

# The Axiology of Panpsychism

**Marybel Menzies**

University of Toronto

## **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to argue that panpsychism entails the value of everything. The argument is supported through an axiological analysis of the value of consciousness demonstrating that consciousness is intrinsically valuable. Moreover, if consciousness is intrinsically valuable then it follows that any entity with consciousness must then be intrinsically valuable in virtue of possessing it. Thus, under the posit of panpsychism (i.e., consciousness is a fundamental and ubiquitous feature of nature), all of nature must be valuable. In this paper, arguments for and against the value of consciousness are considered, outlined, and discussed. From there, an axiology of panpsychism is argued for wherein the most primitive entities to the most sophisticated systems are valuable. Finally, some implications and prescriptions are considered.

## **1 Introduction**

The intuition that the cosmos is intrinsically and wholly valuable is deeply entrenched in much of how we describe our everyday observations about the world. For instance, when we marvel at the intricacies and peculiarities of fundamental particle physics, or are captivated by large-scale planetary motion, the valuable aspects of nature appear pervasive. The symmetry and order of the cosmos, which appears beautiful to us, makes it difficult to withhold the conviction that it is intrinsically beautiful, and hence valuable. Nevertheless, there is no consensus as to whether or not this intuition is consistent with reality. I aim to address this by using theories of panpsychism as the foundation from which to build an axiological model of our world.

At the outset of this paper, to lay the groundwork for an axiology of panpsychism, we must first understand three of its central aspects. First, panpsychism is the thesis that consciousness is a fundamental and ubiquitous feature of reality (Seager, 2020). Second, axiology is a broad discipline of inquiry that investigates values; their nature, variety, and interrelationships (Drob, 2011). Third, consciousness, which

is commonly defined as “the subjective quality of experience” (Chalmers, 2007). When combined, the axioms upholding theories of panpsychism and theories of consciousness have powerful implications for either a value-laden or value-less axiology, contingent on whether or not consciousness itself is valuable. While a variety of literature has argued that consciousness is not only valuable, but intrinsically valuable (Siewert, 1998; Kriegel, 2019; Seager, 2001), others have argued that consciousness is less valuable than we think, or potentially value-neutral (or value-absent) (Lee, 2018; Levy, 2014; Kahane and Savulescu, 2009). Hence, if the value-laden theorists are correct, this suggests that, under the thesis of panpsychism, the cosmos itself must be value-laden. However, if the value-less theorists are correct, then the reverse would hold.

In considering the positions, I argue that the contentions against the intrinsic value of consciousness do not carry weight when framed correctly. I aim to demonstrate that consciousness is not only valuable but intrinsically valuable. Using the paradigm of the panpsychist, the intrinsically valuable nature of consciousness entails the intrinsic value of all entities.

In defending my view, I first examine reasons to believe that consciousness is or is not valuable. Here, I differentiate phenomenal consciousness (i.e., “there is something that it is like” to have that subjective experience) (Nagel, 1974) in particular, from access consciousness (i.e., the ability to access cognitive events such as memories or skills) (Block, 1995). The argument I forward for the value of consciousness is directed at phenomenal consciousness in particular although access consciousness can give us some insight into the axiological significance of consciousness. Second, I lay out the arguments against the intrinsically valuable nature of consciousness and refute them in turn by suggesting that they misunderstand the role of phenomenal consciousness in the world. I will also be differentiating intrinsic value (i.e., good ‘in and of itself’) from instrumental value (i.e., good ‘as a function of what it can do’) (Schroeder, 2016).

Ultimately, using the foundation of my prior conclusions, I describe the relationship between the value of consciousness and the axiology of panpsychism. Here, I outline how theories of panpsychism have developed over the years, why they have been posited, and if they can be made consistent with other

modern theories of consciousness. Last, I will extrapolate how the intrinsically valuable nature of consciousness would fit into our picture of reality via the application of a panpsychist paradigm, extending to a ubiquitously valuable picture of nature itself.

