

Chapter 5

Pain and the Nature of Intrinsic Value

We now know what pains are and why they are intrinsically bad. These are significant conclusions in their own right. But at the outset of this project, I promised that by focusing solely on pain's intrinsic value, we could make progress on our understanding of the nature of intrinsic value and its bearers. In this chapter, I shall begin to make good on that promise; in chapter six, I'll point to some further fruits. Here, I'll argue that the existing accounts of the nature of intrinsic value do not explain pain's intrinsic value. In §5.1, the composite view of pain and my privation account of its intrinsic badness will help unearth a new account of the nature of pain's intrinsic value. I'll then resolve the bearers debate for pain's intrinsic value in §5.2.

§5.1

Moorean versus final value

In chapter two I claimed that almost every conception of intrinsic value's nature falls into one of two families:

Moorean view: The intrinsic value of *x* is *x*'s non-relational, non-derivative, and essential value.

or the

Final value view: The intrinsic value of *x* is *x*'s non-derivative value.

We are now in a position to adjudicate this debate. I'll proceed by examining which of the six kinds of value compose pain's intrinsic value. I'll then conclude

From: Swenson, *Pain and Value*

by examining which of these two views is the correct account of intrinsic value as it is had by pain.

5.1.1 Non-relational value

Let me begin with whether pain's intrinsic badness is a non-relational value. I'll first discuss the relationship between pain and the source of its intrinsic badness. I'll then suggest that this relationship maps onto what we care about in distinguishing between relational and non-relational value. That will show that pain's intrinsic badness is a relational value.

On my account, a pain is a usurpation of user control. The usurpation of user control constitutes a privation — the impossibility of intrinsic goods like autonomy and desire-satisfaction. The impossibility of these intrinsic goods is intrinsically bad. Thus privations are intrinsically bad. Therefore, pain is intrinsically bad because it constitutes something intrinsically bad.

Pain is therefore intrinsically bad in virtue of its relationship to the privation. But we should wonder whether the mere fact that 'constitution' is a two-place predicate entails that pain's intrinsic badness is a relational value. After all, 'identity' is nominally two-place. Moreover, constitution is a metaphysically puzzling relationship given its close connection to identity. To decide whether the constitution relation is the sort of dependence relation that makes something a relational value, it will help to begin with a familiar puzzle.

Suppose I sculpt a statue of my beloved cat Hobbes out of a lump of clay. The lump of clay constitutes the statue. On first blush, it seems that the two are identical. They seem to share all the same intrinsic and relational properties. For example, the statue weighs exactly as much as the lump, and both are the same distance from the top of the Chrysler Building in New York.

A particular pain and the privation it constitutes also seem to be virtually identical. They are both bad in the same degree and are in most respects indiscernible in the experience (see §4.1). Indeed, the constitution relation is very different from the relationships Ross had in mind when he wrote that

most theories of value may be divided into those which treat it as a quality and those which treat it as a relation between that which has value and something else — which is usually but not always said to be some state of mind, such as that of being pleased by the object or desiring it or approving of it or finding its desire satisfied by it.¹

It may therefore seem that pain's intrinsic badness is a non-relational value.

But the two examples are alike in another respect. Suppose that I become frustrated with my artistic ineptitude and squish the statue into a non-cat-shaped ball. I have destroyed the statue but not the lump. Hence the statue and lump were in fact two distinct things even though they seemed to share exactly the same properties prior to the squishing. The statue and lump in fact had different modal properties. The statue had the property 'can be destroyed by squishing' which the lump lacked.

¹ Ross (1930), 75.

The pain and the privation also have different modal properties.

Privations can occur in the absence of a pain. Death, Francis's pleasure in Ascetic**, and Sarah's fatigue in Sentry, are privations but not pains (see §4.3.1).

