a desire directed at a phenomenology. What motivates this is the thought that pleasures can be extremely varied phenomenologically, so that what unifies them is simply the fact that one desires them (Heathwood 2007: 26). In defense of phenomenological hedonism, however, we might note that the felt qualities of, say, seeing blue, tasting honey, and feeling velvet are just as different as the felt qualities of pleasures produced by orgasm and by a particularly well-crafted George Eliot sentence. Yet as we saw in §2, many epistemologists assign epistemic value to perceptual phenomenology, as the genus (or determinable) of which visual, gustatory, and tactile phenomenology are species (or determinates). By the same token, we can assign prudential value to pleasure phenomenology as the genus of which many species can be recognized (Crisp 2006: 109). This is not to say that there need not be any phenomenal commonality among pleasures; rather, it is to say that the commonality is liable to be as phenomenally subtle as that among all forms of perception.

In any case, the real question here is what makes pleasure of value to us. The non-phenomenological hedonist thinks it is not simply the fact that pleasure *has* a certain phenomenology, but that we *like* that phenomenology and *want* to experience it. The phenomenological hedonist holds that this puts the cart before the horse: intuitively, we like and want the phenomenology of pleasure precisely because of *what that phenomenology is like*. It would be odd, according to her, to treat as brute and inexplicable the facts that we like and desire pleasure phenomenology and dislike and are averse to pain phenomenology. These facts do not seem like rock bottom. They seem *obviously* explicable, namely by the nature of pleasure and pain phenomenology. It is because pleasure feels *like this* that we want it. If anything, then, it is the facts about what pleasure and pain feel like that ground hedonic well-being.

The first premise of the above argument – namely, hedonism itself – has of course been the target of many objections. Often the view just seems, especially to philosophers, far too superficial and crude to capture the good life. (Something like this is conveyed by the 'philosophy of swine' objections to hedonism.) My suspicion, however, is that this impression is partly due to the aforementioned ambiguity of 'pleasure' and 'pain.' It is of course unsatisfactory to pin life's goodness on the distribution of punctate pleasure and pain sensations. But when we take into account long-lasting *moods*, as well as the finest shades of emotions, thoughts, and other pleasant or unpleasant experiential episodes, the sense of superficiality quickly evaporates. There is, moreover, an intuitive attraction in the idea that life is going well for one when one finds oneself often in a good mood and very rarely in a foul mood. Arguably, when we say things like 'I was really happy in my junior year abroad,' what we mean is precisely that there was a notable preponderance of good moods during that period.

Another variant of the 'philosophy of swine' objection goes like this: hedonism cannot vindicate the strong intuition that the pleasures of reading poetry, having insights, and so on are somehow *more valuable* than the pleasures of orgasms and strawberries, despite the latter being phenomenologically more intense than the former. Various strategies for dealing with this objection can be found in the extant literature, but let me float one to my knowledge entirely absent from it. (It is modeled on a structurally analogous point made by Nicolai Hartmann in a different context.) The strategy insists that the 'intellectual' pleasures are more valuable than the 'bodily' pleasures, but conjectures that this is because the point of experiential indifference lies in different places on their pleasant-painful spectra. Reading a bad poem involves very little pain, whereas one good poem can fill us with euphoric exaltation and deep satisfaction; this is why we are willing to read fifty poems that do nothing for us for the prospect of reading one that shakes us. In contrast, the pleasure of eating a good strawberry is far greatly outweighed by the pain of eating a rotten strawberry. We would never be willing to eat fifty rotten strawberries for the prospect of getting the one delicious one in the box. These examples may admittedly have various distracting features, but the general theoretical point is summarized in the figure below:

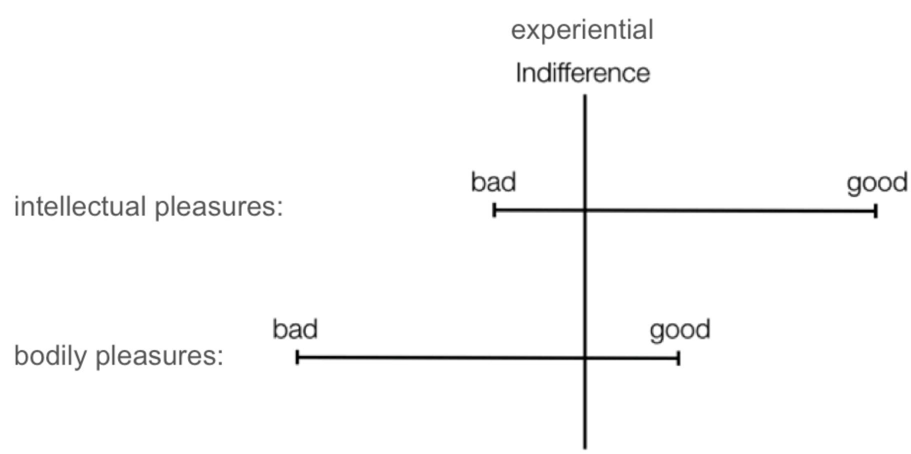

Figure 1. 'High pleasures,' 'low pleasures,' and the point of experiential indifference

Still, hedonism is a minority position in contemporary ethics. This is largely due to Nozick's (1981: 42-3) 'experience machine' objection: the objection that hedonism cannot vindicate the intuition that it would be rational for us to decline an invitation to enter a machine that would simulate exactly the same inner life we would otherwise have but add to it a bit of extra pleasure (one more delicious strawberry!). Now, recent defenses of hedonism have multiplied the attempts to debunk the experience-machine intuition (Silverstein 2000, Crisp 2006, De Brigard 2010). It is worth noting, however, that even if we accept the experience-machine objection at face value, all it really shows is that experience is not *sufficient* for well-being, or that it does not determine well-being *all by itself*. The objection does nothing to undermine the *necessity* of experience for well-being, the idea that experience makes an ineluctable *contribution* to well-being. For suppose you had to choose between the following two options: either (a) you enter the experience machine and lead a life phenomenally approximately indistinguishable from the one you would be leading outside the machine; or (b) you stay outside the machine but lose all phenomenal consciousness, carrying on your 'public' life entirely undisturbed – but as a complete zombie. It would seem folly to choose (b) in this scenario. Thus the fact that in the original experience-machine scenario you are guaranteed a continued experiential life outside the machine is crucial in sustaining the intuition that it is preferable for you not to plug in. At most, then, the experience-machine argument shows that (hedonically valenced) experience is only a *partial ground* of intrinsic prudential value.

