

Is Unpleasantness Intrinsic to Unpleasant Experiences?

(Title and Running Head)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Unpleasant experiences include itches, backaches, phantom pains and moments of embarrassment. What does their unpleasantness consist in?

Philosophers have offered the following answers:

1. The unpleasantness of an experience consists in its representing bodily damage. (Damage)
2. The unpleasantness of an experience consists in its inclining the subject to fight its continuation. (Motivation)
3. The unpleasantness of an experience consists in the subject's disliking it. (Dislike)
4. The unpleasantness of an experience consists in features intrinsic to it. (Intrinsic Nature)

Each of these theories stands or falls with its corresponding view of pleasure. So, I will assess Motivation, for instance, alongside the idea that the pleasantness of an experience consists in its inclining the subject to fight for its continuation. In the end, I will favor Intrinsic Nature.

Why does this issue matter? First, if Intrinsic Nature is true, then unpleasantness doesn't consist in unpleasure—unpleasant experience—playing any sort of functional role. Second, a correct account of unpleasantness should cast light on *why* unpleasures are bad. Third, if we knew why unpleasures are bad, perhaps we could conclude that other things are bad for the same reason. Thus Motivation or Dislike, if true, yield a powerful new argument for the role of desire in ethics:

- (i) Unpleasant experiences are non-instrumentally bad—if not always, then at least when the unpleasure isn't deserved and isn't an "appropriate" response (for example, to hearing that a friend has died).
- (ii) On Motivation or Dislike, unpleasant experiences are non-instrumentally bad due to the fact that one is moved to end them or dislikes them.
- (iii) To dislike an experience or to be moved to end it is to desire that it end (even if one's overall desire is for the experience to continue).
- (iv) So, on Motivation or Dislike, desires sometimes confer non-instrumental disvalue (or non-instrumental value, in the case of pleasure); or, on Motivation or Dislike, sometimes it is good to satisfy a desire (by ending unpleasure) just to have it satisfied. This supports:
- (v) Desires confer disvalue or value in other instances; there is basic reason to satisfy desires in other instances.

I will challenge this argument by criticizing Motivation and Dislike.

Fourth, if Intrinsic Nature is false—if unpleasantness is extrinsic to unpleasures—then such experiences are not intrinsically bad. Several philosophers have made this point about painful experiences. Nelkin, who supports Damage, says, "Pains are *bad*, but no phenomenal state *in and of itself* wears that evaluation."ⁱ Korsgaard, championing Motivation, says that "someone who says he is in pain is not describing a condition which gives him a reason to change his condition. He is announcing that he has a *very* strong impulse to change his condition."ⁱⁱ Parfit, advocating Dislike, says, "Some have claimed that pain is intrinsically bad, and that this is why we dislike it. As I have suggested, I doubt this claim."ⁱⁱⁱ And Hall says, "Why don't we like pain sensations? . . . Because they accompany nociceptual reports of bodily damage, and bodily damage is something we don't like to hear about. It is like the ruler who slew the messenger who brought the bad news; pain sensations are

no more inherently bad than the messenger.”^{iv} These remarks flow from false theories of unpleasantness. The correct account—Intrinsic Nature—supports unpleasures being intrinsically bad.

2. DAMAGE

According to Tye, “pains are sensory representations of bodily damage or disorder.”^v Pains are merely one species of unpleasure, but perhaps some philosophers would say that unpleasures are sensory *or non-sensory* representations of bodily damage. But in what sense do unpleasures represent damage? There are several views in this area to consider.

(A) The unpleasantness of an experience consists in its being caused by bodily damage.

Pitcher holds that “to be aware of a pain is to perceive—in particular, to *feel*, by means of the stimulation of one’s pain receptors and nerves—a part of one’s body that is in a damaged, bruised, irritated, or pathological state, or that is in a state that is dangerously close to being one or more of these kinds of states.”^{vi} This view fails even for painful unpleasures. Brains in vats can have painful experiences without being diseased, injured or in danger; cortical stimulation suffices for unpleasure. Moreover, “Gentle touch, vibration and other non-noxious stimuli can trigger excruciating pain” in some patients.^{vii} Such patients are unhealthy, but their pain is caused by *non-noxious* stimuli. So, (A) fails: an unpleasant experience needn't be caused by bodily damage.

Variants of (A) appear no more promising. For example, “the unpleasantness of an experience consists in its being of a phenomenological type whose instances are

typically caused by bodily damage.” But bodily damage never causes unpleasure in a world of vatted brains. Moreover, many unpleasant psychological states in the actual world—such as loneliness, anxiety, boredom and sorrow—are not typically caused by bodily damage.

(B) The unpleasantness of an experience consists in the subject’s believing it to signal bodily damage.

(B) invites the following objection: “if I interpret my unpleasure as part of a physical or psychological process of healing, then I won’t believe it to signal bodily damage. Similarly, if I know that my diet contains too much fat, I won’t believe that the delicious taste of chocolate signals my good health.” But (B) may be interpreted to avoid this objection.

