

**Jenny Hung**

**Wellbeing in Early Buddhism: Zombies, Experience, and the Value of Consciousness**

**ABSTRACT:**

According to many philosophers, something possesses intrinsic value if it is good in and of itself, without any external justifications. In contemporary scholarship, notable thinkers like Thomas Nagel (1979), William Frankena (1973), Charles Siewert (1998), and Walter Glannon (2016) argue that phenomenal consciousness-the subjective aspect or "what it's likeness" of experience-holds positive intrinsic value. It is uncommon to encounter a pessimistic perspective on the intrinsic value of phenomenal consciousness.

In this presentation, I propose that early Buddhism espouses the belief in the intrinsic disvalue of phenomenal consciousness. By examining the Four Nikayas (a group of early Buddhist foundational texts), I contend that early Buddhism would even endorse the notion that it is preferable to exist as a philosophical zombie-a being physically and behaviorally indistinguishable from a human but lacking consciousness-rather than attaining nibbana, the ultimate goal of liberation. Lastly, I contend that it is possible to achieve nibbana even within an experience machine-a device capable of providing desired experiences by stimulating the brain.