

# Pain, Pleasure, and Unpleasure

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Compare your pain when immersing your hand in freezing water and your pleasure when you taste your favourite wine. The relationship seems obvious. Your pain experience is unpleasant, aversive, negative, and bad. Your experience of the wine is pleasant, attractive, positive, and good. Pain and pleasure are straightforwardly opposites. Or that, at any rate, can seem beyond doubt, and to leave little more to be said. But, in fact, it is *not* beyond doubt. And, true or false, it leaves a good deal more to be said: about the nature of sensory affect; its relations to perception, motivation, and rationality; its value; and the mechanisms underlying it. Much is said about these matters in the contributions that follow. Here, in this introductory essay, we map the dialectical landscape and locate our contributors' papers within it.

## 1 Terminology and Sensory Affect

Like many (but not all) our contributors, we focus on *sensory* affect. Hence we use “pleasure” narrowly, to refer to sensory pleasure, and eschew its broader use, which encompasses such arguably non-sensory pleasures as joy, delight, and happiness. Identifying pleasures as sensory is not straightforward. Consider the strawberry farmer who dislikes the taste of ripe strawberries yet takes pleasure in eating one of her own because she knows that the ripe taste means her crop is ready to harvest.<sup>1</sup> Is this a case of sensory pleasure? We shall take it to be so only if her sensory experience—for example the gustatory cum olfactory cum tactile experience of tasting the strawberry—is *itself* pleasant, hence *not* if her only pleasant state is her happiness that her crop is ready to harvest. How to categorise a given case will often be difficult, of course, not least because of top-down modulation: the farmer's appreciation of the significance of the taste might *affect* her gustatory experience, rendering it pleasant. There are also difficult questions about how to individuate experiences and other mental states, and

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<sup>1</sup>The example is Aydede's (this volume).

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how to apportion pleasantness among them. Still, for our purposes, it suffices to say that our focus is on the pleasantness of sensory experiences.

Turning to “pain”, it too has broader and narrower uses. We use it, narrowly, to refer to so-called *physical* pains, experiences in which a subject has—or seems to have—pains in a part of her own body, for example in her hand, immersed in freezing water. We therefore eschew its broader use, in which it refers to all states of suffering, not only those involving physical pain but also grief, depression, anxiety and so forth.

Our focus on the negative side of sensory affect extends beyond pain, however, to *all* unpleasant sensory experiences. We’ll call these *unpleasures*. This category includes not *only* pains, and arguably not *all* pains. Take the latter point first. It is often claimed that pain processing involves two neural pathways (Price 2000; see also Shriver, this volume). When you are jabbed with a pin, one of these pathways underlies the experience’s unpleasantness; the other underlies further, sensory aspects of the experience’s phenomenology. Hence many take typical, unpleasant pain experiences to comprise dissociable components: a neutral, sensory component, and a “hedomotive” component, the latter contributing the experience’s unpleasantness and motivational force. In rare cases, it is argued, the sensory component might be present while the hedomotive component is absent, the subject thus undergoing an experience with all of a pain’s other properties but not its unpleasantness. Whether we should call such experiences *pains* arguably calls for decision rather than discovery, although it is notable that those with the rare condition *pain asymbolia* seem to. Pain asymbolics say they do not mind the experiences elicited by such noxious stimuli as pinches and pin pricks—and they do not grimace or withdraw, indeed sometimes they smile—yet, unlike pain insensitives, they still describe the experiences as *pains* (Berthier et al. 1988; Grahek 2007; Bain: [forthcoming](#)). Anyway, whether or not there are non-unpleasant pains, there are certainly unpleasant non-pains, including for most people severe itches, and gustatory and olfactory experience of rotten meat. Again, we will call such experiences, together with typical pains, unpleasures.<sup>2</sup>

In sum, our focus in this introduction is sensory affect: that is, pleasure and unpleasure.

## 2 Hedonic Space and Masochism

What questions does reflection on sensory affect generate? Some questions concern the mapping of hedonic space. Are pleasure and unpleasure opposites? Does every pleasure and unpleasure lie at a point on a single dimension, running towards ever more intense pleasure in one direction, and ever more intense unpleasure in the other? Or do they lie on orthogonal dimensions? If the former, does pleasure shade directly into unpleasure, or are there affectively neutral experiences lying between pleasures and unpleasures? Is either pleasure or unpleasure our natural or default state, unnoticed or absent only to the extent that the other state masks or eliminates it? These questions are relevant not only to those, like Olivier Massin in this volume, who are delineating metaphysical space. They also intersect with questions about the nature of pleasure,

<sup>2</sup> Note that we are using “pleasures” and “unpleasures” to refer to experiences, not their objects, hence to the gustatory experience of ice-cream, not to the ice-cream or its taste.

unpleasure, and pain; the mechanisms underlying them; and the challenge of making sense of some difficult—perhaps paradoxical—cases such as masochism.