Nelkin says, “Pains consist entirely of a phenomenal state and the simultaneous, spontaneous appraisal of that state as representing a harm to the body.”^{viii} On this view, I may *spontaneously* take my experience to signal bodily harm (and so it’s a pain), even if I believe it to signal healing, all things considered. But how can infants, rats, cats and bats feel pain despite lacking the concept of bodily harm? Nelkin says that the generalized form of all pain evaluation is, “The state here represented is harmful!”^{ix} Why should we believe that cats make such assessments? Nelkin points to instances in which evaluations seem to affect whether the subject feels pain,^x but evaluations may affect whether an experience is painful or unpleasant by subtly altering the experience itself (Intrinsic Nature), by moving the agent to fight its continuation (Motivation), or by causing one to dislike it (Dislike). Also, Nelkin emphasizes that on his view, pains share no characteristic qualitative feature. But

Motivation, Dislike and Intrinsic Nature (as I develop it) don't imply otherwise. Hence, Nelkin's evaluative theory is undermotivated.

Extending Nelkin's view to cover all unpleasures weakens it further. Consider: "the unpleasantness of an experience consists in the subject's spontaneously evaluating it as signalling bodily harm." Many nonpainful unpleasures don't seem to signal bodily harm in any way. Mouthwash marketers, for instance, make their product taste bad because consumers associate that taste with bodily benefit; sorrows and anxieties often accompany worries about others only; and, with loneliness, what seems wrong is that one lacks company, not that one is in harm's way. These intuitive remarks are inconclusive: perhaps loneliness, sorrow, anxiety and the yucky taste of mouthwash are spontaneously evaluated as representing harm, even if we're not conscious of the evaluation as such. But such a view needs support.

(C) The unpleasantness of an experience consists in its intrinsically representing bodily damage. (This is also a variant of Intrinsic Nature.)

How might an experience intrinsically represent something? (i) The mental image of a square might intrinsically represent square things by robustly resembling them. But unpleasures, as far as I can tell, do not robustly resemble bodily damage. (ii) The mental image of a square might intrinsically represent square things by being itself an instance of squareness. However, no one is tempted to think that each unpleasant experience is or includes an instance of bodily damage. So, (C) seems untenable.

3. MOTIVATION

Korsgaard says, “The painfulness of pain consists in the fact that these are sensations which we are inclined to fight.”^{xi} But that is not quite right; a priest may be strongly inclined to fight his licentious *pleasures* because he views them as sinful. On the best form of Motivation, unpleasantness consists in only that inclination which the experience causes. As Brandt says, “for an experience to be pleasant is for it to make the person want its continuation,” where *wanting* is understood in terms of action-tendencies.^{xii}

Unpleasures typically incline us to fight against them; moreover, Motivation elegantly accounts for unpleasure intensity. An unpleasure’s intensity, on this view, is the degree to which it inclines the subject to end it. So, an intense unpleasure highly inclines one to end it, a mild unpleasure slightly inclines, and so on.

Even if unpleasure always inclines one to fight its continuation in proportion to its unpleasantness, one might not so fight, for any of four reasons. First, other motives might partly, or wholly, mask the expression of that inclination. Nagel says that someone may pursue pain “as a means to some end or . . . backed up by dark reasons like guilt or sexual masochism.”^{xiii} If such motives do not wholly mask the tendency to fight, then the experience would limit the vigor of the pursuit. Second, one might not avoid unpleasant stimuli because one can’t do so for nonpsychological reasons: one might itch but not scratch because one is pinned down in the wrestling ring. Similarly, one’s capacity to fight might be diminished by such causes: one might be too exhausted from swimming to scratch hard. Third, other motives might cause one to fight unpleasure in excess of its intensity: one might work harder to end a headache because the wedding is in an hour. Fourth, one might fight disproportionately hard because of nonpsychological causes external to the experience: one might fight against unpleasure more vigorously if one just drank a

pot of coffee. In all these kinds of case, Motivation entails counterfactuals: if one didn't feel guilty (or weren't pinned to the mat), then one would fight the unpleasure more vigorously; if one weren't concerned about the wedding (or weren't on a caffeine rush), then one would fight less vigorously.

Objection: "People want their unpleasure to end because it's unpleasant. However, on Motivation, this amounts to saying that people want their unpleasure to end because they want it to end, which is nonsense." Motivationists can reply: "Initially, Agent doesn't want her unpleasure to end because it's unpleasant. She tastes quinine, it seems, no sooner than she wants to spit it out; so the unpleasantness of the taste may not cause her urge to spit. However, Agent's urge, once established, may cause further urges; and so, the unpleasantness of the experience may incline her to end it."^{xiv}

Sidgwick criticizes Motivation in a forgotten passage. He considers Dr. Bain's view that "pleasure and pain, in the actual or real experience, are to be held as identical with motive power."^{xv} And Sidgwick objects that "some feelings which stimulate strongly to their own removal are either not painful at all or only slightly painful:—e.g. ordinarily the sensation of being tickled."^{xvi} Call this objection (i). Moreover:

(ii) The soothing pleasure of a massage can be highly intense yet relaxing, so the subject is not strongly moved to prolong it. If the masseuse pauses to rest, her client might say, "Please don't stop" but won't protest in any other way. On such occasions, the pleasure seems to motivate the subject less than its intensity would require.

(iii) Some depressives have no impulse or only a slight impulse to change their condition, perhaps because they cannot imagine feeling happy.^{xvii} "Depression," says comedian Steven Wright, "is merely anger *without enthusiasm*."

(iv) Severe embarrassment can be motivationally crippling—it can cause the agent to “freeze up.” When this happens, the unpleasure seems greater than any tendency the agent has to fight its continuation. Similar remarks hold for anxiety.

(v) Intensely unpleasant physical pains are usually motivationally crippling.