## **2 Axiology and Phenomenal Consciousness**

### **2.1 Value: Intrinsic and Instrumental**

Value entails evaluative properties such as “goodness, badness, having such-and-such amount of utility, having so-and-so degree of well-being, the better-than relation, and so forth” (Cutter, 2017). Axiology, the study of value, comprises three main branches—epistemic, aesthetic, and moral value—and questions associated with the relationship between these branches and the aforementioned evaluative properties. Finally, value can either be intrinsic or instrumental.

Intrinsic value defines something as valuable, “in its own right” (Zimmerman & Bradley, 2019). That is, something that is intrinsically good is “non-derivatively good” (Zimmerman & Bradley, 2019) in that the goodness of the thing is grounded in itself—therefore, its goodness is reflexive. It differs from instrumental value in that if something is instrumentally good, its goodness is derivative i.e., its goodness is grounded in something other than itself.

To clarify, let us consider a potentially ambiguous value discussed by Zimmerman and Bradley (2019), namely, ‘health,’ and see whether it is better defined as intrinsically or instrumentally valuable (or both). Let us assume that we think health is intrinsically good, in the way that Zimmerman and Bradley do, what would that mean? Well, it would be something to the effect that health is intrinsically good for the person who possesses it i.e., it seems in the best interest of the person, let’s say “John” to value being healthy (Zimmerman & Bradley, 2019).

While the value of health may be sufficient to explain why someone engages in a behavior, such as exercise, to enhance or protect their health. Health, even in this case, does not necessarily seem to be intrinsically valuable because the supposed intrinsic value of health is completely reliant on instrumental reasons for valuing it i.e., health serves the instrumental purpose of enhancing quality of life.

Suppose both John and Jane have illnesses that cause them to be bed-ridden for weeks. The illness prevents John from traveling to his dream destination; therefore, he evaluates the illness as 'intrinsically bad'. Jane, to the contrary, receives the attention and care that she has always sought as a result of the illness; therefore, Jane evaluates the illness as 'intrinsically good'. The value assigned to health in this example, I argue, is actually derivative in that it is derived from the evaluative perspective of the person making a value judgment. Moreover, health is valuable for John because health is perhaps necessary for him to act on his surroundings, enjoy his life, engage in social activities, and so forth, whereas for Jane lacking health is perhaps necessary to receive attention and care. While in most cases health is evaluated as good, there are exceptions such as Jane's case. Moreover, all of the functions that health facilitates are instrumentally valuable. Thus, health seems to be contingent on something other than the 'state of being healthy' to determine its value. The value of health is contingent on the evaluative perspective of the subject making the value judgment. That is, if health did not have instrumental value or someone to evaluate the value of health, then health would not be valuable because its value is contingent on it serving an external purpose for the subject. Hence, health is instrumentally valuable, not intrinsically valuable.

With these considerations in mind, we are now in a position to ask whether or not consciousness is better characterized as an intrinsic and/or instrumental value and determine if it features the necessary axiological aspects.

## **2.2 The Axiological Value of Phenomenal Consciousness**

The axiological value of access consciousness may seem self-evident i.e., it allows us to use knowledge to benefit our lives, to use moral judgment to build relationships with others, to live good lives, and to feel pleasure through aesthetically appreciating the world around us. With that said, let us consider if phenomenal consciousness features the necessary axiological aspects. That is, is phenomenal consciousness epistemically, aesthetically, or ethically valuable?

