

What makes pains unpleasant?

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Unpleasantness, badness, and motivation

The Hedomotive Claims

Normativity

- A1. Unpleasant Pain is *bad* for its subject, intrinsically and defeasibly
- A2. Unpleasant Pain is a *justifying reason* (i.e. a *good* reason) for avoidance behavior, intrinsically and defeasibly.
- A3. Intentionally causing unpleasant pain in another is *wrong*, prima facie.

Motivation

- B1. Unpleasant pains are *motivational states*. Independently of further desires, they defeasibly *motivate* avoidance behavior.
- B2. Unpleasant pains are *motivating reasons*. Independently of further desires, they defeasibly *rationalize* avoidance behavior. (this is not meant to be explanatory, but to identify a relation)

The Humean challenge

Pure Perceptualism (Cognitive account of Pain)

A person's being in unpleasant pain consists in her undergoing a somatosensory perceptual experience that represents to her that a body part of hers is undergoing a disturbance of a certain sort (like bodily damage).

Narrow Inertness Argument

1. Moral evaluations are motivational states.
2. Judgements are not. (Narrow Inertness.)
3. So moral evaluations are not purely judgements.

The idea is that beliefs don't motivate without also having a desire. I believe there is a beer in the fridge, but am not motivated to fetch it without also having a desire for it. Likewise, a moral evaluation that "I should save the drowning child" is motivational, so moral evaluations cannot be judgements.

The Humean challenge

Broad Inertness Argument

1. Unpleasant pains are motivational states.
2. Truth-apt states are not. (Broad Inertness.)
3. So unpleasant pains are not purely truth-apt states.

Broad inertness expands judgements to all truth-apt states, including truth-apt experiences. Thus, since pains are motivational and truth-apt experiences are not, pains cannot be truth-apt experiences. As a consequence, pure perceptualism and any (purely) cognitivist account of pain must be jettisoned.

The desire view (non-cognitivist)

The Desire View

Someone being in unpleasant pain consists in:

- i) Undergoing a neutral sensory experience (pain) which is non-hedonic and non-motivational.
- ii) Having an experience-directed, non-instrumental desire for that pain to immediately cease. (he calls these e-desires)

A pure perceptualist would confirm i)

Desire theorists think that the experiences only count as unpleasant pain if you want them to stop (i.e. be in possession of an e-desire wrt that pain).

This is an attempt to explain the normative and motivational aspects of pain's unpleasantness in terms of the normative and motivation aspects of desire.

- The desire view can handle the usual objections: asymbolia, morphine, apparent pain, etc.

Something like the desire view is held by: David Armstrong, Richard Brandt, Hall (1989), Parfit, Pitcher, and Tye (90s)

E-desires as mere inclinations (non-cognitive)

If desires are inclinations then a *desire that p* is a state in which

- Either p is the disposition to act to make p true (IAW one's beliefs)
- Or p is whatever grounds the disposition to act to make p true

These dispositions are what Bain calls inclinations, thus:

The Inclination Approach (substitutes “inclinations” into ii) of the “desire view”)

Someone being in unpleasant pain consists in:

- Undergoing a neutral sensory experience (pain)
- Being disposed to act in a way (IAW one's beliefs) to make the experience immediately cease.

e-desires (as inclinations) lack the normative and motivational character required to account for pain.

Pain's unpleasantness rationalizes (B2); mere inclinations do not; thus pain's unpleasantness cannot consist in mere inclinations. Radio/Bathtub cases

Pain's unpleasantness cannot be a *good* reason (A2) to remove one's foot, if it is merely that one is inclined to stop the pain.

Imperativism (non-cognitive)

Imperativism (substitutes “imperatives” into ii) of the “desire view”)

Someone being in unpleasant pain consists in:

- i) Undergoing a neutral sensory experience (pain)
- ii) Receiving a command from the “pain module” to stop doing whatever he is doing

So, the information received is representational, but in an imperative (versus indicative) mood – so not experience directed, but action- or body-directed. This view explains the inclinations in terms of commands, but has similar difficulties accounting for the motivational (B2) and justifying (A2) reasons.