Given this difference, to decide whether pain's intrinsic badness is a non-relational value, we must look to why we care about the non-relational/relational value distinction. While the putative tie between intrinsic value and necessity is not strictly at issue in the non-relational/relational value dispute as I have described it, the connection does seem to play a central role in answering Kagan's question

why should we think that [a value identified by all the relevant properties being 'one-place' properties] picks out a kind of value of particular interest from the perspective of *value* theory? Why should this type of value be of any more interest to us as value theorists than it would be to pick out the value that an object has on the basis of its relational properties alone? Or the value that an object has on the basis of its 17-place properties alone?²

I suspect that the answer for many writers has to do with the intuitively short step from one-place properties to necessary properties (of course, the step is actually quite large). That is, the distinction between relational and non-relational value may be important in value theory because it is closely tied to questions about what values are necessary. Thus I suspect that the difference in modal properties makes constitution the sort of relational property that is at issue in the distinction between relational and non-relational value. Therefore, if

² Kagan (1998), 290.

From: Swenson, *Pain and Value*

my suspicion about the source of this distinction's significance is correct, then pain's intrinsic badness is likely a relational value.

5.1.2 Essential value

The connection between necessity and intrinsic value is front and center in the essential/non-essential value distinction. Essential value is putatively the value which an *x* has no matter what circumstances *x* occurs in. This is at the heart of Moore's isolation test.

In order to arrive at a correct [answer to the question 'what things have intrinsic value?'] it is necessary to consider what things are such that, if they existed *by themselves* in absolute isolation, we should yet judge their existence to be good³

This suggests a more general test for essential value:

If *x* has the same value *v* in every relevant possible world, then *v* is *x*'s essential value.

The question is which worlds are relevant to this essential value test.⁴

I'm now going to argue that when it is applied to pain, the test for essential value is hardly an isolation test. We'll see that in applying the test to pain's intrinsic badness we cannot easily separate the pain and its value from many features of the context in which it appears. Thus the range of possible worlds we must imagine a pain occurring in to determine whether it has essential value may be narrower than Moore leads us to believe. I'll begin by

³ Moore (1903), 187.

⁴ For Moore's isolation version of the essential value test the relevant worlds are any in which the pain occurs.

exploring what the essential value test must look like when applied to pain. I'll conclude by suggesting that pain's intrinsic badness is an essential bad.

To apply the essential value test to *x*, we must know what *x* is and how to determine the value of an *x*. I have argued for the composite view of what pains are and I have given a privation account of their intrinsic value. Thus to apply the essential value test to pain —to test whether pain's intrinsic badness is an essential value— we must integrate the test and these two views. I shall argue that the range of relevant worlds is circumscribed by the relationship between the pain and its context, and by the role contingent facts about human nature play in pain's intrinsic badness. I'll begin with how the composite view fits with the essential value test.

On the composite view, much of a pain's context is, in a sense, built into its intrinsic properties. In *Ascetic*, Francis has one complex set of attitudes toward the painful sensation kernel because it occurs during a religious ceremony. In *Ascetic**, she has a very different set of attitudes toward a qualitatively identical sensation kernel because it is suffered in the police station. I have argued that the painful sensation kernel in *Ascetic** is a pain while the qualitatively identical kernel in *Ascetic* is not.

Thus the essential value test cannot be asking us to imagine the sensation kernel appearing in different worlds. The kernel is not the pain. Instead, we must

imagine the whole package of context sensitive states which compose the reaction component being transposed between different worlds. The essential value test is therefore limited to comparing instances of a pain across worlds that do not differ in ways which would entail a change in the pain's intrinsic properties.

That is, in applying the essential value test, we may only imagine a pain occurring in situations which make the constituents of the reaction component possible. Consider the pain in Operation — the pain of the first incision in a lengthy unanesthetized surgery. This pain's reaction component involves a degree of fear that does not occur when I slice through the tomato into my finger, even though the sensation kernels are qualitatively identical. Of course, there are plenty of worlds in which I am a hemophiliac or professional violinist or irrationally fearful. These are worlds in which Operation's degree of fear accompanies the sliced finger. Applied to the pain in Operation, the essential value test considers these worlds. It does not consider worlds in which a qualitatively identical sensation kernel occurs when the otherwise normal philosopher slices his finger.⁵

⁵ This restriction may be compatible with Moore's isolation version of the essential value test. It may be possible to have all the affective, cognitive, conative, and desiderative components of the reaction component in a mind which is alone in a world. I have no firm view on this, especially because it raises questions about internalism and externalism about mental content.