It is independently plausible that hedonically valenced phenomenology is only a partial ground of prudential value. For consider the following choice: either (a) you submit today to a medical procedure that would irreversibly zombify you overnight (though it will leave your cognitive and motivational architecture as functionally unchanged as possible) or (b) your life from now on will skew consistently towards the unpleasant (it is not that you will be relentlessly tortured, but just that you will experience considerably more frustration and pain than pleasure and satisfaction). I think most of us will have no difficulty choosing (b). At least as long as the pain is not too overwhelming, most of us find it far better to live with it than to end our conscious life. This seems to suggest that we also value being conscious as such, regardless of the hedonic quality of our consciousness.[9] If this is right, then prudential value is at best grounded partly in hedonic phenomenology and partly in phenomenal consciousness as such.

Partly under the pressure of the experience-machine objection, many ethicists today prefer a desire-satisfaction theory, according to which a person's well-being is a function of her desires being satisfied. It is not the distribution of pleasure vs. pain that matters, but the distribution of satisfied vs. frustrated desires. In some versions all desires count equally, in others some special subclass is relevant to life's goodness (see Heathwood forthcoming for discussion). Importantly, the notion of satisfaction at play here is not subjective but objective: for a person's desire to be satisfied is not for that person to experience a phenomenal feeling of satisfaction, but for the desire's content-fixing satisfaction conditions to be met. It is this notion of satisfaction that helps the desire-satisfaction theorist avoid the experience-machine problem: in the experience machine, we have the *impression* that our desires are being satisfied, and accordingly experience feelings of satisfaction, but our desires are not *really* satisfied (e.g., I may want to go back tonight to the amazing restaurant from yesterday, when in reality I have been tube-fed indeterminate mash ever since plugging into the machine 20 years ago). What matters for one's well-being, on this view, is that one's desires be genuinely satisfied; the presence or absence of feelings of satisfaction (and their positive hedonic phenomenology) is immaterial.

In addition to being supported by an array of arguments (Heathwood 2016: 137-8), taking satisfied desires to be the only things of intrinsic prudential value has a pleasing symmetry with taking true beliefs to be the only things of intrinsic epistemic value. And like the idea that true beliefs are the only things of intrinsic epistemic value, it does not seem to assign special value to phenomenal consciousness (Levy 2014).[10] Even if we suppose, rather implausibly, that all our desires are phenomenally conscious, and moreover that their satisfaction conditions are fully fixed by their phenomenal character, what matters for prudential value on this theory is not just the *having* of desires, but their being satisfied. Prudential value comes into the world when we move from desires had to desires *satisfied*. And what makes a desire satisfied does not normally have to do with consciousness, but with the objective facts about the world. There is of course one exception to this, namely, when one's desire is a desire *for* a certain kind of conscious experience (among other things). We might call such desires *phenomenal* desires. These are desires whose subject matter is, at least in part, a phenomenal experience. Accordingly, phenomenal consciousness does play a role in the satisfaction of phenomenal desires. For non-phenomenal desires, however, it does not. And on the face of it, most of our desires are non-phenomenal.

Because of this, the desire-satisfaction theory may appear to lend itself to a relatively deflationary approach to the role of consciousness in well-being. We may put the reasoning as follows:

1. The goodness of a life is determined by how many of one's desires (or one's desires of the right kind) are such that their satisfaction conditions are met;
2. For most of our desires, consciousness has no role in determining whether their satisfaction conditions are met; therefore,
3. The goodness of a life has little to do with consciousness.

However, this reasoning seems to me to face a difficult dilemma, around the question of the place of phenomenal desires in the "right kind" of desires (i.e., the kind determinative of well-being).[11]

To bring out the dilemma, imagine you are offered the following deal by an omnipotent deity: if you submit to a zombification procedure that retains as much of your cognitive and motivational architecture as possible but deprives you of phenomenology, the deity will see to it that your current desires will be satisfied. Should you accept the deal if you want to make your life better (for you)? Intuitively, you should not. Intuitively, your life will not be better for you if you submit to this procedure; it will be much worse. In fact, there is a perfectly good sense in which *your* life will be no more (Cutter 2017). For suppose you are offered a variant of the deal where after a week in a state of zombiehood, you would be killed and replaced with another zombie cooked up in a Petri dish – but your current desires will continue to be methodically satisfied one by one. It is entirely unclear what reason you have to find this new variant of the deal any less appealing than the previous one. Both offers are, intuitively, really terrible *for you*: far from making your life better for you, they would end your life in any prudentially significant sense of 'your life.' (It is important here to screen off intuitions about whether it would be *morally* good to accept the deal. You might affect a great deal of good in the world if you thus sacrifice yourself to secure the prospective satisfaction of all your geopolitical and macroeconomic wishes. But that would still be a *sacrifice*: your own well-being would be the price you would heroically pay for things going well for others.)

In response, the desire-satisfaction theorist may claim that the reason we would decline this invitation is that many of our desires are tied up with a desire for the conscious awareness of their satisfaction. For example, I do not only want the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to be resolved peacefully, I also want to be consciously aware of this peaceful resolution – this is what I mean when I say 'I wish the conflict will be peacefully resolved *in my lifetime*.' (It does not matter for present purposes whether the awareness element is built into the content of the original first-order desire or constitutes the content of an accompanying second-order desire.) These desires for conscious awareness of (other) desires' satisfaction are a central part, on this response, of the class of desires the satisfaction or frustration of which determines life's goodness.