Whether pleasantness and unpleasantness are opposites can be read as the question whether they are contraries, in the sense of properties it is impossible for a single experience to co-instantiate at a time. A single object cannot, at a time, be both red all over and green all over; but it can, at a time, be both red and cuboid. Which of these is the better model for pleasure and unpleasure?

Against the intuition that pleasure and unpleasure are contraries stand cases of so-called mixed feelings, cases in which a single subject appears to have an experience that is, at a time, both pleasant and unpleasant. Consider, for example, people who enjoy being whipped in certain sexual contexts. Even if we deny this case involves unpleasantness, it can seem puzzling, given the following worry:

A. Masochism seems to involve non-unpleasant pains. But this can't be, since pains are unpleasant by definition.

But there are various things we can do to evade this worry: invoke such inhibitory mechanisms as the Melzack-Wall gate, for example, to say of masochists what is often said of injured soldiers in the heat of battle, namely that they are not undergoing even the neutral, sensory component of ordinary pain experiences, hence are not in pain (Pitcher 1970a); or, even if the sensory component is present, refuse to count the experience a pain given the absence of unpleasantness; or, encouraged by the case of pain asymbolia, deny that non-unpleasant pain is an incoherent idea; or, finally, insist that masochists' pains *are* unpleasant.

This final point strikes many as correct. Masochists' experiences of their whippings *do* seem unpleasant; those who seek them say as much. Yet they also seem pleasant, hence to be cases of mixed feelings. This generates further puzzles. To see these, start with an unproblematic case of a person's tolerating something unpleasant as an unwanted side-effect of something desired, or of a *means* to something desired, for example someone with sensitive teeth tolerating the pain of eating ice-cream for the pleasure of the taste. But now notice that sexual masochism looks quite different from this case, as do less esoteric, non-sexual cases of masochism such as the enjoyment of curries that are so spicy they are painful to eat. In these cases, the unpleasure seems somehow *part* of the pleasure, which is puzzling for at least two reasons:

B. In certain contexts, masochists seem to seek (want, like) unpleasure. How can this be?

C. In certain contexts, masochists seem to have experiences that are both pleasant and unpleasant at a time. How can *this* be?

This last worry arises, of course, from the idea that pleasure and unpleasure are contraries. Hence a straightforward way to deal with it is to jettison that idea. But there are also strategies that retain contrariety, and these may anyway be needed to address (B).

One such strategy is to appeal to the possibility of agents pursuing unpleasant means to pleasurable ends. For while (contra the ice-cream model) masochism does not involve tolerating the unpleasure as a *side-effect* of a means to pleasure, it might yet involve tolerating and even pursuing the unpleasure as *itself a means* to pleasure. On

one such story, for instance, what masochists find pleasurable is the make-believe that they are so subordinate to their master or mistress that he or she is willing and able to make them suffer *regardless of their wishes*; and masochists seek the unpleasantness of the whipping merely as a means to this ersatz belief—a means to the suspension of disbelief, if you like, to which end safety words and masochistic paraphernalia also contribute. Such an account, however, might seem to miss the kinship between different cases: sexual masochism, the curry case, and the desire to watch scary films, for example. (The alternative account Colin Klein offers in this volume is designed precisely to capture this kinship.) Another worry about the suspension-of-disbelief account, invoking as it does the pleasure only of a belief, or an ersatz belief, is that it fails to accommodate the *sensory* pleasure involved in sexual masochism and the other cases.

What might throw *some* light on the *sensory* pleasure of masochism is an understanding of the complex interactions that psychologists and neuroscientists are currently uncovering among pleasure, unpleasure, threat, and our expectations. Unpleasant pain can produce endorphins, for example, which can in turn generate a sense of euphoria (see Klein, this volume). Threat and danger can also produce sexual arousal quite beyond the usual context of sexual masochism, as shown in an experiment in which subjects were required simply to walk across a high, rickety bridge (Dutton and Aron 1974; see also Klein, this volume). Pain, moreover, enhances our attention not only to pain-causing stimuli but also to pleasure-causing stimuli, increasing the intensity and enhancing the processing of *all* sensory signals, not only those subserving pain. Subjects in one study, in pain through immersing their hands in freezing water (the cold pressor test), were better able to distinguish among similar flavours; and they experienced tastes as more pleasurable (Bastian et al. 2014).<sup>3</sup> Pleasant foods and drinks, furthermore, taste better when relieving the unpleasant experiences of hunger and thirst (Cabanac 1979; Kringlebach 2004; see also Bastian and Leknes, this volume).