This first restriction poses no trouble for the claim that pain's intrinsic value is essential value. We have merely clarified which worlds a pain could occur in. It remains the case that a pain is exactly as intrinsically bad in all the worlds in which it occurs.

Let me turn to how we should evaluate pain in applying the essential value test. I'll now suggest that my account of pain's intrinsic badness puts a second restriction on what possible worlds are relevant in the essential value test. Given my account of pain's intrinsic badness, we must keep the factors that influence what is good for human beings constant between relevant worlds. This restriction may pose some complications for the conclusion that pain's intrinsic value is an essential value. These complications raise issues that lead beyond the purview of this dissertation. Thus I shall merely set out what the complications are, what other issues they depend on, and how they might affect my overall conclusions about the nature of pain's intrinsic value.

On my view, pain is intrinsically bad in that it necessarily undermines certain intrinsic goods. But some of these intrinsic goods may be contingent in that they depend on facts about the sort of beings we are. This applies to both what is intrinsically valuable, and to the particular forms of the intrinsic goods that pain undermines (for example, which facets of autonomy it usurps). I'll begin with the more general case.

I suspect that the intrinsic value of many intrinsic goods partially depends on contingent facts about, for example, our social psychology. Consider the value of deep personal relationships. Human beings might have had the social structure of sharks. These humans would occasionally come together to hunt and mate, but otherwise live perfectly solitary lives. If human social psychology was this way, deep personal relationships would not be intrinsically good. In that world pain would not be bad in virtue of its undermining the capacity for such relationships. Thus when we are considering whether the chronic pain of brain cancer has essential value, we cannot compare it to the pains suffered by these sharklike humans. Our social psychology deeply penetrates the reaction component of pain and the attendant usurpation of user control. Thus I cannot imagine that creatures this different from us could instantiate tokens of our pains. The shark-people world is thus not among the relevant worlds for the essential value test.

The same may be true for more particular intrinsic goods. What counts as an intrinsically valuable exercise of autonomy and what kinds of desires it is good to satisfy likely depends on contingent facts about human nature and socio-cultural context. For example, in some social arrangements, autonomy requires a wide range of opportunities for independent decision-making. In other arrangements, autonomy may require far fewer opportunities to decide and act

From: Swenson, *Pain and Value*

independently (this may be true of small tribes in which the close-knit social structure restricts the acceptable and desirable forms of individualism). It thus may be that the essential value test is also constrained by socio-cultural and historical factors.

Therefore, when we change these facts about the human condition we change what is valuable. By changing contingent features of the world, we change the intrinsic value of the pains in it. If this is correct, when we apply the essential value test to pains in our world, the relevant possible worlds are those which share the same intrinsic goods (at least at a suitable level of abstraction). Thus the relevant worlds are those in which the facts about human nature are sufficiently similar the facts in the actual world.

I've only argued that the way we evaluate pain imposes a restriction on what worlds are relevant for the essential value test. The content of this restriction is a further question that depends on (at least) two large issues that are beyond the purview of this dissertation. First, it depends on what intrinsic goods there are. Once we have the correct list of this world's intrinsic goods we'll have a better sense of whether there could be relevant worlds with different lists. Second, it depends on the extent to which changing facts about human nature can affect the essential value test. That draws us into more general questions about the metaphysical relationship between natural facts and normative facts.

Nonetheless, within the confines of these two restrictions on the essential value test, pain's intrinsic value is essential value.

5.1.3 Non-derivative value

There are two conceptions of non-derivative value which correspond to the two positions in the Moorean/final value debate.

Proponents of the final value view often characterize non-derivative value by contradistinction to instrumental and contributory value. That is, 'because it's a good thing to have' is a full answer to the question 'why do you want it?' In Korsgaard's example, a person may desire a mink coat in this way. This person doesn't want the coat because it will keep her warm or because of the pleasure she will draw from owning and wearing it. The mink coat thus could have non-derivative value because she wants it for itself.⁶

But there is a further question: whether the mink coat is a good thing. In some cases, there will be no further explanation to be given. These are things with non-derivative value in the Moorean sense. As Moore writes,

the most fundamental principles [of ethics] must be self-evident....The expression 'self-evident' means properly that the proposition so called is evident or true, *by itself* alone; that it is not an inference from some proposition other than *itself*.⁷

⁶ For example, Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen write "on our view, the claim that a certain value is final does not imply that it must be non-derivative. We interpret final value...by contrasting it with value as a means (instrumental value) and value as a part (contributive value). What is non-derivatively valuable must be valuable for its own sake, but not necessarily vice-versa." Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen (2003), 392.