One way to envisage whether or not phenomenal consciousness has value is to imagine removing it. A common philosophical way of doing this is through the zombie thought experiment (Siewert, 2002). Imagine yourself duplicated via some kind of

science fiction duplication machine. The person that comes out of the duplicator has all of the same physical attributes, the same abilities, the same psychological makeup, but it is missing one crucial feature, their conscious experience. For example, while asleep, we still have a phenomenally conscious experience in that we can be conscious of dreams, yet your zombie twin would have no such experience. They have fully intact access consciousness e.g., memory retrieval, prediction, etc., but no phenomenal consciousness of the ordinary perceptual content we are accustomed to derived from sensation. To be clear, the qualitative part of any typically sensory experience e.g., appreciation of taste or touch, is part of phenomenal consciousness. Now ask yourself, would you comfortably trade lives with your duplicate? Intuitively, it seems that taking on the life of your so-called zombie twin is akin to non-existence. Why is that? It seems there is something here that makes our phenomenally conscious experience valuable that is separate from its instrumental cognitive functions.

Cutter (2017) argues that consciousness has axiological significance in that “the existence and character of conscious experience in a world (or in one’s life) makes a difference to the overall goodness or badness of the world (or the overall goodness or badness of one’s life)”. Hence, if the phenomenally conscious experience makes a difference to the goodness or badness of the world, then it follows that consciousness plays some role in determining the axiological significance of any given feature of the world.

### **2.3 Objection to the Value of Consciousness and Reply** **One objection to this line of argumentation is made by Levy (2014),**

“My zombie twin has a point of view. He sees the world from a particular perspective, in an attitude-infused way. Indeed, his idiosyncratic take on things is identical to mine...he is inclined to say that he values these things, and I am inclined to agree with him”.

To respond, I grant that the zombie twin has ‘a point of view’ in that they can interface with their environment. However, that point of view is not phenomenally conscious and therefore is not ‘attitude-infused’ which is necessary for my zombie twin to

value things.

On the evaluative-attitudinal account of desire and will, “goodness shows up as an aspect of the desire’s attitude, of how the desire presents what it does, rather than as an aspect of its content, of what the desire presents” (Kriegel, 2018). For instance, when observed, my zombie twin and I seem to desire chocolate because we ask for chocolate. However, the difference is that my zombie twin has a belief that chocolate’s goodness ‘presents as true’ whereas to me, chocolate merely ‘presents as good’ as a result of my attitude towards chocolate (Kriegel, 2018). Therefore, my desire for chocolate reflects my implicit attitude towards it, where their desire reflects their beliefs about it. My attitude is a phenomenal feature of my conscious experience where my beliefs are a cognitive feature. Another way to think of this is that my attitude toward the chocolate is ‘full’ whereas my zombie twin’s attitude toward the chocolate is ‘empty’ because my zombie twin has no presentation or justification for how the chocolate tastes.

If you understand ‘a zombie twin’ the way Levy construes, you might as well be reflecting on what it would be like to have an actual twin or a replica. To be clear, a zombie twin, hypothetically, would only be able to act on stimulus inputs from the external world and respond with the requisite behavioral output, analogous to a super-sophisticated automaton, via its access conscious experience. While the zombie twin would make decisions identical to your own, it is on the basis of cognitive representations—it is not consciously aware of its decisions in the traditional, phenomenal sense. Hence, there would be “nothing it is like” to be your zombie twin.

### **3 The Intrinsic Value of Consciousness**

#### **3.1 Phenomenal Consciousness and Intrinsic Moral, Epistemic, and Aesthetic Values**

In this section, I will discuss arguments supporting the intrinsic moral, epistemic, and aesthetic value of consciousness. To begin with, Siewert (1998) argues that the zombie thought experiment demonstrates that not only do we intrinsically value our own phenomenally rich sensory and cognitive lives, we also value others’ possession of phenomenal consciousness (Siewert, 1998). That is, consider the following thought experiment where you have one of three choices: (1) Others having the phenomenally

rich conscious life we expect and hope them to have with all of the phenomenal properties we normally experience such as color, emotion, and pleasure; (2) Their zombified existence with all the access, or non-phenomenal benefits such as planning and calculating; or (3) Their being destroyed and replaced by a zombie twin. He argues that if you view persons as irreplaceable, as a function of them being phenomenally conscious, then there is a way in which we “regard phenomenal consciousness as essential to personhood” (Siewert, 1998) or as I am construing it, ‘personal identity’ or ‘subjectivity.’ Moreover, on some moral accounts, personhood (i.e., personal identity) is required for moral value. So, the argument is as follows,

