

## Chapter 4

### Pains as Usurpers

In the last chapter I argued that, once we discard the kernel view and adopt the composite view as our account of what pains are, we should reject the traditional accounts of why pains are intrinsically bad. I shall now argue that on the composite view the aversion theory is not the only correct account of pain's intrinsic badness. That is, for some pains, one pain can have two distinct intrinsic evils that are independently normatively significant. The aversion theory accounts for one. In this chapter I shall explore the other.<sup>1</sup>

On the composite view, many pains have a distinctive invasive character. These pains are usurpers. Being a usurper gives a pain a second intrinsic evil. Intense pain necessarily undermines autonomy and other intrinsic goods. I suspect that all pains have this character and this additional value to some degree. But I shall only press herein for the more moderate thesis that many intense pains have it. I shall accordingly abbreviate 'intense pain' with 'pain' in this chapter.

The view I shall articulate has a disreputable history. Aquinas, Plotinus, Augustine, and a few other brave or foolhardy souls have held privation views. Pain, these writers claim, is bad because it is the absence or loss of the good. These views are patently false. Pain hurts. Any account of pain's evil which

doesn't place its phenomenology at center stage is simply mistaken. Pain's evil must lie with the way it feels.

However, when we reflect on what is normatively significant in the experience of pain, we see that the experience of a pain —the way it feels— is much broader than the painful sensation. Thus once we adopt the composite view, I think we do find that pain is necessarily bad as a privation. Pain is, and is experienced as, in part, the loss of a kind of self-control. This form of self-control is a necessary condition of intrinsic goods like autonomy. A person cannot, for example, be autonomous if her train of thought is unconstrained babble. Pain is, I'll argue, intrinsically bad insofar as its presence makes autonomy and other intrinsic goods impossible. If my argument in this chapter is correct, a person in pain is ipso facto not fully autonomous.

I will be arguing that pain's evil as a privation is found in the way it feels. I'll begin in §4.1 by setting out the distinctive features of pain's phenomenology in which we will find this evil. Then in §4.2 and §4.3 I shall set out the kind of self-control pain necessarily undermines, and show how the undermining is intrinsically bad. In §4.4 I shall argue that this intrinsic bad is at least as significant as the intrinsic badness described by the aversion theory. I shall close in §4.5 by answering the objection that my account of pain's evil is overinclusive.

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<sup>1</sup> The view I shall now set out is independent of the aversion theory. It depends only on the composite

### §4.1

#### The experience of pain

The experience of pain is, in part, the experience of being destroyed from the inside by an alien and invasive enemy. This experience has two necessary conditions.

INVASION: Pains are aliens which invade one's inner life and dominate parts of it and

PASSIVITY: Pains usurp one's control over parts of oneself. One is made passive, in a distinctive way, with respect to these parts. Together the invasiveness of pain and the passivity it imposes constitute the usurpation of a kind of self-control which I'll call user control. This is a very general kind of control we normally have over the movements of our minds and bodies. It is, I think, deeply connected with our conceptions of agency and value. For now, think of user control along the lines of willpower or self-discipline. Though we'll see that it runs much deeper than those forms of self-control. I'll say much more about it and the normative significance of its loss in §4.2 and §4.3.

I'll now discuss the usurpation at the heart of the experience of pain by addressing INVASION and PASSIVITY. I'll then conclude by drawing them together.

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view's inclusion of the reaction component amongst the intrinsic properties of pain.

#### 4.1.1 INVASION

Being in pain involves being invaded by an alien. Pains are not merely unwelcome —as are embarrassment and shame. They are experienced as entities that are not part of the sufferer. The depth and scope of this invasion increases with its severity. In the playwright Antonin Artaud's words,

pain as it intensifies and deepens, multiplies its resources and means of access at every level of the sensibility.<sup>2</sup>

There are two parts to the invasive dimension of pain which pull in different directions:

ALIEN NATURE: The constituent elements of a pain are experienced as alien presences. That is, a sufferer doesn't identify with the sensations, feelings, urges, thoughts, and desires, that pains involve.

DISASSOCIATION: A sufferer is disassociated from a pain's constituent elements; though she retains the dim awareness that they are part of her.

Let me say a bit about each.

The key feature of pain's alien nature is the lack of identification with its parts. The sensations and desires pain involves are alien in this way, as are the sufferer's screams and contortions.<sup>3</sup> We normally identify with parts of ourselves to different degrees. Spasms and interloping thoughts are to some degree alien; so are the unfamiliar movements involved in learning a musical instrument or new sport. The parts of a pain can similarly be more and less alien. The less a sufferer identifies with the emotions, desires, thoughts, and other aspects of the

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<sup>2</sup> Artaud (1958), 23.

reaction component, the worse the pain will tend to be. The pain is worse (partially) in virtue of this lack of identification.