⁷ Moore (1903), 143. Italics original.

Thus, as characterized by Zimmerman, with a non-derivative value:

there is no helpful explanation of why the state is good; it just is good “as such,” that is, good in virtue of its own nature....All explanation must come to an end somewhere; the explanation of values stops with the citing of [non-derivative] values.⁸

In the Moorean sense, mink coats cannot have non-derivative value. There is a further explanation of why mink coats are good. For example, they are luxurious items which can tangibly represent one’s achievement. Someone who has worked her way out of poverty might desire a mink coat because owning it confirms that ‘she has arrived’. That need not imply that the coat’s value is instrumental —owning it does not promote her success. Nor does this imply that the mink’s value is a contributory value —she would still be successful were she mink-less. Nonetheless, we can explain why the mink coat is valuable in terms of its relationship to the value of success. It is good to be successful and the tangible representations of success inherit their value from this fact. The availability of any such explanation shows that the coat’s value is a derivative value in the Moorean sense.

Turn now to pain’s intrinsic badness. Pain’s intrinsic badness is certainly a non-instrumental and non-contributory bad. We hate pain as such. Pain’s intrinsic badness is therefore a non-derivative value in the final value view’s sense. The question is whether it is a non-derivative value in the Moorean sense.

⁸ Zimmerman (2001), 37.

From: Swenson, *Pain and Value*

We explain pain's intrinsic badness by appeal to the intrinsic badness of the privation. Does this make it a non-derivative value in the Moorean sense?

It may help to approach this with a remark by Korsgaard about what sorts of explanation are possible on the Moorean view.

Moore's theory drives a wedge between the reason why we care about something and the reason why it is good....if you say that something is good because someone cares about it, that could only mean that the person's interest was an element of an organic whole which had intrinsic value. But according to Moore the question why the whole has intrinsic value must not be raised: it just has the property of intrinsic value; there is no reason why it has that property.⁹

We certainly care about pain because it is intrinsically bad. Before becoming philosophers, we all avoided bee-stings and stubbed toes. We knew that pain is intrinsically bad and therefore avoided it. But we did not know why it is intrinsically bad. For the Moorean, there is nothing more for us to have learned. There can be no explanation of why pain is intrinsically bad.

But there is an answer to this second question. Pains constitute privations. Privations are intrinsically bad. To explain why privations are bad we must refer to the fact that they are the undermining of that which is intrinsically good. Thus, not only is there an explanation of pain's intrinsic badness, but it is an explanation in terms of intrinsic goods like autonomy and desire-satisfaction. Therefore pain's intrinsic badness cannot be a non-derivative value in the Moorean sense.

⁹ Korsgaard (1983), 194.

5.1.4 Which account of intrinsic value?

In this dissertation we approached pain's intrinsic value by looking for the best substantive account of the value most tightly tied to pain. My methodology entails that this account will be an account of pain's intrinsic value. I believe we have discovered that neither of the leading accounts of intrinsic value are correct with respect to pain's intrinsic value.

Pain's intrinsic value is relational, essential, and derivative (in the Moorean sense). On the final value view, intrinsic value is not supposed to be essential. Lincoln could have used a different pen; a person may see no value in mink coats. On the Moorean view, intrinsic value cannot be relational or derivative. Therefore pain's intrinsic badness is not intrinsic value on either of the Moorean or the final value view's accounts.

I believe this is an interesting and significant result. Particularly because we have learned that the Moorean view — which intuitively seemed at its strongest with pain's intrinsic value — cannot be correct. I'll say more about this conclusion's significance later. Let me now turn to what bears intrinsic value.

