

Chapter 2

Ontology of Pain in Moral Theories

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Abstract Pain has been a central concept in moral theories, especially among those that take the conceptual pair of pain–pleasure as central to its very formulation. Thus in a way, they present to us a way of understanding the role of pain in its holistic avatar within the fabric of one’s being as being-in-the-world. This essay first undertakes the tracing of this ontology of pain within such moral frameworks through a brief exegetical exercise that is intent on highlighting that the ontology of pain that emerges through these various moral theories is uniformly informed by the *principle of contrariety* and the *principle of naturalness*. The second part of the essay would, through broad strokes, bring to fore the implications of these principles upon the ontology of pain. Through this, it would highlight why the ontology of pain as conceived within these moral theories cannot naturally translate into a fully fleshed out discourse on the social ontology of pain and remain, at best, an asocial ontology of pain.

Keywords Epicureanism • Stoicism • Utilitarianism • Contrariety • Naturalness • Social • Asocial

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2.1 Introduction: Towards an Ontology of Pain

The question ‘what is pain?’ is, by and large, a nineteenth century interrogative stance that emerges rather forcefully with the rise in the disciplines of Medicine and Psychology, and their claims to ‘scientificity’. From the latter half of the nineteenth century this question is what translates into the fervent attempts to categorize the term and to sharpen its boundaries, so as to distill the metaphysical elements that it might share with its historical synonyms ‘suffering’ or even ‘unpleasantness.’¹ For some, this delineation of the boundaries of the notion of ‘pain’, as Eric Cassel’s work (2004) highlights, was based on the rise of the division between objective and subjective knowledge in the ‘sciences’, and the insistence that the predicate of ‘certainty’ was an exclusive characteristic of the former. For others, this delineation was necessary in order to provide a naturalistic ground for the developing domains of Medicine and Psychology.² For yet others, it was a prerequisite step that facilitated lucidity and precision to the positivistic discourse that came to be labelled as ‘Philosophical psychology’. The importance of the notion for Philosophy of Mind can be gauged from the fact that as late as 1967, Putnam asserts that “the typical concerns of the Philosopher of Mind might be represented by three questions: (1) How do we know that other people have pains? (2) Are pains brain states? (3) What is the analysis of the concept *pain*?” (1975, p. 429).

Such attempts to cleanse the notion of pain functioned to reduce it to its narrower connotation of ‘sensations *of* and *in* the body’. The body was construed as the locus

¹The term ‘suffering’ has a much broader connotation and cannot be unproblematically identified with the term ‘pain’. For instance, a person with bodily deformity *may not* experience pain, but he/she *may* nevertheless be suffering. Simply put, following Eric Cassel, bodies are in pain while persons, notwithstanding its ambiguous connotations, suffer (2004, p. v). However, given the scope of this chapter in terms of its engagement with moral theories, the term ‘pain’ is used to stand for the term ‘unpleasantness’ to impart to it a broader connotation than its connotative identification with ‘afflictions of the body’. In doing so, one can fruitfully speak of pain in terms of the ‘pain of boredom’, ‘painful company’, ‘pain of guilt’ and so on, and as there are unpleasant sensations, there are unpleasant memories as well. Here, ‘pain’ therefore means something that is ‘unpleasant’ as it captures the fundamental sense in which it is employed within the moral discourse that the essay engages with.

²The consequences of this dominant tendency, on the one hand has led to the steady *reduction* of the connotation of the term ‘pain’ to mean the mechanical, determinist, and law-governed representation of the complex system of nervous transmission from the site of injured tissues to the brain, within medical science. This representation of pain was far more materialistic and reductive than the one conceived by Descartes himself (see Morris 1994, pp. 12–13). Such a representation, however, was shaken, first by the phenomenon of pain without lesion, and then by the rise of knowledge of *chronic* pain. Though such reductive representation of the notion is now being seriously questioned, following the seminal work by Morris (1991), one cannot also ignore the rise of pain-scales, and algometry within the ‘scientifically’ oriented disciplines like psychology and psychophysics (see for instance, Noble et al. 2005; Melzack 1983). Needless to say, the term ‘pain’ has come to mean significantly different things for people engaged with it in different disciplines. In fact, the difference of the connotative aspect of the term ‘pain’ between the sciences and the humanities is so divergent in terms of the sense signified that many a times what is common is merely the term. This *oneness* of sense can perhaps be sought to be addressed, as suggested by Boddice, by “training of the ear and of the pen” (2014, p. 2).