This response does not seem implausible to me, but it does reintroduce phenomenal consciousness into the picture. For it claims that many of the desires the satisfaction of which contributes to well-being are phenomenal desires: desires *for* certain sort of experience. In other words, the response may be effective in defending Premise 1 of the above argument, it does so at the cost of undermining Premise 2, the premise that consciousness plays a limited role in the satisfaction or frustration of those desires which are relevant to well-being. If well-being-relevant desires are often desires *for* conscious experience, then consciousness has a central place in well-being.

The upshot is that a desire-satisfaction-based deflationism about the prudential value of consciousness faces the following dilemma: either phenomenal desires are included centrally among the desires satisfaction of which contributes to well-being, in which case phenomenal consciousness is still central to the good life; or phenomenal desires are not centrally included, in which case the view yields the absurd result that zombification by a desire-satisfying demon is prudentially advisable. Thus contrary to Levy 2014, there is no argument from desire-satisfactionism to a lack of significant prudential value for phenomenal consciousness.

Indeed, we may even envisage a version of desire-satisfactionism in which *only* phenomenal desires are relevant to well-being. This kind of 'phenomenal desire-satisfactionism' would still not be a version of experientialism about well-being, since intrinsic prudential value would still not inhere in the fact that certain experiences *occur*, but rather in the fact that their occurrence *satisfies* certain desires. But it *would* imply that without phenomenal consciousness there is no prospect for a good life – a zombie could not fare even minimally well. This kind of phenomenal desire-satisfaction theory is to my knowledge absent from the extant literature, but it is not unintuitive. The average person's overarching desire in life is often simply the desire to be happy, notably in the aforementioned sense of experiencing a preponderance of good moods (and a dearth of foul moods). This is clearly a desire for a certain phenomenal pattern to obtain in one's life.

The third type of theory of well-being (in common taxonomies) is the objective-list theory. The general idea is that a life is good for the one who lives it to the extent that it features as many items from a privileged set of goodness-conferring elements. Strictly speaking, however, hedonism and desire-satisfaction theory also satisfy this general characterization. What marks off objective-list theories are two main features, one captured in 'objective' and one in 'list.' The 'objective' part is that the goodness-conferring elements must be such independently of our subjective reactions to them: it is not because we enjoy or want them, or even because we are aware of having them, that they make our lives better. The 'list' part intimates a strong tendency toward pluralism: we expect the goodness-conferring elements to be several, rather than to reduce to a single source. Thus a typical objective-list theory would cite love and friendship, achievement and self-realization, play and free time, appreciation of beauty, and a number of other elements the very existence of which in one's life – regardless of one's attitude toward them – makes it a better life.

Objective-list theories may seem initially unaccommodating of a special role for consciousness in well-being. But in fact most theories in this vein do cite affectively valenced experiences in their list of objective goodness-conferring elements; it is just that (i) it is the having of those experiences that they consider good, rather than our attitudes toward them, and (ii) their lists include also other, non-experiential elements. Thus, Fletcher (2013) includes happiness and pleasure in his objective list, while Murphy (2001) includes happiness, 'inner peace' (which is presumably feels quite nice!), and aesthetic experience (presumably of the pleasant variety to do with beauty rather than the unpleasant one to do with ugliness). To be sure, the fact that for such objective-list theories valenced experiences are only one of many elements responsible for well-being diminishes considerably the prudential value of consciousness; but it does not annihilate it. More precisely, it casts affectively valenced experience as a partial rather than full ground of well-being.

Furthermore, we should keep in mind the coherence of a sort of limit case of objective-list theory that includes on its list *only* conscious experiences, though not only hedonically valenced ones. This kind of 'list-experientialism' is defended by van der Deijl (forthcoming), who cites self-understanding and novelty as experiential goods that supplement pleasure in making life good. Other philosophers have belabored the value of *cognitive* phenomenology. Galen Strawson (2011: 299), for instance, argues that without cognitive phenomenology life would be 'pretty boring' (see also Chudnoff 2015 Ch.3). And as noted above, we may well value having phenomenology as such (so long it is not too agonizing). Thus one may draw a longish list of valuable experiences that go beyond the hedonically valenced, and ground well-being in it. In this limit case of objective-list theory, then, experience regains its status as *full* ground of intrinsic prudential value.[12]

I conclude that unless one adopts either (a) a desire-satisfaction theory purged of phenomenal desires or (b) an objective-list theory purged of experiential items, consciousness plays an important role in enabling, or even partially grounding, well-being. And under some views it can even constitute the *full* ground of intrinsic prudential value, namely, under phenomenological hedonism and list-experientialism. My own sympathies lie with a version of list-experientialism that features only two items on its list: hedonically valenced experiences (notably moods) and phenomenal experience as such. To that extent, I am inclined to think that prudential value is fully grounded in phenomenal consciousness.

5.2. The moral value of consciousness: Consciousness and morality

As noted, modern moral philosophy has been dominated by three main approaches: consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. Let us consider, then, the outlook for a role for consciousness in moral value within each framework.

Consequentialism is typically characterized as the view that an act is morally right to the extent that its consequences are morally good, with different versions of consequentialism issuing from different views on what would make a consequence morally good. One version that may be of special interest to us is 'welfarist consequentialism': good consequence = more well-being. On this view, a life is morally good to the extent that it maximizes well-being in the world – not just one's own, but others' as well. In this version, consequentialism embeds theories of prudential value in its account of moral value. Accordingly, the conclusions about prudential value reached at the end of §5.1 will transfer to moral value. Thus if one combines welfarist consequentialism with either phenomenological hedonism or list-experientialism about well-being, one would obtain the result that consciousness is also the full ground of *moral* value. The basic reasoning here is this:

1. An action is morally right to the extent that it maximizes well-being (welfarist consequentialism);
2. Well-being is fully grounded in (the right species of) phenomenology (phenomenological hedonism or list-experientialism); therefore,
3. An action is morally right to the extent that it maximizes the occurrence of (the right species of) phenomenology.