§5.2

Bearers

Now that we know what pains are and why they are intrinsically bad, we can sort out whether it is the pain itself or the fact that a pain occurs or something else that is intrinsically bad. In this section, I shall argue that it is the former: pains bear intrinsic value. I'll begin by introducing the three competing

From: Swenson, *Pain and Value*

accounts of the bearers of intrinsic value. I'll then give my argument for the pain itself bearing intrinsic value.

The topics of this section unfortunately require some lengthy and awkward grammatical constructions. For brevity and clarity I shall adopt two conventions. First, I shall sometimes say 'bad' instead of 'intrinsically bad'. But I shall always be talking about intrinsic badness. Second, since we must distinguish between the value of a thing and the value of a fact involving that thing, I shall use brackets to denote the content of a fact. That is, instead of writing 'the fact that the pain exists is intrinsically bad' I shall write 'the fact <the pain exists> is intrinsically bad'.

5.2.1 Competitors

As I discussed in chapter two, the candidates for the bearers of intrinsic value include: objects, states of affairs, properties, facts, and tropes. As before, I shall ignore states of affairs and properties. These exist necessarily. As Chisholm writes,

States of affairs...are in no way dependent for their being upon the being of concrete, individual things. Even if there were no concrete, individual things, there would be indefinitely many states of affairs. States of affairs, so conceived, resemble what have traditionally been called *propositions* in the following respect. Even though the author of *Waverly* was the author of *Marmion*, "the author of *Waverly* being knighted" expresses a different state of affairs than "the author of *Marmion* being knighted (the former...but not the

later could obtain in worlds in which there is no *Marmion*, and the latter but not the former could obtain in worlds in which there is no *Waverly*.¹⁰ It is difficult to see how a state of affairs existing, but not obtaining, in a world could make that world better.¹¹ Nor is it easy to find a principled reason for thinking that states of affairs or properties bear value but are only valuable when they obtain. I'll thus focus on the non-necessary candidates: objects, facts, and tropes. On my understanding, objects are physical and mental things; facts are states of affairs which obtain; and tropes are particular instantiations of a property in an object.

To differentiate the three competing views, consider Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen's example of the intrinsic value of Princess Diana's dress. On the fact view, the fact <Diana's dress exists> is intrinsically good. On the object view, the dress itself is intrinsically good. On the trope view, the instantiation of the property 'x belongs to Diana' is intrinsically good.

I'll now say a bit about each of these views, in that order.

5.2.1.1 Facts

Facts and states of affairs are proposition-like entities. That is, they can be referred to with 'that'-clauses. My cat Sanuk is a thing, she is not a state or a fact. We cannot say, for example, 'It is true that Sanuk.' But we can say 'It is true that

¹⁰ Chisholm (1976), 114.

¹¹ An abstract and necessary x exists in every possible world, including worlds in which it has no concrete instances—that is, worlds in which it does not obtain. For example, the abstract property of squareness would exist but not obtain in a world populated only by circles and cylinders.

<Sanuk is grey>.’ As we saw above, states of affairs exist necessarily. The state of affairs that <a cat is on a bed> exists in all worlds; but it only obtains in a small subset. Facts are states of affairs which obtain in a world. Thus the fact that <Sanuk is on my bed> is an obtaining of the state of affairs that <a cat is on a bed>.

On a fact view, facts are the bearers of intrinsic value. Ross holds a fact view when he writes,

Most of our adjectives, I suppose, refer to qualities that belong to substances; ‘good’ is the name of a quality which attaches, quite directly, only to ‘objectives’, and since an objective is an entity more complex than a substance, standing as it does for a substance’s having a certain quality or being in a certain relation, ‘good’ may be called a quality of a different type from those that attach to substances.

and

If I *know* ‘that *A* is *B*’, it is implied that ‘that *A* is *B*’ is a real element in the nature of the universe. And if ‘that mind *A* is in state *B*’ is good, then again it is implied that ‘that mind *A* is in state *B*’ is a real element in the nature of the universe. But the proper name for what is expressed in *such* ‘that’-clauses, which are real elements in the nature of the universe, is not ‘objectives’...but ‘facts’. It is better therefore to say that the things that have ultimate value are facts. And since these are entities of a higher order of complexity than substances, we get an important distinction between value judgments and the judgments in which we judge about substances.¹²

Thus instead of Diana’s dress being intrinsically valuable, on a fact view, the fact

<Diana’s dress exists> is intrinsically good.