In (i), degree of motivation exceeds degree of unpleasantness; in (ii)-(v), it falls short. Motivationists can say that in (i) the extra motivation is caused by something other than the experience, and that in (ii)-(v) the motive power is masked. Empirical findings might vindicate Motivation, but lacking strong reasons to accept that view, this seems unlikely.

4. DISLIKE

Hall says that, “The unpleasantness of pain sensations consists in their being disliked.”^{xviii} Broad entertains Dislike when he wonders whether “This experience of mine is pleasant” means “I like this experience for its non-hedonic qualities.”^{xix} On this view, unpleasures are conscious episodes that are disliked when experienced, and the intensity of an unpleasure is how much the subject dislikes it.

Parfit seems to vacillate between Dislike and Motivation. He says:

On the use of ‘pain’ which has rational and moral significance, all pains are when experienced unwanted, and a pain is worse or greater the more it is unwanted. Similarly, all pleasures are when experienced wanted, and they are better or greater the more they are wanted.^{xx}

Wanting is more akin to motivation than to liking. But Parfit also says, “. . . the badness of a pain consists in its being disliked . . .,”^{xxi} which implies that, on the use

of 'pain' which has rational and moral significance, all pains are when experienced disliked.

Dislike and Motivation are easily conflated because one almost always wants to avoid experiences one dislikes and dislikes experiences one wants to avoid. To dislike an experience to some degree, however, does not entail being moved to fight its continuation to that degree; one can dislike being depressed but be resigned to it.

In what sense must I dislike my unpleasure? Unpleasures can be liked in some ways—for example, I can approve of my pain as part of a healing process or as a means to benefiting others. Perhaps, on Dislike, one must have an unfavorable emotional attitude towards the experience “considered merely as feeling” (to use Sidgwick’s phrase). The priest disapproves of his sexual pleasure, not merely as feeling (in that light it is delicious) but as a sin against God. Such an attitude needn’t be cognitively sophisticated, given that kittens feel unpleasure.

Normally, one distinguishes unpleasant from other experiences based on whether one dislikes them merely as feeling, and one gauges unpleasure intensity based on the strength of such disliking.^{xxii} However, this doesn’t show that one necessarily dislikes unpleasure, for we often categorize phenomena based on features accidental to the category. For example, we normally categorize water as *water* based on features that pick out XYZ on Twin Earth, which (arguably) isn’t water. Perhaps we identify unpleasures based on our disliking them as feeling because such disliking typically includes the judgment that the experience is intrinsically unpleasant.

Yesterday I felt pleasure, to different degrees, all day long. In what sense did I have a “favorable emotional attitude” to my experiences when I was not focusing on them? The notions of liking and disliking need further explication. One might say: “You felt pleasure all day long in the sense that, had you reflected on your experience, at any time during the day, you would have liked it. And how intense

your pleasure is equals how much you would like it upon reflection.” But doesn’t focusing on one’s experiences change them? And sometimes one seems to like an experience more when one focuses on it—typically, the taste of wine—and sometimes less—typically, sexual pleasures. Why should pleasure intensity be the intensity of liking were one to focus, rather than actual liking?

I’ll offer counterexamples to Dislike in which the subject’s emotional attitudes are skewed.

First, how much one likes an experience might be influenced unduly by how it contrasts with a prior state. For example, suppose you are in ecstasy, but then your pleasure plummets to a level only mildly pleasant. Of course, you will dislike no longer being in ecstasy, but mightn’t you also dislike the mildly pleasurable state—resent it, as it were, for being so mild? And Trigg says, “The way in which people apparently enjoy searching with their tongue for a tooth which aches slightly, and deliberately trying to manipulate it, might confirm that it is quite intelligible to like pain.”^{xxiii} People like such unpleasures because they contrast with what the normal experience of touching a tooth with a tongue. People like them less as their novelty wears off.

Second, how much one likes an experience might be influenced unduly by one’s prior expectations. Suppose you are blindfolded and told to expect the touch of a hot poker on the small of your back. As you wait, your anxiety rises. But instead of a hot poker, your back is touched with ice. You cry out, until you feel the object start to melt. Didn’t you greatly dislike the experience, even though it was not intensely unpleasant?^{xxiv}

Third, someone’s desire for attention can skew her attitudes. For example, a child wanting pity might throw a tearful fit over a minor injury. In some cases, it seems, she is not just acting—she dislikes her conscious state out of proportion to its unpleasantness.

Dislikers might respond as follows: “In these examples, the subject’s disliking doesn’t correspond to intensity because of causes foreign to the experience: a prior contrasting state, heightened anxiety, a strong desire for attention. But the unpleasantness of an experience consists in *its* causing the subject’s dislike.” This would revise Dislike to mirror Motivation. Churchland endorses such a view in passing: “[pain] qualia are similar in causing a reaction of dislike in the victim . . .”^{xxv} But causes external to the experience almost always influence how much one dislikes it. Such causes might include noncontrasting prior states, moderate levels of anxiety and modest desires for attention. So, on this view, pleasure intensity will almost never be supposed to correspond to the subject’s *actual* degree of liking. If so, then Dislike is hard to test. Such a view might be true, but why believe it?

5. INTRINSIC NATURE

On this view, it is an intrinsic, nonrelational fact about certain experiences that they are unpleasant.^{xxvi} Unpleasantness, on this view, supervenes on qualia: there cannot be a change in unpleasure intensity without a change in qualia. Also, unpleasantness does not reduce to motivation or disliking or bodily damage relating in the right way to experience. But Intrinsic Nature leaves open whether unpleasantness is irreducible. For example, unpleasantness might reduce to (or supervene on) a physical property intrinsic to all unpleasures.