Being disassociated from a part of one's mind or body involves it being alien. Hence, the disassociative character of pain is tightly tied to its alien nature. The term 'disassociation' can refer to all sorts of phenomena, but pains involve a particular kind of disassociation which, in combination with its alien nature, constitutes pain's invasiveness. A person is disassociated from an *x* in this sense only if she retains a dim awareness that *x* is part of her. Thus while she doesn't identify with the desires a pain imposes, she is aware that they belong to her.

This dim awareness tempers the lack of identification that the alien nature of pain involves. Though a person doesn't identify with her pain, she still feels it as part of her. This is not simply because the pain happens to be occurring in her. It is because pain destroys its sufferer by turning her own body and mind against her. The writer Elaine Scarry brings this out nicely

Regardless of the setting in which he suffers...and regardless of the cause of his suffering...the person in great pain experiences his own body as the agent of his agony. The ceaseless, self-announcing signal of the body in pain...contains not only the feeling 'my body hurts' but the feeling 'my body hurts me.' This part of the pain...sometimes becomes visible [to an observer] when a young child or an animal in the first moments of acute distress takes maddening flight, fleeing from its own body as though it were a part of the environment that could be left behind. If self-hatred, self-alienation, and self-betrayal...were translated out of the psychological realm where [they have]

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<sup>3</sup> Certain injuries and pains are reliably accompanied by characteristic contortions. Once, an emergency room doctor took one look as I hobbled in the door —right elbow tightly tucked against ribs, arm across chest, and body leaning 45 degrees— and asked how I broke my collarbone.

content and [are] accessible to language[,] and into the unspeakable and contentless realm of physical sensation it would be intense pain.<sup>4</sup>

Being in pain involves, *inter alia*, the sufferer feeling that parts of herself have been turned against her. That involves thinking of her body as something independent of herself, but at the same time, remaining aware that it is hers. I believe that this is also true of the beliefs, desires, emotions, and other mental components of a pain. What I'm calling DISASSOCIATION attempts to capture this quasi-schizophrenic aspect of pain.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4.1.2 PASSIVITY

Now for the second part of the experience of pain: PASSIVITY. Being passive in this sense is not mere inertness. The passivity bound up in the experience of pain involves feeling and being helpless and controlled. This comes out when we attempt to resist or ignore our pains. Consider:

*Trial By Ordeal:* Your hand is placed in a pot of water which is gradually brought to a boil. If you remove your hand before it reaches a boil, your child will be killed.

Your pain involves the urge to withdraw your hand. The urge takes several forms: You want to remove your hand, and it feels as though your hand is being involuntarily pulled toward the water's surface. You find yourself rationalizing

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<sup>4</sup> Scarry (1985), 47. The body 'being in rebellion' or having 'turned against her' is part of PASSIVITY.

<sup>5</sup> DISASSOCIATION is also bound up with PASSIVITY. Again, I suspect they are logically distinct, but little turns on the issue. To reflect the passivity implicit in DISASSOCIATION, I shall say 'A is disassociated from x' rather than 'A disassociates from x'. Elsewhere I use 'detachment' to refer to the way one may actively dis-identify herself with a pain. Detachment is an effective means in combating pain; DISASSOCIATION is part of the pain.

removing your hand, and trying to make excuses for giving in and allowing your child to die.

At the same time, you try to keep user control over your hand and your thoughts. You strain to keep your hand in the water. You remind yourself of the stakes and your love for your child; and you actively resist the lure of the rationalizations. Insofar as you are successful, you retain user control over your hand, desires, and thoughts. Insofar as you fail, you lose user control over these aspects.

When you fail, you feel helpless. You may, for example, feel like a spectator watching in horror as your hand pulls from of the water. These feelings of helplessness are part of the passivity pain imposes. In Scarry's wonderful turn of phrase,

In physical pain...suicide and murder converge, for one feels acted upon, annihilated, by inside and outside alike.<sup>6</sup>

This connects with the dim awareness that the disassociation involves. In being disassociated, the sufferer is aware that the usurped aspect is part of her. The passivity adds a sense of helplessness that's tied to the (usually dim) awareness that the aspect is something that should be hers to control. Your desire to remove your hand seems alien and imposed upon you; yet it is sickly yours.

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<sup>6</sup> Scarry (1985), 53.

### 4.1.3 The phenomenological essence of pain

The combination of INVASION and PASSIVITY, along with a certain kind of sensation are parts of (intense) pain's phenomenological essence. They are necessary conditions of a state being a pain. The experience of pain is necessarily the experience of being destroyed from within. It is the experience of the usurpation of user control.

User control, I'll now argue, runs deeply into and throughout our conception of agency, and it underpins many things of intrinsic value. As such, pain is intrinsically bad in virtue of its being the usurpation of user control.