¹² Ross (1930), 112-113. Italics original.

5.2.1.2 Objects

The nature of objects raises deep and vexed questions in metaphysics.

Fortunately, the candidate bearers of intrinsic value at issue here are prosaic things like cats, rocks, pains, pleasures, and dresses. Hence, I think we can avoid many difficult issues. For example, we need not ask whether rocks and pains are both objects (or belong to the same metaphysical category of object). For our purposes herein we can understand objects in contradistinction to facts and states of affairs. Objects are non-propositional entities. That is, not being possibly referred to via 'that'-clauses is a necessary condition of an *x* being an object.

The claim that objects are the bearers of intrinsic value is intuitively attractive. For example, Elizabeth Anderson writes that

our basic evaluative attitudes —love, respect, consideration, affection, honor, and so forth— are non-propositional. They are attitudes we take up immediately toward persons, animals, and things, not toward facts. Because to be intrinsically valuable is to be the immediate object of such a rational attitude, states of affairs are not intrinsically valuable if they are not immediate objects of such attitudes. Evaluative attitudes take up states of affairs as their mediated objects through the desires, hopes, wishes, and other propositional attitudes that express them.¹³

Thus on an object view like Anderson's, objects are good and bad, not the fact that an object exists or is in a certain state.

Before moving on, let me address whether privations are objects. This will be important in §5.2.2. Pains are clearly objects in our sense. If I am in pain, we cannot say 'it is true that pain.' It may seem odd to say that privations are objects.

¹³ Anderson (1993), 20. See also, Anderson (1997), *passim*.

But it seems clear that some alleged privations are objects. Holes are privations of dirt. We cannot refer to them with 'that'-clauses. I've argued that the experience of pain is the experience of the usurpation of user control. This usurpation constitutes the impossibility of certain intrinsic goods. Therefore, if pain is an object, the privation it constitutes is also an object.

5.2.1.3 Tropes

Tropes are particular instantiations of a property in an object. Imagine a red shirt and a red apple with exactly the same redness. On a traditional account of properties, the redness of the apple and the redness of the shirt are tokens of the same abstract type. On most trope-based ontologies, there is no such abstract type. Instead, the redness of each particular apple and the redness of each particular shirt are distinct entities *sui generis*. The apple's redness and the shirt's redness might be qualitatively identical, but these rednesses are themselves different entities; there is no type they are both tokens of. The apple's redness is one trope; the shirt's redness is another.

Because qualitatively identical tropes are distinct entities, tropes can unproblematically have different intrinsic values. This fact is useful for writers who take a certain view on cases of 'mixed values'. Consider a familiar example from Kant,

the coolness of a villain makes him not only much more dangerous but also immediately more abominable in our eyes than he would have been regarded by us without it¹⁴

whereas the coolness of a surgeon is admirable. Many writers, including Kant, find it troubling to claim that coolness is intrinsically good. These writers doubt that the goodness of the villain's coolness is just outweighed by his evil character. They believe that there is nothing at all good about the villain's coolness.

On a trope theory, there is no abstract property 'coolness' that has any single value wherever it is instantiated. Instead, the coolness of the villain and the coolness of the surgeon are entirely distinct things which happen to have a great deal of similarity (the same is true of the different coolness tropes two equally cool surgeons have). Thus there is no problem with one being good and the other bad.

Hence on a trope view of the bearers of intrinsic value, what is of value is each particular instantiation of [a property] P rather than the mere fact that P is instantiated by some object or other....What is valued is not that *this* object *a* has P but rather the instantiation of P, which happens to occur in *a*. We value, in the same way, each instantiation of P, in whatever object it occurs....The instantiations of P in various objects do not contain these objects as constituents.¹⁵

¹⁴ Kant (1785), 394. I don't mean to suggest that Kant is a trope-theorist.

¹⁵ Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen (2003), 395. Italics original.

From: Swenson, *Pain and Value*

Thus in our example of Diana's dress, it isn't the dress or the fact that the dress exists which is intrinsically valuable. Instead it is the instantiation of the property 'x belongs to Diana' that is good.