Hall assumes that if pains are intrinsically unpleasant, then they're necessarily unpleasant,^{xxvii} but this should not be assumed. If a pain is intrinsically unpleasant, then, necessarily, its perfect duplicates are unpleasant, but it might not be identical with only its perfect duplicates. In another world, it (or its counterpart) might be similar to it in this world without being unpleasant. If so, the actual pain would be intrinsically, but not necessarily, unpleasant.

5.1 Two Reasons For Intrinsic Nature

1. When you twist your ankle or jam your finger, the experience itself seems to hurt; the unpleasantness seems to be right there in it. Don't just think about this in the abstract; examine your own unpleasures. Introspection, though fallible, provides evidence for Intrinsic Nature.

2. Why do some physical states, but not others, cause, constitute or realize qualitative experiences? This problem arises on any theory of unpleasantness. On Intrinsic Nature, one aspect of it is to explain why certain physical states cause, constitute or realize qualitatively unpleasant experiences.

However, the other views we've considered face an additional problem: why does conjoining an intrinsically neutral experience with that extra element produce an awful, normatively significant state of affairs? Consider Dislike. Why should having an unfavorable emotional attitude towards an otherwise neutral experience be awful? Why does disliking an otherwise neutral experience have normative significance? Dislikers might say: "I don't know, but this is not just my problem. Everyone believes that liking and disliking confer significance. For example, baseball cards matter because people like having them." But not everyone believes that liking and disliking confer significance. My having an intrinsically worthless baseball card is good, I think, because it gives me intrinsically pleasant experiences—not because I like having it.

5.2 *Objections to Intrinsic Nature*

1. According to the higher-order perception theory (HOP), a mental state is conscious just in case it is introspected. According to the higher-order thought theory (HOT), a mental state is conscious just in case it is accompanied by the thought that one is in that state. Proponents of HOP or HOT might object to Intrinsic Nature as follows:

- (i) HOP or HOT is true.
- (ii) So, mental states are not intrinsically conscious.
- (iii) So, some perfect duplicates of unpleasures are not conscious.
- (iv) Such duplicates are not unpleasant.
- (v) So, unpleasant mental states are not intrinsically unpleasant.
- (vi) So, Intrinsic Nature is false.

I won't assess HOP and HOT^{xxviii} or (iv); I'll bypass these big issues by amplifying Intrinsic Nature so that it's compatible with them. Intrinsic Nature holds unpleasantness to be intrinsic to experience—that is, intrinsic to the minimum unit required for conscious experience. Hence, an experience is either (a) a mental state; (b) a mental state conjoined with one's introspecting it; or (c) a mental state conjoined with one's thinking that one is in it. Intrinsic Nature is therefore compatible with (v): even if unpleasant *experiences* are intrinsically unpleasant, unpleasant *mental states* may not be. If these compatible claims both hold, then functionalism about unpleasantness would be true in one sense and false in another. True, if functionalism is the view that token mental states are type-identified by their relational properties; false, if functionalism holds that token experiences are type-identified by their relational properties.

2. What integrates the category *unpleasant experience*? If unpleasure is *intrinsically* unpleasant, then an intrinsic property, it seems, should unite that category. Do unpleasures share a distinctive, intrinsic feature? I have rejected the idea that unpleasures intrinsically represent bodily harm. C. D. Broad thought that, “. . . there is a quality, which we cannot define but are perfectly acquainted with, which may be called ‘Hedonic Tone.’ It has two determinate forms of Pleasantness and Unpleasantness.”^{xxxix} Some writers agree with Broad,^{xxx} though most disagree.^{xxxi} Broad’s claim that “we are perfectly acquainted with” a quality of “Hedonic Tone” reminds me of Hume’s insistence that beliefs share a common quality of vivacity. “I confess,” says Hume, “that ‘tis impossible to explain perfectly this feeling or manner of conception.”^{xxxii} There is nothing qualitatively invariant about unpleasures or beliefs; unpleasures are too varied for any common feel to distinguish them from all other experiences. And so Korsgaard says,

If the painfulness of pain rested in the character of the sensations . . . our belief that physical pain has something in common with grief, rage and disappointment would be inexplicable. For that matter, what physical pains have in common with each other would be inexplicable, for the sensations are of many different kinds. What do nausea, migraine, menstrual cramps, pinpricks and pinches have in common, that makes us call them all pains?^{xxxiii}

Nausea, migraines and menstrual cramps have no common qualitative feel distinctive of unpleasure, but if unpleasures are physical (or physically realized), then they (or their realizations) might share an intrinsic physical property. That property might be experienced differently depending on what other physical properties contribute to the conscious state; thus unpleasures could have no characteristic *qualitative* aspects, even though they had a characteristic physical

aspect. Such a physical property could explain why we call unpleasures “unpleasant”—we do so when we discern that property’s presence.

However, Intrinsic Nature lovers need not posit such a property, for they can explain unpleasure’s unity in any of the following ways:

- (A) Unpleasures are just those experiences that are intrinsically bad due to how they feel.
- (B) Unpleasures are just those experiences that are bad for the people who have them due to how they feel.
- (C) Unpleasures are just those experiences that one ought to dislike merely as feeling; disliking is an appropriate response to unpleasures alone considered merely as feeling.

