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On Whether Being Conscious is Intrinsic

Author(s): Trenton Merricks

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# *On Whether Being Conscious is Intrinsic*

TRENTON MERRICKS

Hawley's first objection (Hawley 1998) is that my own arguments (Merricks 1998) suggest that *being conscious* is not intrinsic. How? By suggesting that "... the atoms of maimed *P* form a conscious being *because* they are suitably isolated". Hawley does not explain the reading of "because" that would make *being conscious* not intrinsic. (Relational differences can *cause* intrinsic differences; putting a flame near a snowball causes it to change shape.) And my arguments are silent on the relation between suitable isolation and consciousness—except for implying that, if the finger-complement exists, then a difference in whether something is conscious is *correlated* with a difference in isolation. If this correlation is all Hawley means by the "because", Hawley's first objection is essentially the same as her third; I will respond to it below.

The microphysical difference between *P* and her *atom*-complement is piddling (a matter of a single atom) and seemingly irrelevant to consciousness (the atom is in a finger, not the brain). If *being conscious* (is not intrinsic and) supervenes on the microphysical, then this paltry, irrelevant difference *makes all the difference* between having and lacking consciousness. This should dismay those, I argued, who think differences in consciousness supervene on relevant microphysical differences (p. 68). Hawley's second objection is that this is not "dismaying", for, she says, "it does not entail that *I* would not be conscious if I incorporated extra toes, fingers, atoms, and so on". But I never said it did. Her objection does not address the point I was making.

Hawley's third objection is that "the difference in respect of forming a conscious being may be independent of the [microphysical] relational differences [between *P* and the finger-complement], but the correlation is certainly mysterious, if *being conscious* is intrinsic". Indeed it is. But this is not just my problem. For—and this builds on the point just made—even if *being conscious* is not intrinsic, it's *still* mysterious why differences in consciousness are correlated with paltry and seemingly irrelevant microphysical differences. We could dissolve these mysteries by denying the existence of the finger- and atom-complements. But this denial won't save MS; it entails that MS is false (p. 64).

*Department of Philosophy*  
*Virginia Commonwealth University*  
*Richmond, VA 23284-2025*  
*USA*  
*Trenton.Merricks@vcu.edu*

TRENTON MERRICKS

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