Commands, (ii), *do* give us reasons *by dint of their being unpleasant pains*. The shouting command model. But this is question begging.

The pain module has authority to command, so ought to be obeyed, but...

Bathtub again – the authority view cannot account for why one has a reason or is motivated to obey the command to remove one’s foot from the hot water rather than just ‘silence’ the pain (e.g. taking pain killers)

Something like the Imperativism view is held by: Klein, Hall (2008), and Martinez

E-Desires as evaluations (cognitive)

Desires as Evaluations

A desire that p is an impression that it would be good if p (truth-apt)

Dislike Approach

Someone being in unpleasant pain consists in:

- i) Undergoing a neutral sensory experience (pain)
- ii) Undergoing an impression that it would be bad if the pain continued

Consider the radio and bathtub cases again: it seems like this approach can account for rationalizing action.

But...

Something like the e-desire as evaluation view is held by: Stampe, Quinn, Scanlon, Oddie, Helm (2002)

E-Desires as evaluations (cognitive)

Euthyphro Questions:

- (A) Is your (i) pain represented as bad because it is bad, or (ii) is your pain bad because it is represented as bad?
- (B) Do you (i) dislike your pain because it is unpleasant, or (ii) is your pain unpleasant because you dislike it?

The dislike approach must opt for (ii) in each case. That is, your pain's seeming bad makes it bad. But now, there is no way for the impression to be false (or otherwise mis-represent the pain).

So, if e-desires are evaluations, they are problematically self-verifying and cannot be explained in the most natural and plausible ways—i.e., (i) in both cases (A) and (B).

But, if e-desires are not evaluations, then they cannot account for the justifying and motivational reasons (A2) and (B2).

Evaluativism (cognitive)

Evaluativism

Someone being in unpleasant pain consists in:

- i) Undergoing a **neutral** sensory experience (pain)
- ii) The experience in (i) also representing the disturbance as *bad* for her in the bodily sense

Bathtub example again. The pain is unpleasant and motivating only because it has the further representation as that pain being *bad* for you. An asymbolic would have (i), but not (ii).

The non-cognitive views tend to divide unpleasant pains into:

- Truth apt and inert or
- Non-truth-apt and motivational

Bain's view:

- Truth apt and motivational

Strengths – Evaluative views make better sense of unpleasant pains' status as reasons than either as imperatives or inclinations. It avoids the dislike theory's problem of self-verification because it takes experiences to be bodily-directed rather than experience directed (I think this introduces a bodily teleology...the *telos* being proper functioning).

Challenges to Evaluativism

1. Broad Inertness (back to Hume)

If pains are motivational, they cannot be truth-apt. So, we should reject broad inertness. The argument for narrow inertness fails to support broad inertness when applied to perceptions because it fails P1. It is no threat to evaluativism.

P1. A **belief** that p aims to fit the world in the sense that it tends to be eliminated by a perception that not-p.

P2. If a **belief** that p aimed to make the world fit it (i.e. was motivational, like a desire), then it would lack this tendency.

C. So a **belief** that p cannot aim to make the world fit it.

2. Capturing the wrong reasons

-(a) No bodily ends. Wouldn't unpleasant pain be aimed at the cessation of the pain and not at the cessation of bad bodily states?

- But...taking a pain killer... though this might make the experience stop, it is not the aim of the experience.

-(b) Hedonic ends. Unpleasant pain is a justifying reason to act so as to end the unpleasant pain – and this supports (a)

- Yes, but pain killer again... though we end the pain, there is an additional aim that the unpleasant pain is directed—stopping the bodily damage.

Challenges to Evaluativism

3. Not capturing the right reasons: Messenger-shooting

-Why should an episode representing your own body being in a state that is bad for you (in the bodily sense) also itself be bad for you in an experiential sense?

How do we make sense of their intrinsic badness?

Fear and grief analogy as an intuition pump – It is common to think that it is intrinsically bad (in one sense) for one to be in a state in which something seems bad for you (in another sense).