## §4.2

### User control

There are many senses in which agents control themselves. Some are tinged with free will — as a person is the author of her acts — while others seem just to describe physiological states and abilities — as alcohol impairs one's motor control. And we praise still others as virtues — for example, willpower and self-discipline. User control is a catholic conception which underlies control in all of these senses. Whenever we say that someone can do x, we are implicitly ascribing certain forms of user control to her. Thus user control is, I think, pervasive and deeply important.



#### 4.2.1 First pass at user control

I'll now say a bit more about what user control is; I'll then turn to its normative significance. Any creature capable of purposive action has and exercises forms of user control over its thoughts, actions, and body. Its objects include, *inter alia*, intentions, emotions, beliefs, and bodily movements. User control is not limited to rational agents. Most creatures with minds — my cat Sanuk but probably not Harry Frankfurt's benighted spider — exercise user control in their lives. I'll only discuss humans herein. Very roughly,

An agent A exercises user control over x, where x is some mental or bodily state or process of A, only if A consciously and effectively, manipulates or changes x.

All physical and mental acts involve exercises of user control.

User control comes in degrees. I presently have complete user control over the motion of my left index finger — my willing makes its typing 't' so. But purposive choice is not sufficient for the effective exercise of user control. Despite her heavy concentration and effort in fretting difficult chords, the beginning guitar player still hits sour notes.

#### 4.2.2 Two categories of user control's objects

The objects of user control come in two categories. A person can have user control of x or she can have user control over x's effects upon her. I cannot control the feeling of mild hunger, but I can control how much it affects me by

ignoring it and focusing on the task at hand. Both are equally forms of user control and having one does not entail having or lacking the other.

With many of our mental states, we may have strong user control over their content and persistence, but have extremely weak or no user control over their onset. Many beliefs and desires pop into our consciousness despite our best efforts to concentrate. While writing the last sentence, I was struck with the thought ‘isn’t she cute’ and the desire to pet the cat sitting next to me. The occurrence of such states may be beyond our control.<sup>7</sup>

Interloping beliefs and desires seem to be a fact of mental life. It is thus important to underscore that nothing of normative significance follows just from our lack of user control over their onset. The normative significance of a form of user control is given by its connection to what is valuable for us. That will be the topic of §4.3. First, I need to say more about the forms of user control.

#### **4.2.3 Exercising user control**

User control underlies agency and action. Agency normally requires consciousness — sleepwalkers are not agents. Thus all exercises of user control emanate from a conscious decision or some other conscious initiation of mental or physical movement. The objects and means of user control, however, reach beyond the domain of consciousness. There are roughly three modes by which

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<sup>7</sup> C.f., Scanlon’s discussion of judgment sensitive attitudes and irrationality. Scanlon (1998), 37-41, especially 40.

we exercise user control over our minds and bodies: we can do it directly, or via symbolic or external means. I'll say a bit about each in that order.

First and most obviously, we can exercise user control through direct access to the object of control. When I exercise user control over my left index finger in making it type 't', I simply direct my will to my finger. While there is plenty of metaphysical mystery here, direct exercise of user control is commonplace and needs no special discussion.

Second, in certain cases, we seem to be able to exercise user control through symbolic means. Techniques such as biofeedback, meditation, and hypnosis, turn out to be effective means of influencing some mental and bodily processes and states that are normally beyond our conscious direction. For example, some hypertensives apparently can learn to exercise a measure of control over their blood pressure through biofeedback; similarly for sufferers of chronic pain. Meditation carries many benefits for the lay-practitioner's psychological dispositions, and highly-trained practitioners like some Buddhist monks can achieve surprising degrees of control over things like their core body temperature.

With symbolic means, the intentional object of control is rather different from the extensional object. A biofeedback session might involve attempts to modulate a line on a screen rather than introspection upon one's blood pressure,

and meditative practice often involves a carefully structured set of visualizations and imagery. These phenomena may seem a bit strange. But I think that the monk who modulates his body temperature by imagining a fire built in his lower abdomen is doing something unusual but nothing especially mysterious.

Third, we can exercise user control through external (i.e., non-mental) means. The diabetic who controls her blood sugar by injecting insulin uses an external means, but it is no less an exercise of user control than my calming myself with a few deep breaths. It is important to remember, however, that a person's user control originates from and centers upon herself. While you can exercise user control by using other people as external means (for example, doctors or motivational speakers), they don't exercise user control over your states.<sup>8</sup>

#### **4.2.4 Diachronic and synchronic user control**

Finally, both the possession and exercise of user control can be synchronic or diachronic. While I shall focus mainly on synchronic user control, let me sketch two forms of diachronic user control.