P1: Phenomenal consciousness is a necessary condition of personhood

P2: Personhood is a sufficient condition for intrinsic moral value

P3: If personhood is intrinsically morally valuable, then some property of personhood gives it intrinsic moral value

Using abduction,

C: Phenomenal consciousness gives personhood intrinsic moral value

To highlight the moral intrinsic value of consciousness, Kantian Deontology situates personhood at the center of moral consideration because persons are able to ‘set their own ends’ i.e., they can have interests that are important to them. In having interests, persons can set ends for themselves which gives them dignity (i.e., inherent, inalienable rights) (Kant, GM, 4:429). Hence, dignity presupposes personhood and personhood presupposes phenomenal consciousness. Kriegel (2020) argues that the ground of dignity is precisely phenomenal consciousness.. I argue, adding onto Siewert and Kriegel, our understanding of personhood, dignity, and phenomenal consciousness indicate that they are all inextricable. Thus, Kriegel states, “on the emerging view, an entity exacts respect and merits treatment as an end just if it is a phenomenally conscious creature”. Concisely, any entity with

phenomenal consciousness has moral value.

Next, the epistemic intrinsic value of consciousness is argued by Bourget (2017) where he puts forward his phenomenal theory of epistemic grasping. To define, the theory argues: "To occurrently grasp P is to have a phenomenal experience with P as content" (Bourget, 2017). Our phenomenal experience allows us to 'grasp' the content of a proposition. That is when we are given the proposition, 'the sun is 1,300,000 times bigger than the Earth,' we grasp Q and not P. To grasp the P of the proposition, we need the help of a representative model such as an apple seed vs. basketball (Bourget, 2017). Therefore, grasping is one way in which consciousness is intrinsically epistemically valuable because it gives the subject "presentational phenomenology whereby the subject seems to be aware of the truth-maker of P" (Kriegel, 2020). To illustrate, your zombie twin cannot experience 'grasping' due to their lack of phenomenal consciousness, hence any assertion that they 'grasped' the proposition 'the sun is 1,300,000 times bigger than the Earth' would be false.

Last, the aesthetic intrinsic value of consciousness, Kriegel argues, can be arrived at through contemplation of the "so-called explanatory gap between phenomenal consciousness and the rest of the natural order, a certain intellectual type of awe descends on us" (Kriegel, 2020) akin to the experience of the sublime. Hence, if in contemplating its own nature, consciousness induces awe, and "being a fitting object of awe is the mark of the sublime" (Kriegel, 2020), then consciousness is intrinsically aesthetically valuable.

### **3.2 Criticisms of the Intrinsic Value of Consciousness and Responses**

#### **3.2.1 The Argument from Moral Responsibility**

To begin, let's consider the argument of two opponents of the intrinsic value of phenomenal consciousness, Savulescu and Kahane (2009). They argue the following with respect to individuals experiencing a locked-in state,

"The totally locked-in brain-damaged patients we are now considering have no capacity for communication, no external agency, and at most only limited (and completely passive) perceptual input... Their lives have gone very badly since entering this state and



if it continues unaltered, may go on being very bad. It is far from obvious that such lives are still worth living. If so, then even if using fMRI we can establish that brain-damaged patients still enjoy phenomenal consciousness...terminating these patients' lives might be morally required, not merely permissible."

Savulescu and Kahane (2009) refer to access consciousness as sapience i.e., the degree to which we as humans can behave / act on our desires and will. While it may be true that patients experiencing locked-in syndrome would prefer to end their life rather than to continue their phenomenally conscious experience due to a lack of sapience, in some cases, it may be morally required to terminate their life as a way to alleviate their suffering. This demonstrates a case where consciousness has lost its instrumental value, not its intrinsic value. That is, in cases such as these, the instrumental value of a conscious agency is made null by the locked-in state.