Relief from pain is particularly interesting in this context. Studies indicate that relief involves not only a reduction in pain; it involves pleasure (see Bastian and Leknes, and Hardcastle, this volume). Indeed, relief even from the *threat* of pain produces pleasure (Leknes et al. 2011). We asked earlier whether either pain or pleasure is our default state, unnoticed or absent only to the extent that it is masked or eliminated by the other state. One recent explanation of the pleasure of relief, the opponent-processing account, invokes what might be thought to be a neural corollary of this idea of “masking”. It says that, as part of a drive towards homeostatic balance, the neural process underlying an *unpleasant* experience will generate an opposing, *positively* valenced process which, when the unpleasant experience ceases abruptly, results in pleasure (Leknes et al. 2008; Leknes and Tracey 2010).

While care is needed accurately to characterise such empirical evidence, and to tease out its exact bearing on the putative contrariety of pleasure and unpleasure—and the puzzling cases of sexual masochism, curry-eating, and the rest—it looks highly likely that the mechanisms at which we’ve gestured will illuminate at least some of the phenomena.

<sup>3</sup> Hence the ice-cream case described above is potentially more complex than described.

### 3 Theories of Pain and Unpleasantness

#### 3.1 Putative Desiderata: Non-Phenomenality, Motivation, and Normativity

In virtue of what is an experience pleasant or unpleasant? What constitutes its pleasantness or unpleasantness? Various accounts have been advanced but there is little agreement even about the desiderata to be met. While hotly contested, three putative requirements are worth elaborating. Call them: Non-Phenomenality, Motivation, and Normativity

First, Non-Phenomenality. Many have denied that there is any introspectively discoverable “quality” that integrates the class of pleasures or unpleasures (Sidgwick 1907; Feldman 1997; see also Aydede, this volume). Suppose that you are fortunate enough to have packed into the previous minute the pleasures of feeling a tender caress, of tasting chocolate ice cream, and of smelling your favourite rose. Introspect on these experiences and you will find, it is said, no phenomenal quality—no aspect of “what it is like” to undergo them—in virtue of which they are all pleasant. What is denied is not that these experiences’ phenomenal characters *are pleasant*, but that they share a phenomenal feature that *is their pleasantness*. And the same, *mutatis mutandis*, is often said in the case of pains and other unpleasures.

Turning to Motivation, consider the unpleasant pain you have when your hand is immersed in freezing water. It defeasibly motivates you to withdraw your hand, “defeasibly” because the motivation might be overridden by a stronger motivation to (say) prove to us how tough you are. This motivational character, the idea goes, is *inherent* in the pain’s unpleasantness—in the sense that it is independent of (further) desires.<sup>4</sup> Unpleasant pains, some will further argue, belong to a special category of motivations, namely motivations that figure in *rationalising* explanations of action. When we explain your withdrawing your hand from the freezing water in terms of the unpleasantness of your pain, the idea goes, we are not *merely* giving a reason *that* your body moved—as the fullness of Vesuvius’s magma chamber was a reason *that* it erupted—but are also giving a reason *for which* you moved it, a mental episode in light of which that action seemed reasonable to you, thus moving you to perform it. And here too some will want to extend the claim, *mutatis mutandis*, to the rest of sensory affect: pleasures, that is, and also the other unpleasures.

Finally, Normativity. Applied to pain, the idea is that unpleasant pains—whether or not they are motivational—are *in fact* good reasons to act. Even if, on a particular occasion, you know your body is neither damaged nor even at risk of damage, you have a good reason to end your unpleasant pain.<sup>5</sup> For, the idea goes, it is *bad* to undergo an unpleasant pain (defeasibly, of course, since an unpleasant pain might also have very good consequences). That is why it is wrong gratuitously to cause someone else to undergo unpleasant pain. And again, many will extend the thought, saying it is bad to undergo other unpleasures too, and conversely good to experience pleasure.

<sup>4</sup> “Further” is required if one thinks pains are desires. See Bain 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Note that unpleasant pains might also be thought to *present* further good reasons to act, e.g. presenting certain bodily states as bad, thereby motivating actions aimed at eliminating those bodily states (Bain 2013).