One form of diachronic user control provides the sense in which it is true that the irascible person has weak user control over her irritability even when she

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<sup>8</sup> I believe that torture attempts to do just this. That is, torture is an attempt to gain user control over another person's thoughts and actions. The fact that pain is necessarily the usurpation of user control thus makes it an efficient means. David Sussman articulates a similar view in Sussman (2005), and roughly this picture appears throughout Scarry (1985).

is calm. Such dispositional diachronic user control accounts for one way it can be true that the equanimous person presently filled with blind rage has strong user control over her emotions. In most cases, the normative significance of losing synchronic user control is not diminished by retaining dispositional diachronic user control. Though, as is often the case with chronic pain, the loss of dispositional diachronic user control often exacerbates the badness of the synchronic loss.

The more important form of diachronic user control involves extended and non-continuous effort. The diachronic user control involved in behavioral and psychological habituation is a prominent example. A person addicted to heroin has some degree of diachronic user control over her cravings and their power to move her. If she makes no effort to quit or feels helpless to control the cravings, that degree is very low. The puzzle comes when she begins to actively resist the cravings and tries to quit. Sometimes during the long process of quitting, she has very weak control —she caves in when a friend shoots up in front of her— but at other times she has strong control —she watches *Requiem for a Dream* and strengthens her resolve. In these cases, she has variously weaker and stronger degrees of synchronic user control over her cravings and their motivating force.

Diachronic user control in cases of extended effort thus tends to be relatively inelastic. It slowly increases over the course of her recovery, and it does not drastically change with each success and failure. But the magnitude of the increase (or decrease) need not be so slow or constrained in every case. For example, with some addictions one's diachronic user control may typically increase slowly for a long period of time before rapidly rising at some tipping-point; similarly for the downward spiral into addiction. This form of diachronic user control may prove important in understanding certain features of chronic pain.

The many degrees and forms of user control are widespread. They're virtually universal in our lives. They run the gamut from the silly — the ability to wiggle one's ears— to the profound — the ability to direct one's thoughts. They are also what pain threatens.

### §4.3

#### **User control and the intrinsically valuable**

That brings us to the relationship between user control and pain's evil. I'll argue that some forms and degrees of user control are necessary conditions of intrinsic goods. Since pain is the usurpation of user control, it is therefore the loss

of the necessary conditions of various intrinsic goods. That, I'll claim, makes pains intrinsically bad.

I'll begin in §4.3.1 with a sketch of the metaphysical relationship between user control and the intrinsically valuable. I'll then turn to the specific examples of autonomy in §4.3.2 and desire-satisfaction in §4.3.3.

#### **4.3.1 The normatively significant sphere**

If certain forms and degrees of user control are necessary conditions of intrinsic goods, the nature of the intrinsically good circumscribes what forms and degrees of user control a person must have to be, for example, autonomous.

We thus can say that the forms and degrees of user control that are necessary conditions of intrinsic goods constitute the normatively significant sphere of user control. Where a person lacks the constituents of this sphere, certain intrinsic goods are not possible. So if a measure of user control over one's impulses is a necessary condition of autonomy, a person led around by only her urges cannot be fully autonomous.

Many forms and degrees of user control don't fall within this sphere. It may seem that if one is lost in the mountains, autonomy requires a Tibetan monk's user control over her core body temperature. After all, life is a necessary condition of autonomy, and avoiding hypothermia certainly serves that end. But being instrumentally useful is not being a necessary condition. The necessary

conditions of an intrinsic good like autonomy are given by a substantive theory of what autonomy is; the contents of the normatively significant sphere with respect to autonomy are thus entailed by substantive accounts of the intrinsically good.

While I believe that virtually everything that is intrinsically good for someone has various forms and degrees of user control as its necessary conditions, I shall only argue that this is true for two values: autonomy and desire-satisfaction.

#### **4.3.2 Autonomy**

To lead an autonomous life, an agent must be free and able to pursue certain of her projects. User control over some set of the beliefs, desires, intentions, movements, et cetera, which constitute these pursuits are therefore necessary conditions of autonomy.

Some of user control's objects are more central to the intrinsically good than others. Most conceptions of autonomy accept that some components of an autonomous life are more central, and more important, than others. Joseph Raz, for example, writes that

An autonomous person's well-being consists in the successful pursuits of self-chosen goals and relationships. Like all people's...[these] will...be nested goals, with the more comprehensive ones being, other things being equal, the more important ones.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Raz (1986), 370.



Such nested goals plausibly have corresponding capacities. The capacities corresponding to the more comprehensive goals are thus more important. The kinds of user control necessary for these capacities — for reflection, choice, free action, and self-discipline, and others— will thus be the most important. Hence, the loss of the user control necessary for basic reflection may undermine the very possibility of autonomy.

It may help to return to my case of Trial By Ordeal. When the water passes 42.5°C, your hand starts hurting. And that's barely halfway there. At some point your hand will feel as though it is pulling itself to the surface. But autonomy requires some measure of user control over the movements of your body. Thus, the more your hand rebels the more the pain eats away at your autonomy.