Moreover, the state could demonstrate too intense a burden to continue living as a result. However, this line of argumentation does not demonstrate that phenomenal consciousness is not valuable since being in a locked-in state diminishes the instrumental value of consciousness, not its intrinsic value. Consciousness's intrinsic value lies in its ability to ground the value of other things (including, I argue, itself), positively or negatively. Insofar as the locked-in patient is conscious, they can still ground the value of pleasant or unpleasant music, for example. In other words, if phenomenal consciousness did not ground value, then I would be indifferent to my condition (in the locked-in state) altogether.

Additionally, it is important here to accurately characterize the experience of locked-in patients. Damasio (2000) during clinical research asked patients subsequent to coming out of the state to report on their experience. The majority of locked-in patients described the state as "tranquil or calm" (Damasio, 2000). On the negative end, an autobiography written by a locked-in patient during the state using only eyeblinks indicated that the state caused them to experience a plethora of emotions ranging from sadness to disappointment to frustration (Bauby 1997) but never expressed suicidal sentiments.

### 3.2.2 The Argument from ‘The Philosophers Hell’

Kriegel (2019) states that if we consider hedonism the central moral account, “we only need to add that pleasure and pain contribute to well-being in virtue of their phenomenology to obtain intrinsic prudential value for phenomenal consciousness”. From here, a criticism is put forward by Lee (2018) which relies on hedonic valence. He states “when the philosopher in Hell thinks about the axiology of consciousness, they might be drawn towards neither the positive view nor the neutral view, but instead the negative view, according to which consciousness is intrinsically dis-valuable”.

One contention is that pain is instrumentally valuable in giving us information about the world but is intrinsically dis-valuable since its hedonic value is negative. Here, I hold that the phenomenally conscious experience of pain can either be instrumentally valuable or dis-valuable, depending on the epistemic value it confers and our ability to act on that epistemic information. That is, if the pain is informative, then it is instrumental. If pain is uninformative, then it is not instrumental. Nevertheless, in both cases, the phenomenally conscious experience of pain retains its intrinsic epistemic value and its intrinsic moral value even if it loses its intrinsic aesthetic value. That is, we still ‘know something about the world’ and we still ‘know something about the difference between right and wrong’ in virtue of the experience even if there is nothing intrinsically aesthetically valuable, or pleasurable about being phenomenally conscious in hell. Importantly, I grant that the displeasure combined with the lack of instrumentality may make it preferable to be unconscious than conscious in hell. So, I agree with Kriegel that hedonic valence, while important to value, is not its sole determinate.

## 4 An Axiological Model of Panpsychism

### 4.1 Historic and Contemporary Theories of Panpsychism

Panpsychism’s origins begin in a prehistoric animist (i.e., all objects have spirit) worldview. However, from that origin, panpsychism can be found in the traditions of Greek philosophers (e.g., Aristotle argued “all existing things...seek [their] own special good...” (Skrbina, 2005)) and onwards to modern conceptions (Skrbina, 2005). I argue the depiction of panpsychism as ‘occurring through the ages’ adds credence to the impact of panpsychism on modern thinking.

To demonstrate, intermediate to ancient and modern philosophy, Cavendish, a 17th Century renaissance philosopher, argued for an ontology nearly indistinguishable from that of most modern panpsychists. In her *Observations*, she argues that ubiquitous reason is necessary to explain the variety and orderliness of the natural world. That is, she argues “I believe there is sense and reason and rational knowledge, not only in all creatures but in every part of every particular creature”. Hence, she argues “all parts of Nature, even the inanimate, have an innate and [fixed] self-knowledge, [and] it is probable that they may also have an interior self-knowledge (Cavendish, 1655/1991)” (Skrbina, 2005). Thus, the Reason that Cavendish attributes pervasively throughout nature is that which animates and organizes it. I argue that if we presuppose panpsychism, nature’s basic Reason as attributed by Cavendish is akin to its fundamental conscious property.