of ‘objective claims’³ and consequently medicine, in its bid to ‘objectivity’, becomes fundamentally engaged with the category of ‘disease’. This turn towards confining ‘pain’ to bodily sensations within the discourse becomes the dominant mode, and not surprisingly so, from the nineteenth century onwards, since this bias was then bolstered by fresh discoveries pertaining to the intricate mechanisms of the nervous system and with the refinement of the stimulus-response framework within Psychology. With this prevailing tendency, ‘pain’ was sought to be distinguished even from its broader correlate ‘unpleasantness’. One cannot miss to note this tendency in the journal articles and reviews engaging with the notion during the late nineteenth century.⁴ In some cases, as with the 1895 review article of Sidney E. Mezes, one can see the explicit demand, with a sense of urgency, that the term ‘pain’ be restricted to mean “an unpleasant sensation, either of touch or systemic, of abnormal intensity” (1895, p. 46), emphasizing that

Pains arise in the case of burns, lacerations, bruises, the crushing of any part of the body, neuralgia (*not nervousness*), toothache, inflamed tissues, etc., etc. Pains, that is, in strictness are a *class* of highly unpleasant sensations located quite definitely in the body’. (1895, p. 22; emphasis mine)

Although the reductive physicalist’s insistence on the objectivity of pain is still a dominant mode (see for instance, Hardcastle 1999), there has nevertheless been a steady rise of a voice within the discourse that decries the legitimacy of this reductivist insistence. The last few decades has seen a forceful emphasis on the ways in which the subjective and the socio-cultural aspects undergird the varying meanings that ‘pain-experiences’ come to acquire, highlighting how pain-experiences defy the reductivist’s neat mechanical and ‘objectivistic’ explanatory structures of pain and its affects.

In the light of the above, how do we place moral theories that take the notion of pain as cardinal? These moral frameworks clearly take the notion to signify more than what the reductive physicalist would agree to, but at the same time, they do not manage to explicitly embed the notion inalienably within the realms of the subjective and the socio-cultural. Within these moral frameworks, the question ‘what is pain?’ becomes an exploration that seeks to address the existential question of pain in its phenomenality. Here querying the *whatness* of pain, takes a tacit turn to an engagement with its *whyness*, seeking to make sense of it in terms of its existential function. The distinctiveness of such an orientation emerges in terms of the interpretation that one provides to the term ‘being’ in the phrase ‘being in pain’. The former orientation of ‘whatness’ takes the term ‘being’ to be a verb, while the latter

³This was one of the crucial reasons for the interest in ‘phantom limbs’, for it set to seriously challenge this identification by highlighting the experience of pain in the absence of its bodily correlate that could act as its locus. Phantom limbs thus challenged the very idea that there could be no pain without lesion.

⁴From the range of conceptually oriented scholarly articles available on the notions of pain and pleasure, one can see that it was a theme of great interest from the late nineteenth century. For instance, see Brinton (1876), Stanley (1889), Marshall (1889, 1891, 1895), Bain (1892), Nichols (1892a, b), Hutchinson (1897), Anonymous (1921).

orientation of ‘whyness’ treats it as a noun. Consequently, in the former orientation, to raise a question of *whatness* in relation to ‘being in pain’ is to primarily raise the question ‘what is it to be in pain?’ or ‘what does it mean to say I, or someone, is in pain?’ Thus, the explorative attempt of such an orientation is to address the phenomenality of the *state* of being-in-pain. In contrast, the latter orientation takes the interrogative stance of addressing, not the *state* primarily, but rather the phenomenality of pain in relation to the *being* of the person who is in pain. It is in this primary relation of pain to the *being* of a being-in-pain, rather than to a state in which the being happens to be, that the latter orientation can be said to be an *ontology of a being in pain*.⁵ Interrogating pain in terms of its *whyness* in relation to *being* has had a significant import on the discourse on morality and has lent it a distinct trajectory. As we shall see, it is along this trajectory that the ontology of pain first finds its precursor in classical moral theories. Moving beyond the binary lens of pain as a ‘sensation’ and as a ‘feeling’/‘disposition’, these moral theories can be seen as implicitly explicating the role of pain in its holistic avatar within the fabric of one’s being, and as a being-in-the-world. Within this orientation, the question of ‘whatness’ of pain is not neglected, but simply put under the purview of what I call the *principle of familiarity*⁶ where the unmediated subjective familiarity with pain in terms of its ‘thatness’ becomes the ground of knowing *what it is*, and hence, is taken to sufficiently answer the substantive question pertaining to its *whatness*.