As the temperature rises, the pain begins usurping more central forms of user control. Autonomy requires some measure of control over your attention and your thoughts. But part of the increase of pain is the diminution of your ability to ignore it. After a certain point, you will be unable to think of anything else. Worse, the pain begins stripping away your control over your beliefs and desires. You may find yourself not caring about your child's death or rationalizing letting her die.

In a sense then, it is not you who eventually jerks your hand out of the pot. You are no longer at the controls of your body and mind. That, I think, makes autonomy utterly impossible.

Of course, the forms of user control autonomy demands are not sufficient conditions of autonomy. Coercion undermines autonomy, but the coerced still form intentions, plan, and act —one can plot how best to rob the liquor store to save her mom from the thugs demanding it.

Substantive theories of autonomy often agree on what forms of user control are necessary for autonomy, but disagree on how much. Consider the relationship between autonomy and intoxication on different views. I can't think precisely enough to do philosophy if I'm mildly intoxicated. Many believe that my autonomy has not been compromised by that loss of user control; I've lost nothing within my normatively significant sphere. But this is a substantive question. Some religious writers hold that intoxication and sensual pleasures in and of themselves despoil the soul, and are anathema to autonomy. For them, the forms and amounts of user control lost with intoxication are part of the normatively significant sphere of user control.

Similarly, while we lose the ability to control our movements while sleeping, few theories of autonomy would hold that sleep is anathema to the autonomous life. That is, the user control lost during sleep is no more a part of

the normatively significant sphere than is the user control of one's thoughts that one occasionally loses with a few glasses of wine. The same applies to the user control we lose when consumed with pleasure (though with a slight twist since pleasure is itself intrinsically valuable —I shall say more about that issue in §4.5).

Thus there is plenty of disagreement about what lies in the normatively significant sphere of user control. Fortunately, my account only demands that this answer be given by substantive theories of the intrinsic goods in question. What we believe about goods like autonomy thus entails much of what we believe about pain's evil.

#### **4.3.3 Desire-satisfaction**

I've now argued that, in virtue of the relationship between user control, pain, and autonomy, pain necessarily involves the privation of autonomy. I think this is also true of the intrinsic value of desire-satisfaction. That is, I shall argue that, for many kinds of desire,

D1: The satisfaction of desire *d* is good only if *A* has an appropriate measure of user control over *d*.

There are many different kinds of desire, and thus there are probably some exceptions. Nonetheless, I believe that D1 is generally true, and that it is widely assumed. Indeed, most modern theories which base value on desire-satisfaction

tacitly assume that user control over a desire is a necessary condition of it being a source of value —of the satisfaction of that desire being good.<sup>10</sup>

Among those who hold desire theories, very few, if any, accept:

D2: For any  $x$ , if  $A$  desires  $x$ , obtaining  $x$  is good for  $A$

We all occasionally have uncharacteristic transient desires, urges, and compulsions, which we would not endorse upon reflection. These interlopers are usually weak and merely distracting. But when they are the products of psychosis, mania, or obsession, they can be overpowering.

The place of interlopers in our lives strongly suggests that we should reject D2. Consider:

*Dishes:* While washing dishes, I am assailed by the overwhelming urge to plunge my hand into the whirring blades of the garbage disposal. At that moment, it is what I most want to do.

Since D2 places no constraint on what desires it is good to satisfy, D2 entails that the satisfaction of my desire to mutilate my hand is (very) good.

This is implausible. There has to be some filter on what is good for me.

Thus most proponents of desire theories hold something like:

D3: For any  $x$ , if  $A$  desires  $x$  and would continue to desire  $x$  after an appropriate form of reflection, then obtaining  $x$  is good for  $A$ .

Different substantive theories may characterize the appropriate form of reflection differently. For example, some views may require fully informed deliberation in

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<sup>10</sup> For stylistic reasons I shall usually omit the caveat that there may be exceptions to D1. It remains in force in what follows.

a cool moment; others may require the desire to survive a stricter form of cognitive psychotherapy. And, depending on my preferences and the substantive theory we accept, it could be that mutilating my hand would be good for me (in which case the desire would not have been an interloper). Nonetheless, whatever the specifics, any tenable theory which holds that desire-satisfaction is intrinsically good should reject the unconstrained D2 for some version of D3.

I believe that D3 implies:

D4: For any  $x$ , if  $A$  desires  $x$  and would cease to desire  $x$  after an appropriate form of reflection so dictated, then  $A$  has an appropriate measure of user control over the desire for  $x$  (*mutatis mutandis* for the continuation of desires which pass reflection).