Goff, a current-day proponent of panpsychism argues that the view’s plausibility lies in its ability to solve two distinct modern philosophical problems i.e., the hard problem of consciousness (‘how can the firing of neurons give rise to qualitative experience e.g., color?’) and the problem of the intrinsic nature of matter (‘what explains the intrinsic nature of fundamental particles?’) (Barrientos, 2021).

Goff argues that panpsychism has determinate answers to both of these problems. In response to the first problem, he argues that our brains and conscious states emerge together as a result of combinations of billions of basic conscious particles assembled in the right way (Goff 2017) due to the dispositions of the particles to organize in that particular way. Furthermore, he argues that panpsychism can explain brains as consciousness manifested i.e., the brain as a consciousness producing physical piece of matter is the way that it is because of the organizing dispositions that the more fundamental parts or particles have. Moreover, he argues that this is the explanation that best fits the criteria of Occam’s razor because it adheres parsimoniously with our scientific narrative of how the world works. That is, in response to the second problem of the intrinsic nature of matter, Goff states,

“...the only thing we know about the intrinsic nature of matter is that some of it— the stuff in brains— involves experience...we either suppose that the intrinsic nature

of fundamental particles involves experience, or we suppose that they have some entirely unknown intrinsic nature... On the former supposition, the nature of macroscopic things is continuous with the nature of microscopic things. The latter supposition leads us to complexity, discontinuity, and mystery. The theoretical imperative to form as simple and unified a view as is consistent with the data leads us quite straightforwardly in the direction of panpsychism" (Aeon, 2019)

Parsimony leads us to an interpretation of nature that has consciousness as a fundamental feature of matter since at least some matter, namely brains, have consciousness. If that is the case, we need some explanation for how that occurs. Panpsychism, I argue, provides a plausible and parsimonious explanation for the existence of consciousness.

#### **4.2 Objections to Panpsychism and Solutions**

Contemporary objections to Panpsychism are typically depicted by the following series of retorts i.e., it's 'contrary to common-sense', 'how do basic conscious 'simples' combine to create complex consciousness?', and 'what a 'conscious subject is' is arbitrary'. Here, I will discuss these objections and outline some responses.

The argument against common-sense states that it is counter-intuitive to attribute consciousness to things such as rocks and tables. That is, Goff (2019) writes, "common sense tells us that only living things have an inner life...panpsychists deny this datum of common sense. According to panpsychism... an electron has an inner life". To many, this provides a strong reason to deny panpsychism. However, Goff responds that common sense has often led us astray. For example, other common-sense theories have been proven incorrect such as the geocentric model of the universe, Newton's theory of gravitation, or naïve set-theory. Additionally, Roelofs (2019) argues that it is possible to reconcile panpsychism with our 'great chain of being' (GCOB) intuitions. That is, we can trust GCOB if we are using it to paraphrase about consciousnesses that are close to ours such as a dog being more like us than an ant, for example. Hence, panpsychism does not discount all of our intuitions about consciousness.

The next problem facing panpsychism is the combination problem. The combination problem asks, how do subatomic particles join together to form consciousness? One solution to this problem is the fusion view forwarded by Mørch (2019) (and by Seager (2010)). Mørch writes that the fusion view of mental combination is “when micro-or proto-conscious entities come together in the right way, they fuse...together to form a single unified consciousness”. Moreover, “the new macro-consciousness thereby replaces the original micro- or proto-consciousness...before fusion, the particles of the brain were each individually realized by their own micro-consciousness, but after fusion, the same particles become jointly realized by a single macro-consciousness instead.”. Hence, the combination problem can be solved by positing fusion conditions for complex consciousness.