### 3.2 Perceptualism About Pain

We might well contest Non-Phenomenality, Motivation, and Normativity. But suppose for now that we don't. What bearing have they on accounts of pain? (We will return in Section 4 to pleasures and the other unpleasures.) Well, they can seem to make trouble for those who model pain experiences on perceptual experiences. One such model invokes sense-data, saying that having a pain at the end of your nose consists in being acquainted with an awareness-dependent, mental object, namely a pain, literally located in the end of your nose. Another is to embrace a kind of adverbialism and say that the situation rather consists in your sensing your nose *painfully* (Aune 1967; Tye 1984; and Aydede, this volume). But the perceptual model that has dominated philosophers' theorising about pain since the 1960s—call it perceptualism—instead invokes representational content (hereafter, just “content”). For perceptualists, just as its visually seeming to you as though a red cube is before you consists in your undergoing an experience that represents to you *that* a red cube is before you, your being in pain consists in your undergoing an experience representing to you that a part of your body is damaged (on one version of the view, on which we'll focus) or undergoing some kind of “disturbance” (on another).<sup>6</sup> It is not that pain is a *sign* from which damage might be *inferred*, as spots are a sign from which measles might be inferred, but that pain *informs* subjects of damage in a way comparable to that in which visual experiences inform subjects of the shape and colour of things in their environment. While pain experiences are not beliefs, on most versions of this view, they do have truth-conditions, being true (or veridical) if the represented bodily location really is damaged, and false (or illusory) if it is not (as in cases of referred pain).

Perceptualism can seem attractive. It enables a promising account of our talk of the location of pains according to which the difference between, on the one hand, phantom-limb and other cases in which we say that a subject is merely *in* pain and, on the other hand, cases in which we additionally say that the subject *has a pain in a body part* is as follows: the former involve her merely seeming to somatosensorily *perceive* a body part as damaged, the latter involve her actually doing so, whether accurately or not (Bain 2007). Perceptualism also dovetails with representationalist accounts of phenomenal consciousness (Tye 1995; Byrne 2001). These say that an experience's phenomenal character is or supervenes on its content, that what it is for a visual experience, for instance, to be “red-feeling” (as it's sometimes put) is a matter of the experience's representing to you that there is something red in your environment. For adherents of this view, the phenomenology of pains would be an embarrassing excrescence if pains were, contra perceptualism, representationally blank (as many philosophers have assumed).

But, for all its attractions, perceptualism can seem ill placed to accommodate the three putative desiderata: Non-Phenomenality, Motivation, and Normativity. For these might seem precisely to register respects in which pain experiences *differ* from the visual experiences that some perceptualists take as their model. By explaining unpleasant pains' phenomenal character in terms of content, the

<sup>6</sup> See Armstrong 1962 and 1968; Pitcher 1970b; Tye 1995; and Bain 2003.

worry goes, perceptualism risks missing pains' crucial differences from visual experiences,<sup>7</sup> missing in particular the non-phenomenal aspect in virtue of which pains are motivational and normative, namely their unpleasantness. Some may reply that visual experiences too can be motivating, perhaps even unpleasant. But that misses the thrust of the point: that just as Hume denied that beliefs can by themselves motivate (Hume 1739; Bricke 1996), we should deny that the possession of indicative content by an experience—whether a visual experience or a pain—suffices for it to be unpleasant or motivational.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.3 Desire and Functionalist Views of Pain's Unpleasantness

But how else might we illuminate pain's unpleasantness and its motivational, normative character? Instead of invoking perceptual content, numerous philosophers invoke desires, in particular experience-directed desires. The orthodoxy has it that a pain's unpleasantness consists in the subject having what we might call a termination- or t-desire, that is a non-instrumental desire for that pain immediately to cease.<sup>9</sup> “Non-instrumental” is important. On this view, the desire for a given experience to cease *so that you might better concentrate*, say, would not render it unpleasant; but an experience for the experience to cease *for no further end* would. And it would render it unpleasant, notice, not because it would causally affect—or “modulate”—the experience's content or character, but rather because an experience simply *counts* as unpleasant by dint of being the target of such a desire, rather as Fred counts as the shortest by dint of being shorter than everyone else. Notice that, as an account of pain's unpleasantness, rather than of pain per se, this view can (though it needn't) be advanced as a way of saving perceptualism: perceptualists are right about what pains are, the idea goes, but desires are needed to explain what it is for them to be *unpleasant* (Armstrong 1962).

Whether in the service of perceptualism or not, making desires components of unpleasant pains can seem a good way of doing justice to Non-Phenomenality, Motivation, and Normativity. After all, desire theorists can allow that unpleasant pains are phenomenally diverse, since they think pains count as unpleasant in virtue not of some shared phenomenal character, but of their being t-desired. Moreover, that unpleasant pains are inherently motivational and, further, bad states to be in is explained by their incorporating t-desires that are, further, unsatisfied.