That is, some measure of user control over a desire is a necessary condition of the satisfaction of that desire being good for one. Again, the 'appropriate measure' is determined by the various substantive theories (and it may differ depending on the kind of desire at issue). A view which required the desire to persist or extinguish in the face of rigorous self-examination would require a higher degree of user control than a view which required the desire to survive only a quick weighing against other current desires.<sup>11,12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Scanlon's conception of desires as judgment sensitive attitudes may be an example of the former. The claim that the existence and persistence of desires are sensitive to judgments may require a great deal of user control on the part of a rational agent. Indeed, this is, I think, an important part of his argument that there can be *akrasia* of belief. See Scanlon (1998), 35-36.

<sup>12</sup> D4 probably excludes desires that can be posthumously fulfilled or frustrated. Indeed, there may be a broader class of timeless desires which do not depend on our states at any given moment. Thus these kinds of desires may be exceptions to D1. There are a host of interesting issues concerning the relationship between user control and these kinds of desires which I cannot explore herein. Earlier drafts of this dissertation contained a chapter that discussed these and other temporally-indexed desires and values, and

It's worth noting that what separates interlopers from desires which pass D4 is not the fact that the interlopers arise unbidden. Many desires simply pop into our consciousness. We have no user control over their appearance. But, as we have seen, not every loss or lack of user control is normatively significant. As with the user control we lose with some pleasures, this lack of user control is likely benign. That is, the substantive theories of the good which determine the normatively significant forms of user control are unlikely to condemn this common feature of our psychological lives. The problem with interlopers is not that they show up, it's that they won't leave when we want them to.

D4 reflects, I think, the fact that desire theories are partially motivated by the belief that the individual is, in some sense, the gatekeeper of her good. Things are only good insofar as she desires them; the satisfaction of a desire is only good for her insofar as the desire is hers. Desiring *x* involves making *x*, selected from the manifold possible objects, part of one's psychological life. That's what makes the satisfaction of the desire, or the *x* itself, valuable for her. But gatekeepers must be able to shut the gate. Here, gatekeeping requires some ability to manipulate and terminate the sources of value if she chooses. Some measure of user control over a desire is therefore a necessary condition for its satisfaction being good for one —that is, D1 is true for many desires. As with

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the distinction between 'good' and 'good for'. I could not include it because it departed too far from the

autonomy, the possession of user control is often a necessary condition of the intrinsic value of desire satisfaction.

Think again of the pain in Trial By Ordeal. At some point, the pain will involve the overwhelming urge to remove your hand. Like the interloping desires I mentioned before, this desire isn't yours because you do not have user control over it. Thus, when you remove your hand, that satisfaction of your strongest desire cannot be good for you. Your desire to remove your hand is in many ways as removed from you as my present desire for a cold beer. Neither the slaking of my thirst nor the removing of your hand could be good for you because neither desire is yours.

This isn't to say that nothing good occurs when you remove your hand. My claim is only that there is no good in the satisfaction of the desire by itself. Removing your hand is (pro tanto) good in at least two ways.

First, removing your hand ends the pain, and ending the pain is good. But the good need not arise from the satisfaction of any desire. Being in pain is being in a bad state, and ending bad states is good. Thus the good can come from the fact that the state is bad, not the fact that you don't want to be in it.

Second, satisfying a desire is normally accompanied by a feeling of relief. This can be true even when we don't want the feeling — we may be horrified at

ourselves for feeling the relief. Even though you have no control over the desire to remove your hand, the desire is still in you. Thus the feeling of relief occurs in you. Hence when you remove your hand, the satisfaction of the desire causes you to feel relief. This relief is a kind of pleasure. It is therefore intrinsically good. It is true that this feeling of relief is causally dependent on the desire's satisfaction. But that doesn't show that the relief is good in virtue of the satisfaction of the desire. The relief may be good simply as a pleasure.<sup>13</sup>

With these out of the way, we should accept that the satisfaction of the desire to remove your hand is not itself good. It has been forced upon you by the pain. You have no user control over it. Thus, in this case, desire-satisfaction can only be intrinsically good if one has a measure of user control over the desire. I suspect the same will be true for most other desires.

### **3.4 The evil of usurpation**

I've now argued that pain undermines both autonomy and the goodness of desire-satisfaction. These are two very different kinds of intrinsic value. Thus, while I cannot argue for it here, I suggest that many things that are intrinsically good for a person have some form of user control as a necessary condition. Thus I suspect that pain qua usurper is evil because it is necessarily the privation of

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<sup>13</sup> It is a further question whether the pleasure is good for you. It may be that pleasure cannot be good for one unless she has user control over it. I cannot address this here, so I'll just concede that the pleasure is something good in the desire-satisfaction.



the possibility of many intrinsic goods including, but not limited to, autonomy and desire-satisfaction.