The combination of welfarist consequentialism and phenomenological hedonism appears to enjoy a sustained contemporary defense in Roger Crisp's work.[13] The combination of welfarist consequentialism and list experientialism, however, is to my knowledge unexplored.

It is a weakness of the argument just laid out that neither of the options supporting premise 2 is very prominent in contemporary accounts of well-being. But as we have seen, many more approaches support the idea that well-being is *partially* grounded in phenomenology. Indeed, only quite implausible versions of desire-satisfaction theory and relatively idiosyncratic versions of objective-list theory deny even that. So most plausible theories of well-being pave the way, against the background of welfarist consequentialism, to the thesis that moral value is *partially* grounded in (the right kinds of) phenomenology.

Deontological approaches to morality emphasize motivation over consequences: they commend acting from the motive of duty rather than acting for the promotion of well-being. There is any number of views one could have about what our moral duty is, but the paradigmatic view here is surely Kant's: our duty is to always treat human beings as ends in themselves rather than as mere means to our own ends (or for that matter someone else's ends). There is something about the presence of another person in a situation that, for Kant, puts the breaks on how we would otherwise naturally act – the person 'exacts respect for himself from all other rational beings in the world' (Kant 1797: 186-7). That in virtue of which a person exacts respect, and merits being treated as an end, is what Kant (1785: 52) calls 'dignity.' Our fundamental duty, then, is to respect and treat as ends all creatures possessed of dignity; all our other, more 'local' duties derive essentially from this one.

What role might consciousness play within the deontological framework? I think the key question here is: What gives some things dignity and not others? It seems odd to think that dignity is a brute, inexplicable attribute that attaches itself to some entities and not others in a completely arbitrary way. More plausibly, things have certain empirical properties that ground their dignity – be these genetic, psychological, or other empirical (i.e., non-evaluative) properties. We have duties to other people, but not to rocks – and this must have to do with the factual differences between people and rocks. This creates an opening for a role for consciousness. One claim in this area might be that the ground of dignity is precisely phenomenal consciousness (Kriegel 2017). The reasoning would be something like this:

1) An action is morally right iff it treats dignitaries (i.e., creatures possessed of dignity) as ends rather than mere means;
2) All and only phenomenally conscious creatures are dignitaries; therefore,
3) An action is morally right iff it treats phenomenally conscious creatures as ends rather than mere means.

On this view, an entity exacts respects and merits treatment as an end just if it is a phenomenally conscious creature. (It follows that we have duties toward not only human beings but all conscious beings, including conscious nonhuman animals.[14])

It might be objected to Premise 2 that it fits poorly with Kant's idea that dignity attaches to rational beings capable of setting ends. But the Kantian idea faces a dilemma: could an unconscious automaton be a rational end-setting being? If not, then (a) it would seem that rational end-setting status implies consciousness. But if a rational end-setting automaton is possible, then (b) intuitively, there is no particular reason for us to treat it as an end rather than mere means. We can all envisage a future in which household robots are treated as means for the performance of household chores. Even if such robots were developed to the point that they could set their own ends, as long as they remained certified zombies, we would feel no more pressure to treat them as ends than we do our current-day Roombas. Both those future robots and today's Roombas are characterized by one simple fact: *there is nobody home*. For these reasons, I am convinced that Kant himself had horn (a) in mind, and so would accept consciousness as at least a partial ground of dignity ('partial' because end-setting capacity might go beyond the bare possession of phenomenal consciousness).

Naturally, it is also possible to reject Premise 1 of the deontological argument for the value of consciousness – that is, to reject deontology. Many objections have, obviously, been floated against deontology (see, e.g., Alexander and Moore 2016 §6). For my part, I am sensitive to Sartre's (1946) objection that when we face a moral dilemma in which all courses of action are equally respectful of persons as ends rather than mere means, Kant's deontology offers us no guidance whatsoever. I think it is intuitive that in such circumstances we should favor whichever course of action would maximizes people's well-being, or happiness, or something of the sort. And this brings consequentialist moral sensibilities back into the picture.

That said, such a hybrid moral theory would still secure an important value for consciousness if both its deontological and its consequentialist components had an important role for consciousness to play. Consider the following ecumenical maxim: Always maximize well-being in the world consistently with treating all dignitaries as ends rather than mere means. To the extent that consciousness grounds well-being and dignity, we could reason as follows:

1) An action is morally right iff it maximizes well-being consistently with treating all dignitaries as ends rather than mere means;
2) Well-being is fully grounded in (the right species of) phenomenology (phenomenological hedonism or list-experientialism);
3) All and only phenomenally conscious creatures are dignitaries; therefore,

4) An action is morally right iff it maximizes the occurrence of (the right species of) phenomenology consistently with treating phenomenally conscious creatures as ends and not mere means.

The conclusion is doubly consciousness-invoking: (i) insofar as it identifies the promotion of the right species of phenomenology as the default goal of moral action and (ii) insofar as it identifies the possession of phenomenal consciousness as the only factor constraining the pursuit of that default goal.

I am tempted by a moral theory organized around something like (*Ecumenical*). According to this, there are two independent sources of moral value in our world, well-being and dignity, and both are empirically grounded in phenomenal consciousness: well-being in certain species of phenomenal consciousness, dignity in phenomenal consciousness as such. Thus on the moral theory I am most tempted by, consciousness grounds moral value.

The last major approach to moral value is virtue ethics. Here what makes a person's life morally good is his or her actively maintaining and reliably exercising stable dispositions of a certain sort – the virtues. That is what we call *a good person*: a person on whose generosity, modesty, kindness, empathy, trustworthiness, warmth, fairness, and courage we can safely rely. The morally good life is the life of such a person.