The desire view remains popular and has important variants, some invoking episodes of *disliking* pains rather than *t-desiring* pains.<sup>10</sup> But some reject it. The commonest complaint is that the desire view gets the order of explanation wrong: a person wants her unpleasant pains to end *because* they are unpleasant, hence it cannot also be that they are unpleasant because she wants them to end. (See Cohen and Fulkerson, this volume, for a reply.) Others argue that the desire view fails to meet the

<sup>7</sup> For another version of this worry, centring on “interiority” rather than Motivationality or Normativity, see Bain 2003.

<sup>8</sup> For more on this worry and the parallels with metaethics, see Bain 2013.

<sup>9</sup> See Armstrong 1962 and 1968; Pitcher 1970b, Tye 1995, and—for more references—Bain 2013.

<sup>10</sup> For criticism of one dislike view, see Bain 2013. Note that some take the notions of t-desiring and disliking to be interchangeable (see Bain 2013).



desiderata above, questioning for example whether desires—construed as some construe them—can *rationalise* in the sense we sketched earlier. Yet others don't accept all the desiderata, for example those who—returning from the introspective coal face with quite different findings from their opponents, as philosophers are wont to do—reject non-phenomenality and insist it is just obvious that pain's unpleasantness *is* a phenomenal matter after all.

It is worth flagging here Murat Aydede's attempt to split the difference between accounts that claim and accounts that deny that pleasantness and unpleasantness are phenomenal properties. Arguing that the pleasantness of an experience consists not in an experience-directed desire, but rather in the experience's desire-like functional role, Aydede concludes that pleasantness is a *phenomenal* but not a *sensory* feature of an experience. Again, while phenomenal, pleasantness and unpleasantness are not "sensory qualia", Aydede argues, since they lack the appropriate correspondence to the tastes, smells, textures and other sensible properties that the experiences they characterise represent.

### 3.4 Special Content Views of Pain's Unpleasantness

The worry presented in Section 3.2 was that a pain experience's possession of indicative content could not account for its motivational and normative characteristics. Desire theorists respond by invoking desires; and Aydede invokes desire-like functional roles. But others think the worry can be met by invoking special contents. Granted not all experiential contents make their bearers motivational and bad states to be in, nevertheless some *special* contents do. Or so it is claimed. But how are the relevant contents special? Recent attention has focused on two proposals.

On the first, unpleasant pains' contents are special because of a feature corresponding to a sentence's grammatical mood. Whereas some contents—visual contents, perhaps—are indicative, the contents that render pains unpleasant are imperative (Klein 2007; Hall 2008; Martínez 2011). Pains don't inform, or on some versions don't *only* inform; rather, they command. In particular, on one such approach, a pain might consist in your "pain module" telling you to stop immersing your hand in freezing water. Imperativism is an increasingly popular view, being developed by various philosophers in intriguing ways. But it also has its critics. Some worry that there is no command that all and only pains can plausibly be taken to incorporate (Tumulty 2009; Bain 2011), others that commands—unlike unpleasant pains—are incapable of *rationalising* the actions they prompt (Bain 2013).

An alternative view says that unpleasant pains' contents are special not because they are imperative, but because they are evaluative. According to evaluativism, while an unpleasant pain of yours might *also* have non-evaluative content—which content might persist in a case of pain asymbolia—your pain is unpleasant and motivates in virtue of representing (correctly or incorrectly) that a part of your body is in a *bad* state (Helm 2002; Cutter and Tye 2011; Bain 2013). Some evaluativists think this position is required to make sense of unpleasant pain's rationalising role (Helm 2002; Bain 2013). Opponents disagree: some deny that unpleasant pains rationalise; others—including Cohen and Fulkerson in this volume—think it has not been shown that evaluative content is needed in order for them to do so; and yet others find the very notion of an experience having evaluative content murky, denying that we have an



account—or at least a naturalistic account—of what an experience’s possessing such content would involve (for a reply, see Cutter and Tye 2011).

## 4 Pleasure, Unpleasure, and Pain: Symmetries and Asymmetries

Having looked at unpleasant pain in Section 3.2–3.4, let us broaden our focus again and consider the symmetries and asymmetries among pleasure, unpleasure, and pain.

### 4.1 A Further Contrast Between Pain and Pleasure/Unpleasure

At the outset we noted that not all unpleasures are pains. But notice a further point: whereas unpleasantness and pleasantness seem in some measure to span the sense modalities, pain does not. Your tactile experience of someone touching you and your gustatory experience of a taste may both be unpleasant or pleasant. But again, pain seems not to span the modalities in this way.