Intense pains are usurpers of user control. As such they necessarily undermine the possibility of autonomy and desires as a source of value. If making the intrinsically good impossible is intrinsically bad, then the usurpation of user control is intrinsically bad.<sup>14</sup>

Certain forms of user control are necessary conditions of autonomy. Hence the usurpation of user control is itself intrinsically bad. However, the possession of user control is not itself intrinsically good. Rather, a usurpation is bad because undermining certain forms of user control is undermining that which is valuable. The usurpation of these kinds of user control does not cause autonomy to be undermined. It is the undermining of autonomy; mutatis-mutandis for desire-satisfaction. Therefore, the usurpation of user control is intrinsically bad in virtue of its being the privation of the intrinsically good.

If this is correct, and we accept chapter two's aversion theory, then it follows that many intense pains have two distinct intrinsic evils.

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<sup>14</sup> This metaphysical claim requires some qualification and defense which I cannot undertake here.

#### §4.4

##### **Significance of both evils**

The fact that intense pains have two distinct evils is not a mere curiosity. I believe that in some cases each value commends different alternatives. I shall now argue that it can be a mistake to ignore the usurpation's intrinsic badness. This is most clearly true of chronic pains. But I think it is also true of acute pains.

Consider an acute pain:

*Fiona's Fall:* Crossing 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue on a cold New York night, Fiona slips on some ice and lands hard on her left arm breaking the ulna. She lies in the street, clutching her forearm. Traffic is approaching. Passersby urge her to get up, but she moans that she can't. She sees the cars and wants to rise, but finds she can't move.

We should take her at her word when she claims that she cannot get up. While it is physiologically possible for her to do so —nothing is wrong with her legs and she has one good arm— the pain has paralyzed her. Every time she moves, the pain pushes her back down. In trying to get up and believing that she should, she fights the pain. In being unable to rise, she loses. She feels taken over by it. The pain is an oppressor which she is helpless to resist. The helplessness and paralysis that she feels are part of the usurpation of user control. Lying in the street, Fiona is subject to the two distinct intrinsic bads of the aversion and the usurpation.

Fiona's pain is such that the aversion is  $\text{bad}_{50}$  and the usurpation is  $\text{bad}_{50}$  (written  $\text{bad}_{\text{aversion/usurpation}}$ , it is  $\text{bad}_{a=50/u=50}$ ). Now suppose that we offer Fiona a choice:

Drug A: Diminishes the aversion's badness to  $\text{bad}_{45}$ ; but leaves the usurpation unchanged. Thus the pain with Drug A is  $\text{bad}_{a=45/u=50}$ .

Drug B: Diminishes the usurpation's badness to  $\text{bad}_{20}$ ; but leaves the aversion unchanged. Thus the pain with Drug B is  $\text{bad}_{a=50/u=20}$ .

Surely it is rationally permissible for Fiona to choose Drug B's much greater reduction in the pain's overall badness. Whatever the relationship between the two values, it's implausible that the aversion is lexically prior to the usurpation. Indeed, we don't think this about instrumental value. I'd be irrational to accept the ruin of my career to salve a paper cut. I think it is also likely permissible for her to choose B when the effects are equivalent for both drugs; where A yields  $\text{bad}_{a=20/u=50}$ . However, the absence of lexical priority is enough to show that we should not ignore the intrinsic badness of usurpation.

But why should we believe that it is possible for the aversion and usurpation's values to vary independently of each other? Drug B operates by diminishing her feeling of helplessness. But, like fear, the feeling of helplessness is part of the aversion. Thus the diminution of the helplessness seems to be ipso facto a diminution of the aversion. The decrease in the usurpation's badness seems to entail a commensurate decrease in the aversion's intrinsic badness.

We can avoid this problem by stipulating that Drug B's diminution of the helplessness has the side-effect of increasing the contribution of another component, such as the pain's meaning. Imagine that Drug B must be administered with an instrument shaped like a baseball bat. That makes the fact that she will not be playing second base this season weigh more strongly in the aversion. This increased contribution of the meaning is exactly equal to the helplessness's decreased contribution. Thus the feeling of helplessness present changes, but the degree of aversion does not. Therefore, the usurpation decreases without a commensurate decrease in the aversion.

If the two values can vary independently, then it seems that Fiona can rationally choose Drug B. Therefore, considering only the intrinsic properties of her pain, what she ought to do in this case is determined by the usurpation's badness, and not by the badness of the aversion. We should not ignore the badness of the usurpation.

#### §4.5

#### **Overinclusion?**

In this chapter, I've argued that the usurpation of user control is a necessary condition of pain's evil. Since this is only a necessary condition, there is room for other phenomena to involve the usurpation of user control and be similarly intrinsically bad. This may seem problematic. There are many cases in which we lose user control, but in which we find no evil. Indeed, with the

experience of immersion in music, wallowing in the sun, orgasm, and other pleasures, the loss of control seems to be a large part of what makes the experience good.

Of course, the concern does not arise for just any loss of user control. Usurpations involve a specific kind of experience —one which satisfies *INVASION* and *PASSIVITY*. But we identify with the pleasure of wallowing in the sun, and do not find the sensation invasive in the sense described by *INVASION*.