What role does consciousness have in this framework? Well, whatever role it has in the virtues. Now, being dispositions, the virtues are standing conditions of personality, not occurrent events as conscious experiences are. Still, consciousness may well show up in the identity conditions of these dispositions. In general, dispositions individuate by their *triggering* and *manifestation* conditions. To take a toy example, a vase's disposition to break when dropped (roughly: 'fragility') has dropping for triggering condition and breaking for manifestation condition. Generosity, too, has characteristic triggering and manifestation conditions. The triggering condition of generosity is typically the presence of someone in need. Arguably, now, a zombie duplicate of a person in need either (a) does not have needs the meeting of which has any moral significance or (b) does not have needs at all, in the proper sense of 'needs.' So consciousness appears to show up in the triggering conditions of generosity. As for manifestation conditions, the central such conditions are surely behavioral and involve the ceding of resources (money, time, energy) to the person in need. But in the Aristotelian tradition, the generous person is she who not only *behaves* in the right way but also thinks and *feels* the right way. Indeed, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle puts feeling at the heart of virtue: 'to feel [what we feel] at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, is … characteristic of virtue' (6.1106b). Thus generosity is individuated partly in virtue of the kind of magnanimous or giving feeling it manifests in. There is a subtle phenomenology of magnanimity that one must be able to appreciate for one to understand what a manifestation of generosity is – and therefore what generosity itself is.

Obviously, I do not offer the foregoing as a robust argument that consciousness shows up both in the triggering and manifestation conditions of generosity. The considerations I have aired are far too superficial and preliminary. All the same, they serve to *illustrate* how consciousness might be claimed to show up in the identity conditions of a virtue – to be part of what makes it the virtue it is. Now, generosity may be unusual in having consciousness in its triggering conditions. Courage, for instance, is triggered by conditions of danger, and these can occur in the complete absence of consciousness. Still, even courage plausibly involves, as part of its *manifestation* conditions, a certain phenomenology of resolve in the face of danger. And from an Aristotelian perspective, we may expect some experiential component in the manifestation conditions of all or most virtues.

According to Annas (2008), there is a also a more generic phenomenology characteristic of the manifestation of all virtues. It is what she calls the phenomenology of *flow* – of acting in the right way in an effortless and unconflicted manner. The person who gives a homeless person a dollar only after overcoming strong internal resistance, perhaps by deliberately overriding her self-interested instincts, is not as generous as the person who does not need to mobilize great moral effort to give away the dollar. Likewise for other virtues.

For a virtue ethicist, then, moral value is grounded in the virtues, and certain species of consciousness (a phenomenology of magnanimity, a phenomenology of resolve, and so on) are part of what individuates the virtues. It follows that certain species of consciousness are part of what individuates the grounds of moral value. To that extent, they may be thought of as partial grounds of moral value. At the same time, they may turn out to be a *small* part. Behavioral manifestations might plausibly be claimed to be more crucial to the identity conditions of the virtues than experiential manifestations, and some virtues' triggering conditions may turn out not to include reference to consciousness at all.

In conclusion, we see that many mainstream views on both types of ethical value – prudential and moral – ground this value in phenomenal consciousness. Typically the claim is of merely partial grounding, and of grounding by only some species of phenomenal consciousness. But it is also typically a claim of *intrinsic* value (unlike the epistemic case, where the standard claim concerned merely instrumental value), and on the margins we have also encountered claims of *full* grounding (in phenomenological hedonism and list experientialism about prudential value and corresponding versions of welfarist consequentialism about moral value). Thus the ethical value of consciousness is by many lights quite important.

I mentioned at the opening of this essay that the value of consciousness has been a lively area of debate in medical ethics. A big reason for this is the dramatic emergence of very strong evidence of consciousness in patients in permanent vegetative state (PVS) in the first few years of this century. The question before the ethicists is whether such patients should be granted 'full moral status,' which includes the right to life. The shared assumption seems to be that they should, provided the evidence suggests that they can lead lives worth living (i.e., lives that clear a certain threshold of goodness to those who live them). But this is where opinion split. Kahane and Savulescu (2009) argue that PVS patients should not be kept alive, on the grounds that their inability to communicate with others likely results in unbearable solitude. Here the background framework seems to be broadly hedonist: it is the pain caused by solitude, and its (speculated) overriding enormity, that grounds Kahane and Savulescu's verdict. This hedonist background seems to be shared by Peterson and Bayne (2018), who only call into question Kahane and Savulescu's empirical assumptions about the possibility of meaningful interaction in PVS. In contrast, Levy and Savulescu (2009) argue that phenomenal consciousness is not what matters to a patient's full moral status, but rather the patient's hope that many of her interests will be satisfied. This seems to presuppose rather a desire-satisfaction theory of well-being, something Levy (2014) is explicit about. The dispute goes on, and mixes empirical questions about the nature of PVS patients' actual conscious lives (something we know relatively little about) and ethical questions about what makes a life worth living. To my knowledge, the dispute does not feature any disputants who rely on an objective-list theory.

Another issue in the medical ethics of consciousness that may loom large in future discussions is the very real possibility that cerebral organoids will become the first conscious artifacts during our century. Organoids are miniature imitations of biological organs produced in laboratory from pluripotent stem cells. At present these organoids tend to be functionally impoverished and very small, but this field of medical research is growing rapidly, as it holds the promise of medicine's "holy grail": organ transplant *à la carte*. One lively sub-field is *cerebral* organoids, that is, stem-cell-produced functional mini-brains. These raise immediate ethical issues, however (Lavazza and Massimini 2018). Recent evidence suggests that cerebral organoids can develop within six months patterns of neural synchronization among distinct neural populations (Trujillo et al. 2019), a feature widely believed to be a component of the neural correlate of consciousness (despite important disagreement as to *why* it is – see Kriegel 2007 for my take on it). Although other components are almost certainly necessary, there is every reason to expect that a future cerebral organoid would reproduce perfectly what we would know to be the neural correlate of consciousness in "neuronormative" human adults. This possibility raises many questions, among them: What moral status, if any, would such a conscious artifact be owed? What degree of credence in its conscious existence should we set as a threshold for granting such a status? What safeguards, if any, should we put in place to avoid the unwitting production, and the unwitting exploitation, of such a being? Although the current medical ethics of cerebral organoids is underdeveloped, it may well become a prominent topic as the corresponding science continues to evolve.