If right, this might be taken to indicate that pain is *itself* a sense modality, to which pain experiences—unpleasant or not—belong.<sup>11</sup> The idea of pain as its own sense modality once seemed more outré than it does now. For whereas in the pain case there were no obvious sense organs (contrast eyes in the case of vision) and no obvious, well-defined kind of stimulus to which any such organ might be sensitive (contrast light in the case of vision), some think that the discovery of nociceptors has supplied the relevant sense organs, which—they claim—respond to damage or the threat of damage or perhaps to some other kind of “disturbance”.

Whether pain is a sense modality or not is still a live issue; and settling it will depend on settling the criteria by which sense modalities ought to be individuated (Macpherson 2011). We will not pursue the matter further except to register another possibility, articulated in this volume by Richard Gray. According to Gray, while pain is not itself a modality, and does not respond to physical stimulations of one particular kind, it is nonetheless related to perception, since pains—he argues—represent the significance for us of the excessive stimulation of the sense organs of the modalities. In any case, pleasantness and unpleasantness seem to be (as Gray acknowledges) a different case again. They are features possessed by experiences across a range of sense modalities (including pain experiences, *whatever* modality pain experiences belong to). There is, again, *no* basis on which to call either pleasure or unpleasure themselves sense modalities.

### 4.2 Symmetries: Extending Accounts of Pain’s Unpleasantness

Since the accounts we examined in Section 3.3–3.4 were not of pain per se, but of its unpleasantness, we should ask whether they might be extended to illuminate pleasure, on the one hand, and the remaining unpleasures, on the other.

Some of those accounts’ adherents do indeed try to extend them. Some desire theorists, for example, say that just as pain experiences count as unpleasant by being the targets of t-desires, so do itch experiences (Armstrong 1962). And, turning to

<sup>11</sup> Perceptualism, as characterised in Section 4, is not committed to this claim.

pleasure, they claim that an experience of a caress counts as pleasant by, conversely, being the target of a “c-desire”, that is a non-instrumental desire for the experience to *continue*. Can the special content views be similarly extended? What, for example, do imperativists say about the non-pain unpleasures? About itch (a type of experience to which imperativism was applied before pain), imperativists have said that the experience is not a command for the subject to stop what he is doing, but rather a command for him to scratch (Hall 2008).<sup>12</sup> Turning to pleasure, while imperativists have so far said little on this score, one can imagine what they might say: if unpleasant pains command one to stop doing what one is doing, or alternatively to stop the perceived bodily disturbance, then perhaps pleasures command one to *continue* doing what one is doing, or to *sustain* some perceived event or condition. Given this, masochism might threaten imperativism to the extent that it would seem to require an experience that commands the subject both to stop and to continue. But perhaps such ambivalent commands are possible; and anyway, if Klein can successfully defend the alternative account of masochism that he offers in this volume, then imperativists may not need to invoke them. As for evaluativists, they too—like imperativists—have said less about pleasure than pain, but the obvious elaboration of their view is that, if unpleasures represent certain conditions as bad, pleasures represent them as good. It remains to be seen whether these extensions of accounts of pain’s unpleasantness are defensible.

### 4.3 Asymmetries and Motivation

Having glimpsed how accounts of pain’s unpleasantness might be extended, it is important to note that we must not simply assume that they should be. We must not, that is, assume that whatever is said about unpleasantness should simply be inverted and said about pleasantness; or that whatever is said about *pain’s* unpleasantness should be said about unpleasantness *in general*.

Starting with the latter point, notice that we often call pains not just unpleasant but *painful*. Why do we ascribe painfulness only to pains and not to other unpleasures, for example itches or nausea?<sup>13</sup> It could be that talking of *painful* experiences is simply another way of talking of *pains*, or of pains *that are unpleasant*—unpleasant in some generic way, that is, no different in kind from the unpleasantness of other unpleasures. But, alternatively, it could be that “painful” is a word for a distinctive kind of unpleasantness or aversiveness that only pains have. If so, it would be mistaken simply to carry over to the other unpleasures an account of pain’s unpleasantness, or simply to invert that account to get a story about pleasantness. In short, whatever the meaning of “painful”, we must ask: Is pain’s unpleasantness *distinctive* vis-à-vis the unpleasantness of other unpleasures? Is pain’s unpleasantness *asymmetric* vis-à-vis pleasure? And is unpleasantness *in general* asymmetric vis-à-vis pleasure?

Myriad positions on these matters are possible. Some, for instance, might think that pain’s unpleasantness—not just pain itself—is *phenomenally* different from the

<sup>12</sup> One challenge this presents for imperativism is to ensure that the command to scratch—at least partly constitutive of unpleasant itches—and the command to stop what one is doing—at least partly constitutive of unpleasant pains—have something in common in virtue of which both of itches and pains count as unpleasant. Although see Section 5.3 below.