5.2.1.4 Loyalties

There is no general reason Mooreans cannot hold object views.¹⁶ Nor is it impossible to fit a final value view with a fact or trope view. But issues surrounding cases like Korsgaard's mink coat, mixed values, and organic unities, tend to wed Moorean views with fact views and final value views with object views (trope views have more ambiguous loyalties).

However, all of the existing views tend to be quite slippery. There are many ways each view can be revised to deal with objections. Fortunately, the argument I'll now deploy is broad enough to undermine any version of the fact or trope views. I'll begin with fact views and then extend the objection to trope views.

5.2.2 Carts before horses

Suppose that a particular piece of pristine wilderness is intrinsically good in virtue of its having not been touched by human hands.¹⁷ On the fact view, the fact <this wilderness exists> is intrinsically good; on the object view, the

¹⁶ Indeed, Moore's own view is unclear on this point. In saying that books and works of art can have intrinsic value he sometimes seems to be endorsing an object view.

¹⁷ The example is from O'Neill (1992).

wilderness itself is intrinsically good. Against the fact view, Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen write

But is such a reduction [of object-born to fact-born value] reasonable? At first sight, it does not seem to be: it appears to put the cart before the horse. If the existence of the wilderness is valuable, it is *because* the wilderness itself is valuable. Thus, it is the state that derives its value from the object it involves and not the other way round. Consequently, the value of the object does not seem to be explicable in terms of the value of the state.¹⁸

therefore

The value of the thing thus seems to be ontologically prior to the value of the state. The former grounds the latter and not vice-versa.¹⁹

If this is right, the fact view is false. The value of the wilderness is both ontologically and explanatorily prior to the value of the fact that it exists.

Despite the problems this argument faces with certain alleged exemplars of intrinsic value, I think it is decisive in the case of pain. A pain is intrinsically bad because it constitutes a privation, and privations are intrinsically bad. Thus we explain the badness of the fact <a pain exists> by looking to the value of the privation, but not vice-versa. Since a pain constitutes a privation, we are thus explaining the badness of the fact <a pain exists> via the pain's intrinsic badness. Therefore the pain is what bears intrinsic value, not the fact <a pain exists>.

To keep a fact as fundamental in the explanation, the fact view's friend might suggest that the explanatory work is being done by the evaluative fact <privations are intrinsically bad>. But this fact is not intrinsically bad. Murder is

¹⁸ Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen (1999), 43. Italics original.

¹⁹ Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen (2003), 390.

bad; the fact <murder is bad> isn't. We could avoid this by conjoining the evaluative fact <privations are intrinsically bad> with the existential fact <a pain exists>. That compound fact could bear intrinsic value. But again this fact would inherit its value from the privation.

But perhaps the fact <a pain exists> is not what the proponent of the fact view has in mind.²⁰ With the wilderness and Diana's dress there are clear alternatives to the facts <the wilderness exists> and <the dress exists> being the bearers of intrinsic value. For example, with the wilderness the value might be born by the fact <the wilderness is untouched>. Similarly, we might say that the fact <the dress belonged to Diana> is intrinsically good, not the dress itself. Indeed, as Zimmerman notes, the apparent intrinsic value of the dress depends on the intrinsic value of the fact <the dress belonged to Diana>. Thus perhaps the fact <the pain exists> is not what bears intrinsic value on the fact view.

In the examples of the wilderness and Diana's dress, the value-bearing fact was the fact that the object has the properties which its value supervenes on. Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen summarize this alternative:

Suppose...*a* is said to be valuable for its own sake. Its putative [intrinsic] value must then supervene on some of its properties. For simplicity, assume that *P* is the conjunction of all the evaluatively relevant properties of *a*. Thus, *P* is possibly a very complex property of *a* on which *a*'s final value is supposed to supervene....[thus *a*'s intrinsic value] is again located in a certain

²⁰ My discussion here follows Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen in Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen (2003).

state of affairs, but the relevant state, rather than being existential in form, simply consists in that *a has P*.²¹

But what would the relevant fact be for pain?