6. The Aesthetic Value of Consciousness

We have many experiences of beauty in life – aesthetic experiences occasioned by encounter with art, with nature, and even with abstract structures. But do we have experiences that are themselves beautiful? That is, do we have aesthetic experiences directed at *other experiences*? For my part, I find it hard to think clearly about what that would amount to. But when I widen my view from beauty to the great range of aesthetic values commonly cited in the philosophy of art, I find it easier to conceive of aesthetic values borne by experiences. A fine shade of moral emotion may seem *exquisite*, an insight that allows one to see a longstanding problem in a fresh and fecund light may seem *compelling*, and so on. At the same time, clearly many things other than conscious experiences can be exquisite or compelling, and to that extent the relevant experiences appear inessential to the *existence* of those aesthetic values. And it also hard to know what exactly accounts for the exquisite or compelling aspect of these experiences. Certain experiences may, by their rarity and intricacy, exhibit aesthetic value; but it may well be their rarity or intricacy that grounds this value, rather than their being experiences.

Still, there is a broadly subjectivist tradition in aesthetics that grounds aesthetic value in experience in a different way. I have in mind the kind of 'secondary-quality' account whereby an object's being aesthetically valuable is a matter of its being disposed to elicit the right kind of aesthetic experience in the right kind of subject under the right kind of circumstance. The approach continues to command philosophical defense and development (e.g., Matthen 2018) and may be generically stated as follows: For any item x and intrinsic aesthetic value V_i, such that x is V_i, there is a kind of subject S, a kind of circumstance C, and a kind of aesthetic experience $Æ_i$, such that (i) x is disposed to elicit $Æ_i$ in S under C and (ii) x is V in virtue of the fact that (i). Presumably, the *phenomenology* of aesthetic experience is crucial here: if an object elicited in us internal states with the functional role of aesthetic experience, but without the corresponding phenomenology, most subjectivists would be disinclined to consider it aesthetically valuable.

There are three potential concerns with this approach to grounding aesthetic value in consciousness. The first surrounds the very notion of aesthetic experience. As is well known, the notion had been out of favor for much of the second half of the twentieth century, largely due to Dickie's (1965) influential critique.

However, more recent discussions in the philosophy of perception have inspired a renewed interest in the putative phenomenon of aesthetic perception. One central issue has been what separates aesthetic from non-aesthetic perception. After all, it is perfectly possible to look at a painting or listen to a symphony without undergoing aesthetic experience. Nanay (2015) has argued that paradigmatic instances of aesthetic experience display a distinctive distribution of perceptual attention, absent in non-aesthetic perception. But it is also possible to appeal here to a non-perceptual, purely *affective* element. After all, intuitively a perceptual experience of a painting or a symphony does not amount to an aesthetic experience unless one also *enjoys* what one perceives. Indeed, a recent line of thought, starting from the observation that aesthetic experience occasioned by (e.g.) literature and conceptual art is not perceptually based (Shelley 2003), has led some authors to *identify* aesthetic experience with the relevant affective element, recasting perceptual experience as merely contingently and causally linked to aesthetic experience proper (Goffin 2019). Alternatively, one might construe aesthetic experience as a pleasure taken *in the apprehension* of certain objects, where 'apprehension' covers both perceptual and non-perceptual (e.g., imaginative) awareness (Matthen 2017).

A second concern about the secondary-quality account of aesthetic value is that it does not recover the evaluative or 'normative' aspect of aesthetic value. Whether an object is disposed to elicit experiences, and if so which, is a purely factual, 'descriptive' matter. To reduce aesthetic value to a factual matter is to commit a 'naturalistic fallacy.'

One approach to this problem is to defend the very notion of a naturalistic reduction of aesthetic value. Another approach is to unpack 'right subjects' and/or 'right circumstances' in overtly evaluative terms. Thus, one might construe these as *ideal* subjects and/or circumstances. The would be a sort of 'ideal-observer theory' of aesthetic value: an object being beautiful is a matter of it eliciting a positive aesthetic experience in *ideal* subjects under *ideal* circumstances. Of course, what makes a subject ideal cannot be that she has *veridical* experiences of aesthetic value (and what makes a circumstance ideal cannot be that it favors the formation of such veridical representation), on pain of circularity. Some story must be told about what makes subjects (and circumstances) ideal that does not invoke objects' aesthetic value. Here Hume's version of subjectivism points the way, with its account of five central elements that distinguish 'true critics' from ordinary subjects: 'Strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice' (Hume 1757: 229).

Another option for recovering the evaluative dimension of beauty is to revise the account so it grounds beauty not in the experiential responses subjects *actually* have but those it would be *right*, or *fitting*, for them to have. This is a sort of 'fitting-attitude account' of aesthetic value: for *x* to be beautiful is for it to be fitting to have an aesthetic experience in the presence of (and in response to) *x*. Fitting-attitude accounts are more familiar from metaethical discussions of *moral* value, but they have seen some play in aesthetics too. Franz Brentano (1906: 17), for instance, writes: 'The concept of the beautiful has to do with… [that which] elicits in us a delight with the character of fittingness.' Brentano has a complicated account of what the relevant fittingness consists in, but all that matters for us is this detail: it is *not* a matter of the delight tracking *x*'s independent beauty.