<sup>13</sup> A question Jennifer Corns has impressed on us.

unpleasantness of other unpleasures. Some will argue for *normative* asymmetries between the positive and negative cases: claiming, for instance, that there is greater moral justification (all else equal) for eliminating a person's unpleasant pain (or unpleasure generally) than for increasing his pleasure (Hurka 2011; and Shriver, this volume). Another claim in this area is that the unpleasantness of pain occupies subjects' attention in a way that the pleasantness of pleasures does not (see, in this volume, Gray and Shriver).

A particularly important dispute falling under this head relates to Motivation (Section 3.1). On the basis of experiments on rats, neuroscientist Kent Berridge argues that—in his terms—"liking" and "wanting" dissociate (Berridge et al. 2009). While care is required to interpret Berridge and his data, not least given his definition of "liking" and "wanting", some are tempted to take him to have shown that it is possible for a subject to have a pleasant experience without the pleasure motivating her (even defeasibly) to get more of it or its cause—to show, for example, that she might have a pleasurable gustatory experience of an expensive wine and yet that pleasure not even slightly incline her to taste more *even* when she lacks any opposing motivation (for example, a desire to stay sober or to save money). Suppose that is right. Is a parallel dissociation possible in the case of unpleasantness and motivation? Jennifer Corns argues that it probably is.<sup>14</sup> If successful, her argument seems to undermine Motivation as characterised in Section 3.1. But Shriver (this volume) rejects this dissociation. He claims that while one can indeed find an experience pleasant without the pleasure even defeasibly motivating one to have more of it or its cause, one *cannot* find an experience *unpleasant* without the unpleasantness defeasibly motivating one to *end* it or its cause. If Shriver is right, a further asymmetry between pleasure and unpleasure opens up.

## 5 Synopses

The papers in this special issue address many of the questions above. In this final section, we provide brief synopses.

Defining "contraries" as incompatible properties that have the same category of bearers, **Olivier Massin's** paper, 'Pleasure and its Contraries', denies that pain is the contrary of pleasure, since he claims that pain and pleasure belong to different categories. Instead, he suggests, pleasure has *two* contraries: unpleasure (which he calls pleasure's 'polar opposite'; see also Section 2 above) and hedonic indifference or 'indolence' (pleasure's 'neutral opposite'). (Massin helpfully disentangles various relations: for example contrariety, contradiction, and opposition. See also Section 1–2 above.) Against Plato, moreover, Massin argues that the contradictory of pleasure does not comprise a natural class, since the non-pleasures include not only unpleasures but states of "hedonic indifference". To understand the neutrality of these states of indifference, Massin considers two competing models: zero degrees centigrade, which is a temperature, and zero kilograms, which by contrast is not a weight, but weightlessness.

<sup>14</sup> Corns *forthcoming*. See also Cohen and Fulkerson, this volume. Corns' principal claim concerns a dissociation at the sub-personal, computational level, but she thinks it also *likely* that the personal level dissociation mentioned in the text holds.

Massin claims that the former is the more appropriate model, since hedonic neutrality (or indolence) is itself, he argues, an hedonic property.

**Colin Klein's** contribution focuses on a central issue in Section 2 above, mentioned also by Massin and Leknes and Bastian: how to make sense of masochistic pleasures, experiences that people find pleasant *because* they are painful or unpleasant. Klein argues that these experiences are not limited to sex or psychopathology, but include, for example, eating hot food or running a marathon. Typical attempts to make sense of these experiences, he argues, fail to capture the kinship among such disparate cases. Klein's own view is that in masochistic pleasures what is found pleasant is the experience's 'penumbral quality', that is, the awareness that the painfulness of the experience is on the very limit of bearability. Pleasurable pains are thus penumbral sensations. Thus Klein answers the question of *what* is pleasurable in masochistic pleasures. As for how they are possible, his account appeals to the following hierarchy: pain is a first-order mental state, but painfulness and pleasantness are *higher-order* states. The structure of masochistic pleasure, then, involves a first-order experience, for example a pain, being felt as painful, which painfulness is in turn (and because of its penumbral quality) felt as pleasant.

**Siri Leknes and Brock Bastian's** paper, 'The benefits of Pain', focuses on matters also addressed in other papers in the volume, for example the idea that pain gives us reason to act by dint of its affective nature, and the idea that certain pains can in fact be pleasurable. But their principal claim, supported by empirical data, is that pain has many potential benefits, many of them concerning pleasure. Pain can, they argue, (i) give you a sense of accomplishment when re-conceptualised as a challenge, (ii) allow the subject to demonstrate positive qualities of strength, determination, and self-control, (iii) provide the possibility for atonement and redemption after transgression, (iv) motivate the accumulation of social resources, such as social bonds and support, which help to strengthen our defence systems against future pain, (v) direct attention to bodily stimuli and thereby enhance pleasure, (vi) give rise to the pleasure of relief when pain subsides, and (vii) inhibit other painful and unpleasant experiences.