More importantly, we've already seen that the vast majority of these cases are unproblematic (see §4.3.1). Once we have an account of pleasure's intrinsic value we will know what forms of user control lie within the normatively significant sphere for pleasure. Thus if it turns out that losing user control over some aspect *x* is part of what makes pleasure good, then the loss of user control over *x* cannot be bad.

But there are some cases in which a pleasure or other innocuous sensation does satisfy *PASSIVITY* and *INVASION*, and therefore involves the usurpation of user control. Here are two examples.

*Sentry*: Sarah and her Army squad are deep in enemy territory. They are all exhausted. Sarah remains awake as sentry while the others sleep. If she falls asleep they will all die. Yet as each wave of fatigue washes over her, she finds herself, to her disgust, wanting nothing more than to fall asleep.

*Ascetic\*\**: Francis's tormentors inject her with a combination of heroin and MDMA which causes overwhelming sensations of pleasure and ecstasy.

Despite the fact that her deepest convictions demand that she eschew pleasure, she finds herself wanting more.

Both cases involve the experience of the usurpation of user control. The sensations are invasive and make each passive with respect to the changes in her beliefs and desires. Since the usurpation of user control is intrinsically bad, it follows that these feelings of sleepiness and pleasure are intrinsically bad. I believe this is the correct result.

The sensation of pleasure is invasive and usurping for Francis precisely because of the deeply held beliefs that undergird her autonomous life. She has shaped herself around a life eschewing pleasure. Thus while she, at the moment, wants the pleasures that force themselves on her in *Ascetic\*\**, her life is built around wanting not to want them. This is in stark contrast with the rest of us. Many of us would welcome the temporary ecstasy just as we normally welcome the sensation of sinking into the pillow.<sup>15</sup>

More importantly, Francis's pleasure forcibly draws her to it —it forces her desires away from her deep commitments. By twisting what she wants, the pleasure undermines her autonomy. It not only forces her to act contrary to what

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<sup>15</sup> In conversation Larry Temkin has argued that most of us wouldn't welcome this temporary ecstasy if it was forced upon us or if we didn't know its source. For example, if while sitting on the couch watching television you were suddenly and mysteriously overcome with this ecstasy, the feeling would be invasive and unwelcome. I have my doubts. I agree that the initial onset of the sensation might be quite disconcerting or even terrifying. But after a moment or two, the way that intense pleasure tends to obliterate thought and our natural tendency to identify with it will take over. The reason Francis does not give herself over to the pleasure and welcome it is based in her deepest convictions about herself and what's valuable. Thus I suspect that the cases where pleasure is a usurper are rare. Nonetheless, if Temkin is right, these pleasures may be more common than I suspect.

she most wants; it also warps what she wants away from what she is deeply committed to. *Mutatis mutandis* in Sentry.

We should therefore agree that Sentry and Ascetic\*\* involve normatively significant usurpations of user control, and thus involve ordinarily innocuous sensations that are intrinsically bad in the same way as pains qua usurpers.

#### §4.6

#### Conclusion

I have described the usurpation of user control in phenomenological terms. It is experienced in the INVASION and PASSIVITY that pain involves. This meets the traditional objection to privation accounts. The critics of the traditional privation views rightly claim that the evil of pain must lie in the way it feels. But once we've rejected the kernel view, we can no longer assume that 'how pain feels' refers solely to the sensation kernel. On the composite view, 'how pain feels' can be extremely rich and complex. Fear, beliefs about meaning, and the like, can be intrinsic properties of a pain, and they are part of how some pains feel. And these rich experiences which make up the reaction component are all part of the experience of usurpation. Indeed, I believe that seeing pain as a usurper allows us a greater understanding of why factors like the undue solicitousness of one's caregivers can make a pain intrinsically worse. When your loved ones treat you as weak and helpless in the face of your condition, you are more likely to feel weak and helpless to fight the pain for the user control it

steals. That feeling of helplessness is part of the pain. Far from removing pain's phenomenology from the center of its intrinsic badness, the complex phenomenology of usurpation gives a much richer and more powerful account of what being in pain feels like than was ever possible with the kernel view.

The aversion theory captures the intrinsic badness of pain that lies in our complex reaction to the painful sensation kernel. The intrinsic badness of pain as a usurper lies at a deeper level. The phenomenology of the experience of pain — which unifies the disparate elements of the reaction component and kernel — is the surface manifestation of the privation of the intrinsic good. We experience pain as the exsanguination of that which is intrinsically good in our lives. The evil of pain as a usurper is thus contained in the way that pain feels. That meets the traditional objection to privation views of pain's intrinsic badness. Therefore, if the argument of this chapter is correct, we should accept that some pains have two intrinsic evils.