On these views, “unpleasure” is evaluative. Variants of this idea dot the literature. Nelkin says, “When one ascribes ‘pain’ to one’s self, one is not merely describing a condition of oneself. One is also evaluating that condition.”^{xxxiv} And utilitarians have traditionally understood “pleasure” and “pain” normatively. Sidgwick, for example, defines “Pleasure—when we are considering its ‘strict value’ for purposes of quantitative comparison—as a feeling which, when experienced by intelligent beings, is at least implicitly apprehended as desirable or—in cases of comparison—preferable.”^{xxxv}

3. There are many kinds of case in which two experiences differ in pleasantness but seem intrinsically indistinguishable (or only unimportantly different). Some of these cases involve medical intervention. Parfit says that:

After taking certain kinds of drug, people claim that the quality of their sensations has not altered, but they no longer dislike these sensations. We would regard such drugs as effective analgesics. This suggests that the badness of a pain consists in its being disliked, and that it is not disliked because it is bad.^{xxxvi}

Brandt and Hall dispute Intrinsic Nature on similar grounds.^{xxxvii} Let's distinguish two varieties of this kind of case. When drugs relieve pain (as in Parfit's example), the subject says that the experience has not altered, but she no longer minds it. When drugs prevent unpleasure from occurring, the subject says that the resulting experience is intrinsically just like pains normally are. Both varieties are potential counterexamples to Intrinsic Nature. In each case, the subject says that a current experience which doesn't hurt is intrinsically indistinguishable from a past experience that did. The subject's report is more credible when pain is relieved, for then the intrinsically indistinguishable experience is one the subject just had.

Brandt and Parfit do not cite any studies, interviews or personal experiences. Hall quotes a number of sources,^{xxxviii} but in them subjects are not probed for the right information. All parties agree that analgesics have psychoactive properties. Demerol, for example, is psychoactively identical with heroin. So the question is not whether the subject's conscious state has qualitatively altered—obviously it has. Rather, the question is whether those changes account for why the state is no longer unpleasant. One cannot answer such a question based on a simple inspection of the introspective data. Under *favorable* circumstances, ordinary subjects might get these matters wrong. The circumstances, moreover, are unfavorable because the subjects are high on drugs. Hall believes that the altered state of the subjects does not undermine the credibility of their reports. "Is it really likely that they could actually be in an unpleasant or even awful mental state and not notice it or be able to

report it correctly?”^{xxxix} But the danger is that the subjects’ new experience is *not* unpleasant, but they do not discern why.

Furthermore, subjects may be asked, “Though your pain has been relieved, is it still there?” with “Yes” being taken as evidence against Intrinsic Nature. But the ordinary concept of “pain” might naturally extend to pleasant or neutral experiences which have much—but not everything—qualitatively in common with paradigmatic experiences of pain, and the qualitative differences might account for the hedonic difference. Similarly, the ordinary concept of “same sensation” might naturally apply to the sensation I have now (which is not unpleasant), and the unpleasant sensation I had two minutes ago, if they have much, but not everything, in common qualitatively.

After taking Demerol for pain relief, my father thought that the drug changed the sharpness of his pain to something duller that didn’t hurt.^{xl} “Before anaesthetics proper came into use,” says Hare, “surgeons used to give their patients whisky before operations; as anybody may verify, this does not diminish substantially the intensity of the pain-sensation, but may make it a great deal easier to bear.”^{xli} My experience is that alcohol makes pains *intrinsically* duller, which might make them less unpleasant.

Trigg says that, “We talk of ‘acquiring a taste for something’ and this just means coming to like a taste which we previously did not care for. It is a reasonable assumption that the taste has not changed in such instances.”^{xlii} If so, then whether a taste experience is pleasant or unpleasant depends on whether it is liked, not its internal nature. But it is also reasonable to suppose that the taste has changed. As I child, I despised crunchy peanut butter; now I like it, and I think my peanut butter experience itself has changed.

And in support of Motivation, Korsgaard says:

Pain really is less horrible if you can curb your inclination to fight it. This is why it helps, in dealing with pain, to take a tranquilizer or to lie down. Ask yourself how, if the painfulness of pain rested just in the character of the sensations, it could help to lie down? The sensations do not change.^{xliii}

Do they not? When relaxing soothes pain, doesn't pain's quality change? Might not a Stoic attitude affect the intrinsic properties of experience?

4. Assume the Humean thesis that distinct existences are never necessarily related—anything can be conjoined, or not conjoined, with anything else. On Intrinsic Nature, unpleasures are conceptually and ontologically distinct from emotional or behavioral responses to them. I assume that, if this is true of unpleasure, then it is true of pain. And so, on Intrinsic Nature, severe pain can be conjoined with liking or pursuit. It is a further question whether human beings, given the actual laws, can like and pursue severe pains. However, it would seem that we can; we can leap tall buildings in a single bound, given the occurrence of multiple, improbable quantum events. The fourth objection to Intrinsic Nature holds that no being—and certainly no human being—can like severe pain, and severe pain can never cause its subject to pursue its continuation. (Motivation is vulnerable to the first half of this objection, and Dislike to the second.)

I won't appeal to masochism as a counterexample to this objection, for the familiar claim that masochists like and pursue pain might be true but not in the sense that masochists have a favorable emotional attitude towards severe pain itself, considered merely as feeling, and seek its continuation for that reason. Masochists might like pain but not severe pain; masochists might dislike pain but like the pleasure that accompanies it; masochists might seek stimuli that cause most people pain but cause them pleasure; masochists might dislike how pain feels but like its gratification of their self-loathing.