Turning to **Valerie Hardcastle's** paper 'Pleasure Gone Awry?', it focuses on data about the neural mechanisms underlying chronic pain, acute pain, pleasure, and addiction, which Hardcastle uses to put pressure on these folk categories. In particular, she claims there are important similarities between the neural substrates of chronic pain and alcoholism, and argues that both can be understood in terms of the malfunctioning of our pleasure system. On this basis, she recommends that chronic pain and addiction be regarded as "of a conceptual piece." She argues, moreover, that these similarities have implications for how we think of acute pain too, especially its relationship to pleasure (in particular, the pleasure of relief from pain) and whether pain should be considered an *evaluative* state.

**Richard Gray's** paper concerns the relationship between pain, pleasure, and perception. He focuses particularly on pain, conceding that pain is subserved by its own physiological system, but rejecting both the perceptualist view that pains are perceptual representations of actual or threatened damage (Section 3.2 above) and the idea that pain is itself a sense modality (Section 4.1 above). Yet Gray thinks pain is nonetheless related to perception, and in an interesting way. Pains, he claims, represent the significance for us of the excessive stimulation of the sense organs of the modalities. This is his updated version of the 'intensive theory'. This view, he argues, handles

transient pains (pains that occur when damage is imminent) better than perceptualist views; and it can also handle acute and chronic pains by deeming them deviant cases. It also provides one reason for doubting that pleasure and pain are opposites, since it is implausible—he argues—that pleasure’s role is whatever would be the opposite of the role of pain just sketched.

In ‘Affect, Rationalization, and Motivation’, **Matthew Fulkerson** and **Jonathan Cohen** defend what they call ‘causal theories’ of pleasure and pain (which include functionalism and imperativism) from an objection made by evaluativists (Section 3.4 above).<sup>15</sup> The objection is that only evaluativist theories, not causal theories, can capture affective states’ rationalising role (Section 3.1 above). Cohen and Fulkerson argue that this objection turns on two substantive and controversial but so far undefended views: a kind of internalism about justification and a form of motivational internalism about practical reasons (Section 3.1 above). They contend that, at the very least, we should require defence of these controversial presuppositions before we accept the evaluativists’ argument against causal theories. Finally, they identify a tension between some evaluativists’ aspiration to give a naturalistic account of evaluative contents, on the one hand, and their idea that ‘mere causes’ cannot rationalise, on the other

Turning to **Murat Aydede’s** paper, ‘How to Unify Theories of Sensory Pleasure: an Adverbialist Proposal’, it targets two traditional approaches to pleasures: felt-quality views (Section 3.1 above) and attitudinal views (Section 3.3 and 4.2, above). On the former, pleasures share an introspectible common quality in virtue of which they count as pleasures. On the latter, pleasure is a composite of an experience plus an attitude – such as liking or desiring – taken towards that experience. About each, Aydede makes a negative and positive point. He rejects those versions of felt-quality views that claim pleasures share an introspectible *sensory* quality; but he accepts that pleasantness has an “occurrent phenomenology”. Regarding attitudinal views, he rejects that pleasantness consists in having a pro- attitude, such as desire or liking, directed at your experience; but he accepts what he sees as a related idea, namely that an experience’s pleasantness consists in its having a desire-like functional role. As Aydede puts it, pleasantness is an adverbial matter (Section 3.2 above), a matter of the *way* incoming sensory information is processed. And he extends this conclusion to unpleasantness too. In sum, possession of the right desire-like role, Aydede thinks, constitutes the experience’s affective phenomenology; and while this phenomenology is non-sensory, it is phenomenology all the same (Section 3.3 above).

Finally, in ‘The Asymmetrical Contributions of Pleasure and Pain to Well-Being’, **Adam Shriver** aims to refute the standard assumption in ethics and value theory that pleasure and pain, while opposites, are symmetrical, hence that arguments about pleasure and its relation to well-being necessarily tell us about pain and *its* relation to well-being. Shriver claims that current neuroscience undermines this assumption. He maintains that experiences of pleasure and pain are mediated by different cognitive systems, argues that pleasure and pain stand in different relations to our motivational

<sup>15</sup> Cohen and Fulkerson say ‘evaluationist’, but for reasons of editorial consistency we have used ‘evaluativist.’

systems (see Section 4.3 above), and marshals evidence to the effect that, as he puts, “bad is stronger than good”. Pleasure and pain, he concludes, are not symmetrical.

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