From our perspective, the most problematic aspect of the secondary-quality account of aesthetic value is that although it yields a grounding of aesthetic value in consciousness, the aesthetic value thus grounded in consciousness is not an aesthetic value *of consciousness*. It is not the aesthetic experience *itself* which is beautiful, or otherwise aesthetically valuable, but the *object* of the experience. This raises the question of whether this kind of grounding really constitutes an aesthetic value *of* consciousness. It seems more natural to say that consciousness *enables* aesthetic value, on the proposed account, than that it *has* this value.

Two points should be made in response. The first is that in virtue of enabling something else having aesthetic value, consciousness itself acquires an *instrumental* aesthetic value. The fact that a painting (say) is beautiful in virtue of its eliciting an experiential response imputes *instrumental* aesthetic value on the experience – though not *intrinsic* aesthetic value. Secondly, however, there might be aesthetic values other than beauty that consciousness itself has, independently of its secondary-quality role in grounding aesthetic value. I suspect that this is indeed the case with *the sublime*.[15] On the traditional conception of the sublime, the sublime is not simply whatever is especially beautiful. Rather, it is what is so incomprehensibly grand and imposing as to somehow elude our grasp and inspire in us something like *awe*. This reaction of *awe* that is either constitutive or at least diagnostic of the sublime. (Again, we might offer a fitting-attitude account: the sublime is that by which it is fitting to be awed. That is, *x* is sublime just if it is fitting to be in awe of *x*.) Arguably, when we contemplate sufficiently vividly the so-called explanatory gap between phenomenal consciousness and the rest of the natural order, a certain intellectual type of awe descends on us, and does so rather fittingly. (Importantly, as many philosophers recognize, it is fitting to experience this awe even when one has credence higher than .5 in physicalism.) If consciousness is a fitting object of awe, and being a fitting object of awe is at least a mark of the sublime, then consciousness is sublime.

In conclusion, phenomenal consciousness may have at least two kinds of aesthetic value, at least if certain assumptions hold. One is an instrumental aesthetic value in enabling things to be aesthetically valuable – at least if a secondary-quality account of aesthetic value is accepted. The other is an intrinsic aesthetic value as sublime – at least if it is fitting to feel awe upon contemplating the fact that a world made up entirely of subatomic particles should contain something like phenomenal consciousness.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this paper has been to sketch out a general framework within which the question of the value of consciousness – increasingly prominent in a variety of discussions across quite disconnected research areas – could be addressed in a systematic manner. In the first instance, the question is usefully factorized into six types of question: about epistemic, ethical (both prudential and moral), and aesthetic value, either intrinsic or instrumental. To make progress on these questions, we must first have clear views on what the intrinsic values in each domain *are*. Once we have such views on the table, we can use standard philosophical techniques of analysis and argumentation to try and establish various relatively concrete theses. The more comprehensive our collection of such theses, the more comprehensive our account of the value of consciousness.

In the course of our discussion, we have identified a number of potential lines of thought leading to an intrinsic value for consciousness. First, if (1) understanding is an intrinsic epistemic value, (2) grasping is an ineluctable component of understanding, and (3) presentational phenomenology or some such phenomenal feature is necessarily involved in grasping, then (4) there is an intrinsic epistemic value partially grounded in (a species of) phenomenal consciousness. Secondly, if either phenomenological hedonism or 'list-experientialism' is true about well-being, then intrinsic prudential value is fully grounded in (certain species of) phenomenal consciousness (and may be partially grounded in phenomenal consciousness as such, namely, if the latter shows up within one's list-experientialism). Thirdly, if (1) either phenomenological hedonism or list-experientialism is true of well-being and (2) welfare consequentialism is true of moral value, then (3) intrinsic moral value is fully grounded in (the relevant species of) consciousness as well. Fourthly, if (1) phenomenal consciousness is the ground of dignity, and (2) dignity the ground of moral value, then by transitivity of ground, (3) phenomenal consciousness (as such) is the ground of moral value. Fifthly, if (1) the sublime is an intrinsic aesthetic value, (2) anything is sublime that elicits fitting awe, and (3) there is an intellectual kind of awe fittingly elicited by phenomenal consciousness, then (4) there is an intrinsic aesthetic value that attaches to phenomenal consciousness (as such).

Each of these lines of thought is of course controversial. Some have courted actual controversy (e.g., phenomenological hedonism about prudential value). Others may increasingly do so over the coming years, as the topic of the value of consciousness comes more transparently to the forefront of a number of areas intersecting with the philosophy of consciousness.[16]

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[1] A positive answer to the first question clearly requires that *all* species of phenomenal consciousness have value. But it also requires more than that. For suppose that pluralism is true of ethical value, such that V_1 and V_2 are two mutually irreducible intrinsic ethical values. And suppose that species S_1 and S_2 of phenomenal consciousness exhibit V_1 while species S_3 and S_4 exhibit V_2. Then there would be no intrinsic ethical value that phenomenal consciousness as such would exhibit – even tough for each of its species there would be an intrinsic ethical value that *it* exhibits.

[2] This may be either because consciousness' epistemic value is more salient than its ethical and aesthetic value, or (as I rather suspect) because epistemology lies nearer the philosophy of mind than do ethics and aesthetics.

[3] Objection: if you imagine a chair, you have the same chair-y phenomenology, but that would not rationalize the belief that there is a chair in the room. Response: a phenomenology as of perceiving a chair has more to it than just a chair-y phenomenology; it also involves a perception-y phenomenology, a phenomenology to do with the experiential mode or attitude rather than content. Indeed, this is what Pryor and Huemer's notion of force(fullness) is supposed to be. Some writers have contested the notion that phenomenal forceful(ness) cleanly separates perceptual from imaginative experiences, arguing that some perceptual experiences lack it (Ghijsen 2014) or that some imaginative ones have it (Teng 2018). But these arguments rely on spirited interpretation of experimentally rather narrow results. Thus we observe recurrent appeal to the so-called Perky effect: when subjects are put in front of a white screen and asked to imagine a banana or an apple, while unbeknownst to them an ever-so-dim image

of a banana is surreptitiously projected on the screen, they tend to report having imagined a banana rather than an apple. Many interpretations of this result are possible. The one anti-dogmatists rely on is that Perky subjects have *perceptual* experiences of banana that lack the property of representing-as-actual/real. But the properly experimental results are consistent with many other interpretations. My own inclination is to think that although Perky subjects have perceptual representations of bananas, these perceptual representations *causally* encourage them to imagine bananas rather than apples. As a result they do actually have *imaginative* experiences, though ones caused ("primed") by perceptual banana representations of.