Should Intrinsic Nature lovers reject the Humean thesis? Sprigge suggests that we “turn away from that denial of genuinely intelligible necessities stemming from David Hume . . .” and “not be afraid of the idea that pleasures and pains are of their very nature liable to affect behavior in certain directions.”^{xliiv} But, first, Sprigge’s thesis is vulnerable to some of my objections to Motivation: if pleasures and pains are liable to affect behavior in certain directions, then why don’t massages and severe physical pains move us more than they do? Second, one can visually imagine and propositionally describe (in some detail) sentient beings pursuing all types of pain; this tends to show that beings can pursue all types of pain.^{xlv} Third, what evidence tells against beings pursuing pain? Sprigge says that Intrinsic Nature lovers siding with Hume must “pretend that there would be nothing intrinsically odd to counter-hedonistically guided behavior.”^{xlvi} But pursuing pain, on such a view, may be intrinsically odd because it is so obviously imprudent.

Can sentient beings like severe pain merely as feeling? Consider this argument: “to like a token severe pain merely as feeling, one must not fully understand it; one must fully understand one’s current experience; therefore, one cannot like severe pain.” This argument has intuitive force, but its second premise is false. Consider a more humble argument: “to like a token severe pain merely as feeling entails robustly misunderstanding it, which is impossible. So, one cannot like severe pain.” But why can’t there be robust self-misunderstanding? And why couldn’t some strange animal know that its pain was awful without disliking it?

Intrinsic Nature lovers should not be faulted for believing that some sentient beings can like and pursue severe pain. “It is a contingent fact that [pleasures] do cause and sustain desire and do shape behavior.”^{xlvii} By the same token, Motivationists should not be faulted for thinking that sentient beings can like severe pain; nor should Dislikers be faulted for believing that beings can seek to prolong severe pain.

5. The fifth objection goes as follows. “On the view that combines the Humean thesis with Intrinsic Nature, any psychology that includes one element from each of 1-4 is possible:

- 1a. The general avoidance of unpleasure.
- 1b. The general pursuit of unpleasure.
- 1c. No general motivational pattern towards unpleasure.
- 2a. The general pursuit of pleasure.
- 2b. The general avoidance of pleasure.
- 2c. No general motivational pattern towards pleasure.
- 3a. The general disliking of unpleasure.
- 3b. The general liking of unpleasure.
- 3c. No general emotional pattern towards unpleasure.
- 4a. The general liking of pleasure.
- 4b. The general disliking of pleasure.
- 4c. No general emotional pattern towards pleasure.

So, 81 distinct psychologies are possible (assuming that liking and disliking are distinct from behavioral tendencies). If so, the human psychology (1a, 2a, 3a, 4a) is improbable—a ‘gross, empirical accident,’ to use Findlay’s phrase.^{xlviii} But the human psychology is uniquely rational among the 81 possibilities; surely we can explain its existence rather than regard it as a fluke; we can do better than to say ‘perhaps it is the greatest luck of all that for some creatures that which is intrinsically motivating is also intrinsically valuable.’^{xlix} So, the Humean version of Intrinsic Nature is false.”

Similar objections apply to combining the Humean thesis with Motivation or Dislike. For example: “On Dislike, any psychology that includes one element from

each of 1 and 2 is possible. If so, the human psychology (1a, 2a) is improbable. But that psychology is uniquely rational among the 9 possibilities; surely we can explain its existence rather than regard it as a fluke. Therefore, the Humean version of Dislike is false.”

These objections are similar to the following argument from design: “According to atheist metaphysics, vastly most possible worlds do not include intelligent life. But surely we can explain the existence of intelligent life rather than regard it as an improbable fluke. Therefore, atheist metaphysics is false.”

The fifth objection, like the argument from design, is hard to assess. How might Intrinsic Nature lovers respond to it? Appeals to natural selection are worthless, for at least the following reason: fitness-producing activities such as eating and mating might cause unpleasure in some worlds, and so evolution would favor unpleasure-seekers. Instead, Intrinsic Nature lovers might say that sentient species must have the human psychology, for any of three reasons. First, they might hold that pleasure, by its nature, motivates and causes liking no matter what other causal regularities a world exhibits (and similarly for unpleasure). Second, they might adopt the more general view that the laws and initial conditions of this world are metaphysically necessary, and so the human psychology is no fluke. Third, they might say that God exists necessarily, and human psychology is rational because God is wise and good. These responses entail that the Humean thesis is false: unpleasure can't be conjoined with liking and pursuit.

But two other, defensible responses are compatible with the Humean thesis:

(1) One might respond to the fifth objection and to the argument from design by rejecting *a priori* probabilities: “Although most possible worlds do not include intelligent life, it is not *improbable* that the actual world does. And although most possible psychologies aren't rational, it is no *fluke* that ours is. Probabilistic notions

presuppose regularities and so operate within worlds; they do not apply to worlds as a whole."ⁱ I won't discuss the difficult issues that this response raises.