With pain the metaphysics are quite different from Diana's dress. On the composite view, the evaluatively significant properties of a pain wholly comprise its sensation and reaction components — the pain just is its evaluatively significant properties. Thus the value-bearing non-existential fact must be the fact:

$\beta = \langle \text{pain } x \text{ has all the properties which make it pain } x \rangle$

Given my account of pain's intrinsic badness, the properties that make up a pain are evaluatively significant because they together constitute a privation. Thus 'x is a privation' is one of a pain's evaluatively significant properties. Privations are intrinsically bad because of what they are — because making intrinsic goods impossible is intrinsically bad. Therefore, the pain qua object is intrinsically bad because it has the property 'x is a privation'.

But this doesn't yet answer the fact view. The properties that make a pain what it is are also the properties which make it intrinsically bad. If it weren't true that a pain has the evaluatively significant properties it does, that pain wouldn't exist. Thus a pain would not be bad if β did not obtain. Therefore, the value-bearing fact β is a necessary condition of pain *x* being bad. That seems to make β

²¹ Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen (2003), 393. Italics original. I have substituted 'intrinsic value' where they write 'final value'.

—and thereby β 's badness— ontologically prior to the pain's badness. If so, the cart-before-the-horse objection to the fact view fails for pain.

This is a mistake. The fact view's claim that Diana's dress is good in virtue of the goodness of the fact <the dress belonged to Diana> avoided the cart-before-the-horse objection by making the relevant fact the supervenience base of the value. But because of the metaphysics of pain, the attempt to reduce pain's badness to β 's badness still commits the equine orientation error.

It is true that pain x is bad because the fact < x involves a privation> obtains. Hence, more generally, x is bad because the fact β obtains. But this does not yet establish that x is bad in virtue of β 's badness. That requires some sense of why β is bad. In the case of the wilderness we can't explain why intrinsic goodness supervenes on the fact that <the wilderness is untouched>. Thus we have reached a Moorean stopping-point. We can go no further without committing the naturalistic fallacy. But such an explanation is available in the case of pain.

On my view, the badness of the fact β supervenes on the badness of the privation pain constitutes. Privations, I've claimed, are intrinsically bad simply in virtue of what they are. Thus the fact view again places the cart before the horse. The alleged value-bearing fact inherits its value from the intrinsic value of the object. Any attempt to inject intermediate facts such as <the privation is bad> will

not avoid grounding β 's value in the privation's value. Thus the ultimate bearer of intrinsic value is the privation. Pains constitute privations. Therefore, facts about pain inherit their value from the intrinsic value of the pain.

The trope view falls to the same set of objections. On the trope view, the instantiation of the property 'x is a privation' is intrinsically bad. But again, we must ask why the instantiation of that property is bad. The answer lies in the nature of privations qua objects. Therefore, the intrinsic badness of the trope depends on the intrinsic badness of the object.

§5.3

Pain's intrinsic value

The intrinsic value of pain is a relational, essential, and derivative value born by the pain itself. As far as I am aware, no conception of intrinsic value has held all of these characteristics together. We saw in §5.1.4 that this conclusion is incompatible with both the Moorean and final value views of the nature of pain's intrinsic badness. The Moorean view cannot admit that intrinsic value is relational or derivative. The final value view cannot make intrinsic value essential without giving up on the values of many central and defining cases including Lincoln's pen and Korsgaard's mink coat. §5.2 rounded out this result by showing that this relational, essential, and derivative, form of intrinsic value is born by the pain itself.

I shall say more about the significance of these conclusions in the next chapter. For now, let me just note that, given the way most approach the nature of intrinsic value, these results should be surprising. Pain was supposed to be the easy case. It seemed to be a simple and familiar phenomenon which wears its value on its phenomenological sleeve —hence the attractiveness of the kernel view. It was thus supposed to be a convenient proving ground in the debates about the nature of intrinsic value.

But when we focused just on pain we found that pain and its value are much more complex than they seemed. That led us into new territory. In this chapter these conclusions unearthed a new account of the nature of intrinsic value and undermined the existing views. Far from being a test case for the competing theories of intrinsic value, thinking only about pain has forced us to, at least for pain, reject all of the theories others come to pain to test.

In setting out on this project of focusing solely on pain and its intrinsic value, I promised your indulgence would be repaid with significant dividends. Consider this chapter a first disbursement.