[4] Some naïve realists, notably Keith Allen (forthcoming), have argued that perceptual experience, insofar as it provides us with contact with reality, is intrinsically rather than instrumentally valuable. It is not entirely clear from Allen's discussion, however, whether he has epistemic or ethical value (or both) in mind. In any case, I am skeptical of Allen's argument. The argument is that naïve realism is the only view of perceptual experience that can account for its intrinsic value as constituting contact with reality, because other views must claim that it is only in belief (and action) that contact with reality is achieved, and so perceptual experience is valuable only insofar as it is instrumental to the formation of beliefs (and actions). But this is wrong: most opponents of naïve realism would claim that contact with reality is established in veridical perceptual experience; it is just that it is the veridicality of the experience, not it sheer occurrence, that establishes contact. (An appeal to belief here would be strange, since most opponents of naïve realism think that false belief and true belief belong to a single psychological kind just as veridical and falsidical perceptual experience do.)

[5] It might be argued that the type of introspective awareness of our conscious states that is infallible is itself conscious, so that this assigns at least one species of consciousness – introspective consciousness – a kind of intrinsic epistemic value. The problem, though, is that the fact that conscious introspections are infallible does not show that they are so *in virtue of being conscious*. (Indeed, most of the cited authors hold that they are so in virtue of some constitutive connection between introspection and the introspected.)

[6] Siewert (2013) argues for a central role for consciousness in specifically *linguistic* understanding (see also Campbell 2002 for the connection between consciousness and linguistic reference). But this kind of understanding could be claimed to reduce to a species of knowledge: knowledge of meaning (in Campbell's case, knowledge of reference).

[7] Joshua Shepherd (2018) has recently presented a particularly developed account of what he calls 'phenomenal value' – in essence, phenomenally grounded prudential value – in terms of 'affective-evaluative' phenomenal properties. These are phenomenal properties which involve both hedonic valence and evaluation of their objects. Thus, taking pleasure in beer, being content with beer, and hoping for beer both (i) feel good and (ii) evaluate beer positively; while pain, embarrassment, and anger both (i) feel bad and (ii) evaluate their objects negatively. For Shepherd, then, there is an evaluative dimension that must supplement valence in the

phenomenal grounds of prudential value. Arguably, however, the temptation to incorporate evaluative phenomenology in the phenomenal grounds of prudential value is shaken when we consider the rare instances in which the correlation between the evaluative and hedonic dimensions breaks down. Thus, yearning for *x* feels bad but evaluates *x* positively. Intuitively, having a lot of yearning in one's life makes life (other things being equal) worse for one.

[8] Note that we can appreciate this point while staying silent on the question of whether the duplicate's functionally equivalent states count as pleasures and pains.

[9] Thanks to Géraldine Carranante and Anna Giustina for making me see this.

[10] Levy deploys desire-satisfaction theory also to bear on a lively issue in medical ethics: whether patients in permanent vegetative state (PVS) can lead lives worth living. The debate has been shaken by the recent dramatic emergence of very strong evidence of consciousness in PVS patients. Levy and Savulescu (2009) argue, however, that phenomenal consciousness is not what matters here, but the patient's hope that many of her interests will be satisfied.

[11] The dilemma I will present is inspired by exchanges with Charles Siewert, who deserves intellectual copyrights for the use of zombification thought experiments (or 'radical pheno-ectomy' – see Siewert 1998: 320) in assessing various value claims concerning (phenomenal) consciousness.

[12] A hedonist may object that novelty, self-understanding, and so on are themselves pleasurable. But this seems to be so in a merely causal and not constitutive sense: novelty tends to *produce* pleasure, it is not *itself* a pleasure. So van der Deijl is quite right that his theory is not a form of hedonism. The hedonist may still suspect that it is the tight causal link to pleasure that tempts our intuition toward this kind of list-experientialism.

[13] Classical utilitarianism of the Bentham/Mill mold can also be seen as the upshot of welfarist consequentialism plus hedonism about welfare. But consequentialism can also be combined with a desire-satisfaction account of well-being, the result being Hare's (1981) 'preference utilitarianism,' or with objective-list accounts, yielding any number of pluralist consequentialisms (see already Brentano 1889 and Moore 1903).

[14] Kantian defenses of animal rights do not typically put much emphasis on phenomenal consciousness. It is perfectly possible, though, to hold that an animal's possession of phenomenal consciousness confers dignity on it and requires us to treat it as ends rather than mere means (Kriegel 2013). That said, in consequentialist defenses of animal rights the notion of 'sentience' is much more central – and 'sentience' is essentially the capacity to experience pain and pleasure (Singer 1975).

[15] I am grateful to Takuya Niikawa for making me see clearly this connection between consciousness, awe, and the sublime.

[16] This paper is influenced by an immense number of philosophical exchanges over the years. Exchanges with Lorenza D'Angelo, Anna Giustina, Andrea Lavazza, Tricia Magalotti, Olivier Massin, and especially Charles Siewert stand out in my memory, but there were many others. I have also benefitted from presenting it at the Jean Nicod Institute, Rice University, Ruhr-University Bochum, and the University of Konstanz; I am grateful to the audiences there, in particular Gwen Bradford, Géraldine Carranante, Benjamin Eva, Anna Giustina, Michele Impagnatiello, Andrew Lee, Slawa Loev, Takuya Niikawa, Luke Roelofs, Charles Siewert, and Hong Yu Wong.