(2) Suppose the universe contains a great many sentient life-forms, and that each of the 81 possible psychologies occurs with roughly equal frequency. Then the fact that the *human* psychology is rational would need no explanation; we could say: "It was likely that *some* life-forms would have the rational psychology; we're just lucky that ours does." Even if all earthly psychologies are of the (1a, 2a, 3a, 4a) variety, there are three non-exclusive ways in which the actual universe might have a roughly equal distribution of the 81 psychologies: first, a great many sentient life forms of varying psychologies might exist on distant planets; second, our cosmos might be one of many actual cosmoi (causally isolated worlds with different laws) which contain sentient beings of various psychologies; third, our cosmos might have cyclically expanded and contracted in the past, with various beings existing during different periods of expansion and contraction. So, Intrinsic Nature lovers can say, "We have no reason to think that the universe doesn't have a roughly equal distribution of the 81 psychologies; so, we have no reason to think that the rationality of the human psychology needs explaining."ⁱⁱ

Intrinsic Nature lovers can respond to the fifth objection by affirming that either (1) or (2) is true. [Note added in 2005: Mike Huemer and Roger White have convinced me that response 2 is untenable. So supporters of Intrinsic Nature must either affirm (1) or deny the Humean Thesis.]

6. CONCLUSION

Damage, Motivation and Dislike face worrisome difficulties, while Intrinsic Nature rebutted five objections. Moreover, two additional considerations support Intrinsic Nature. So, our evidence now seems to favor Intrinsic Nature. As empirical psychology develops, this might change.

I haven't assessed all possible competitors to Intrinsic Nature. The ones I've discussed offer a single condition as necessary and sufficient for an experience to be unpleasant. A more complex functionalist view would hold that a token of unpleasantness can consist in multiple relational elements, and perhaps that unpleasantness can be realized by different, single elements in different instances. No such view, to my knowledge, has been explored,^{lii} but here are two brief challenges. First, can multi-factor functionalisms preserve the integrity of “unpleasure,” or must that category seem as artificial as “itchy and anxious experience” or “itchy experience or anxious experience?” Second, can such views offer a natural way of determining when one experience is more unpleasant than another—of weighting contributors to unpleasure intensity?

If Intrinsic Nature is true, then “unpleasant” admits of no functional analysis. And so, as Goldstein says, “It is by feeling the way it does, i.e. awful and bad, that pain justifies our aversion to it. Similarly, our justification for desiring pleasure and calling pleasure ‘desirable’ and ‘good’ lies in the intrinsic quality of the experience.”^{liii} If unpleasures are bad due to how they feel, then nothing else is bad for the same reason. But Intrinsic Nature does not entail that unpleasures are *intrinsically* bad (though I think they are). Suppose that unpleasures are just those experiences that are bad for the people who have them due to how they feel. This was Intrinsic Nature's (B) reply to the second objection. If so, the wrongdoer's unpleasure might

be *good* because it's bad for him—and so that experience would not be intrinsically bad.

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ⁱ Norton Nelkin, "Reconsidering Pain," *Philosophical Psychology*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1994, p. 332.

ⁱⁱ Christine M. Korsgaard, *The sources of normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 146. Korsgaard should not say "very" strong. When the pain is mild, so is the impulse.

ⁱⁱⁱ Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 501.

^{iv} Richard J. Hall, "Are Pains Necessarily Unpleasant?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. XLIX, No. 4, June 1989, p. 647.

^v Michael Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1995), p. 113. Tye gives no account of disorder. Mightn't an experience during an LSD trip be pleasurable but represent bodily disorder?

^{vi} George Pitcher, "Pain Perception," *The Philosophical Review*, July 1970, p. 371. Similarly, see D. M. Armstrong, *A Materialist Theory of Mind* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968) and K. Wilkes, *Physicalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977).

^{vii} R. Melzack and P. D. Wall, *The Challenge of Pain* (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 206, quoted in Nikola Grahek's excellent essay, "Objective and subjective aspects of pain," *Philosophical Psychology*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1991, p. 252. Grahek gives other examples of pain without bodily damage on p. 252 and p. 260.

^{viii} Norton Nelkin, "Reconsidering Pain," p. 332.

^{ix} *Ibid.*, p. 337. The exclamation mark suggests that emotion is essential to pain, but that is not Nelkin's considered view.

^x See Nelkin, "Reconsidering Pain," pp. 327, 329, 334-335, 338.

^{xi} Christine M. Korsgaard, *The sources of normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 147.

^{xii} Richard Brandt, *A Theory of the Good and the Right* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 38.

Gilbert Ryle advances a behaviorist forerunner of this view in *Dilemmas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958); for criticism, see T. L. S. Sprigge, *The Rational Foundations of Ethics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988), pp. 131-132.

^{xiii} Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 156-157.

^{xiv} The analogous objection to Dislike—"People dislike their unpleasure because it's unpleasant . . ."—admits of similar treatment.

^{xv} Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th Edition, 1907, p. 125.

^{xvi} Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th Edition, 1907, p. 127. Sidgwick also says that "exciting pleasures are liable to exercise, even when actually felt, a volitional stimulus out of proportion to their intensities as pleasures." But I can't think of any convincing examples of exciting pleasures, and Sidgwick offers none.

^{xvii} This might be a counterexample to Hare's claim that, "If I am suffering, I have a motive for ending the suffering." (*Moral Thinking*, p. 93)

^{xviii} Richard J. Hall, "Are Pains Necessarily Unpleasant?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. XLIX, No. 4, June 1989, p. 646.

^{xix} See C. D. Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1930), pp. 237-238.

^{xx} Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 493.

^{xxi} Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 501.