Finally, there is the arbitrary conscious subjects’ problem. That is, where do we “draw the line” when attributing consciousness/subjecthood to various entities? Are there micro subjects that form macro subjects? Or is everything conscious in the same way? Well, as noted above, it seems like the fusion solution is able to solve this contention. Nevertheless, another solution ‘Combinationism’ forwarded by Roelofs (2019) argues that, “all elementary particles are associated with incredibly simple experiences, whose structure is no more complex than the structure of those particles’ physical properties”. Hence, at the most foundational level, what exists there can be considered a micro-subject. Similar to the fusion account, the micro-unity hypothesis (MUH) supposes, “...when two subjects are related in the relevant way, their experiences become unified...”. Thus, consciousness becomes more complex as a function of specific combination relations.

To conclude, as quantum science advances and our understanding of what it means for something to be fundamental changes, so too does our conception of what consciousness would look like at that level. For example, emerging theories such as field panpsychism (Horne 2020) aim to account for new developments.

### **4.3 The Axiology of Panpsychism**

The intrinsic value of consciousness and panpsychism, I have argued, entails the value of all beings—from the most fundamental entity whether that be micro entities such as

quarks or fields to macroscopic combinations of those entities such as brains or planets. In this picture, value is pervasive insofar as everything has consciousness as its intrinsic nature, even if that consciousness is not complex, and consciousness has intrinsic value. Given the arguments I have previously forwarded, taken together, they provide an axiology of panpsychism. That is, consciousness is intrinsically valuable in that it has the requisite moral, epistemic, and aesthetic axiological features. Consciousness is morally intrinsically valuable because phenomenal consciousness is the ground of dignity and dignity is intrinsically morally valuable. Consciousness is epistemically intrinsically valuable because it can be a truth-maker for a proposition *P*. Consciousness is aesthetically intrinsically valuable because it can reflexively appreciate the beauty of its own existence as well as the experience of pleasure. Thus, consciousness possesses all the requisite axiological components.

### **5 Implications and Future Directions**

The axiology of panpsychism appears to lead to significant ethical implications regarding our interaction with other entities. In this section, I will only be scratching the surface of these implications since the central aim of this paper was to outline how panpsychism leads to the pervasive value of all entities without merely taking it for granted. That being said, some implications include consequences for Great Chain of Being intuitions, ethical consumption, and potentially existentialism.

With respect to GCOB intuitions, if we accept combinationism or the fusion view of panpsychism, then we can accept that there are gradients to conscious experience because complex consciousness is a result of specific relations between micro conscious parts. If those relations do not obtain, then the conscious parts remain rudimentary. Therefore, we can continue to suppose that rocks are not conscious in the way that animals are conscious, and so forth.

So, Roelofs (2019) states that, “insofar as panpsychism conflicts with the GCOB intuition, it seems to undermine one major rationale for ethical vegetarianism or veganism” which seems altogether an extreme implication. Nevertheless, Roelofs argues that panpsychists may grant moral status to all beings, in the way that I have. He states,

“the moral reasons [against interference] are usually outweighed by those provided by the hedonic, conative, and epistemic experiences of animals. That is, they might say that it is morally better not to kill a plant than to kill one, but that animals need to sustain their richer sort of life justifies killing plants for food.” (Roelofs, 2019)

The sentiment that Roelof forwards here is consistent with my line of argumentation. The axiology of panpsychism does not need to conflict with ethical veganism/vegetarianism because what makes something conscious in increasingly morally important ways is the way in which the fundamental conscious subjects combine and the justification for interference by beings with complex consciousness.

While the previous suggestions seem to not offer any prescriptions for how we ought to engage with the world—I think there are important implications for our relationships with other entities. In accordance with Mathews (2003), “if not only human beings but other self-realizing systems, or selves, including the world-as-a-whole, are understood as subjects rather than as pure objects, then perhaps encounter should be seen as the appropriate mode for relating with the world at large”. Thus, from an existential perspective, cultivating an attitude of accepting and appreciating reality as it is will engender respect and sympathy toward it. Moreover, in traversing our surroundings through encountering, it is not to simply project human qualities into everything (Mathews, 2003), but we ought to see entities as they are and respond to each appropriately as a unique locus of experience.

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