^{xxii} Kurt Baier and Roger Trigg make this point. See Baier, *The Moral Point of View* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), p. 273 and Trigg, *Pain and Emotion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 114.

^{xxiii} Roger Trigg, *Pain and Emotion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 151.

^{xxiv} Has this experiment been performed, or is it an urban legend? Robert Van Gulick described it to me as "an old fraternity gag," and Norvin Richards told me that his fraternity played on new members. Paul M. Churchland uses this type of example without citation. (*Matter and Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1984), p. 77)

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- ^{xxv} Paul M. Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1984), p. 52.
- ^{xxvi} This view is ably defended in T. L. S. Sprigge, *The Rational Foundations of Ethics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988), "Pleasure and Pain," ch. 5.
- ^{xxvii} Richard J. Hall, "Are Pains Necessarily Unpleasant?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. XLIX, No. 4, June 1989, pp. 643, 648, 653, 655.
- ^{xxviii} For criticism, see Guzeldere on HOP and Byrne on HOT. (Guyen Guzeldere, "Is Consciousness the Perception of What Passes in One's Own Mind?" *Conscious Experience*, ed. Thomas Metzinger (Schoningh: Imprint Academic, 1995); Alex Byrne, "Some Like It HOT: Consciousness and Higher-Order Thoughts," *Philosophical Studies* 86: 103-129, 1997.)
- ^{xxix} C. D. Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1930), p. 229.
- ^{xxx} G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), pp. 12-13, 78; J. S. Feibleman, "A Philosophical Analysis of Pleasure" in *The Role of Pleasure in Behavior*, ed. R. G. Heath (New York, 1964), p. 252; Carolyn Morillo, *Contingent Creatures* (London: Littlefield Adams Books, 1995), especially p. 97; and perhaps David Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 17.
- ^{xxxi} Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, p. 127; Georg Henrik von Wright, *The Varieties of Goodness* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 67-69; William P. Alston, "Pleasure" in Paul Edwards, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), p. 344; Jonathan Glover, *Causing Death and Saving Lives* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 63; Rem B. Edwards, *Pleasures and Pains: A Theory of Qualitative Hedonism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 83-86; James Griffin, "Modern Utilitarianism," *Revue Internationale De Philosophie* No. 141 (1982), p. 333; Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 493; Paul M. Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1984), p. 52; T. L. S. Sprigge, *The Rational Foundations of Ethics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988), p. 130; Richard J. Hall, "Are Pains Necessarily Unpleasant?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*

Vol. XLIX, No. 4, June 1989, p. 646; Noah Lemos, *Intrinsic Value* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 67; Norton Nelkin, "Reconsidering Pain," *Philosophical Psychology*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1994, p. 329; Christine M. Korsgaard, *The sources of normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 148.

^{xxxii} David Hume, appendix to *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), p. 629.

^{xxxiii} Christine M. Korsgaard, *The sources of normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 148. Brandt makes a similar criticism of this sort of view. (See *A Theory of the Good and the Right*, p. 37.)

^{xxxiv} Norton Nelkin, "Reconsidering Pain," *Philosophical Psychology*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1994, p. 331.

^{xxxv} Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, p. 127.

^{xxxvi} Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, p. 501.

^{xxxvii} Richard Brandt, *A Theory of the Good and the Right*, pp. 37-38; Richard J. Hall, "Are Pains Necessarily Unpleasant?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. XLIX, No. 4, June 1989, section III.

^{xxxviii} Richard J. Hall, "Are Pains Necessarily Unpleasant?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. XLIX, No. 4, June 1989, p. 651.

^{xxxix} Richard J. Hall, "Are Pains Necessarily Unpleasant?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. XLIX, No. 4, June 1989, p. 652.

^{xl} Email communication, October 29, 1996. Also, when I gave this paper at Western Washington University, Philip Montague enthusiastically reported that Demerol alters the intrinsic nature of unpleasure.

^{xli} R. M. Hare, "Pain and Evil," reprinted in *Essays on the Moral Concepts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 88.

^{xlii} Roger Trigg, *Pain and Emotion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 81.

^{xliii} Christine M. Korsgaard, *The sources of normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 147.

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- ^{xliv} T. L. S. Sprigge, *The Rational Foundations of Ethics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988), p. 141, p. 142.
- ^{xlv} For a similar view about pleasure, see Carolyn R. Morillo, *Contingent Creatures* (London: Littlefield Adams Books, 1995), especially pp. 63-65.
- ^{xlvi} T. L. S. Sprigge, *The Rational Foundations of Ethics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988), p. 148.
- ^{xlvii} Carolyn R. Morillo, *Contingent Creatures* (London: Littlefield Adams Books, 1995), p. 42.
- ^{xlviii} J. N. Findlay, *Values and Intentions* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 177.
- ^{xlix} Carolyn R. Morillo, *Contingent Creatures* (London: Littlefield Adams Books, 1995), p. 165.
- ^l Jonathan Bennett taught me this view. He says that he learned it from Hume.
- ^{li} (2) follows Peter van Inwagen's response to the argument from design. See Peter van Inwagen, *Metaphysics* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1993), ch. 8.
- ^{lii} David O. Brink endorses one such view (without developing it) in "Rational Egoism and the Separateness of Persons," *Reading Parfit*, ed.: Jonathan Dancy (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), p. 112.
- ^{liii} Irwin Goldstein, "Why People Prefer Pleasure to Pain," *Philosophy* 55 (1980), p. 360.