Thus, the attempt to elicit an ontology of pain is, in a way, to *rethink* the trajectory of the notion in its varying formulations in the dominant moral theories that take pain as an axial category, and to trace its conceptualization through them, charting out its legitimate existential sense. Of course, the tracing of such an ontology of pain within the dominant moral frameworks is an extrapolation, given that these theories were not explicitly engaged in formulating ontologies of pain. This essay precisely makes such an attempt to foreground the ontology of pain in these theories through a brief exegetical exercise, with the intent of highlighting that the ontology of pain that gets sketched through these various moral theories are

⁵The literature on ‘pain’, following the popularity of the two seminal works, that by Scarry (1985) and Morris (1991), in my reading can be precisely categorized along this division. While both Scarry and Morris seek to argue against the narrow envisaging of pain in strict medical terms, the former seeks to do so by exploring the question of ‘what is the import of pain to my *being*’ while the latter seeks to open up the medical discourse to the question, ‘what is the import of my *being* to pain?’.

⁶The ‘principle of familiarity’ was also invoked by psychologists and ‘medical professionals’. Instantiating the invocation of this principle, Thomas Lewis, who was closely associated with both, the field of medicine, as well as psychology, begins the Preface of his *Pain* by declaring that “[r]eflection tells me that I am so far from being able satisfactorily to define pain, of which I here write, that the attempt could serve no useful purpose. Pain, like similar subjective things, is known to us by experience and described by illustration. The usage of the term in this book will be clear enough to anyone who reads its pages; to build up a definition in words or to substitute some phrase would carry neither the reader nor myself farther...” (1942, p. v).

uniformly informed by the ‘principle of contrariety’, and the ‘principle of naturalness’. Given the constraint of space, my brief concluding section will indicate the implications of these two principles for the ontology of pain.

2.2 Part-I

2.2.1 *In the Socratic Thesis...*

The first interrogation of pain in this modality comes to us in Plato’s *Philebus* which offers the Socratic view that “when the harmony in animals is dissolved, during such time there is both a dissolution of their natural state and a generation of pain... and the restoration of harmony and return to nature is the source of pleasure” (31d; 32d–e). Further along the Dialogue, Socrates accentuates this view to Protarchus when he remarks:

I have often repeated that pains and aches and suffering and uneasiness of all sorts arise out of a corruption of nature caused by concretions, and dissolutions, and repletions, and evacuations, and also by growth and decay... And we have also agreed that the restoration of the natural state is pleasure (42c–d).

The Socratic view presented here by Plato, which later serves as the grounds for the distinction between the Epicureans and the Stoics, foregrounds a particular modality to look at pain that is in resonance with the Hippocratic view that pain is a signifier pointing to an individual’s condition in relation to what is *natural*.⁷ The *Philebus* thus renders a diagnostic value to the notion of pain, more or less in the same vein as does the Hippocratic view.⁸ Further, within Greek thought, what a sign signifies (*sēmainon*) could only be deciphered within the larger, tacitly held, *world-view* or the idea of a *cosmos*. Thus, the *Philebus* in its diagnostic approach portrays pains and pleasures as indicators of one’s conformity or digression from one’s ordained place within the *cosmos* predetermined by the nature of one’s *being*. Clearly then, here, the denotative power of the term ‘pain’ transcends the narrow confines of pointing to something in and of the physical body.

Further, the fact that Socrates in *Philebus* upholds that one could have pleasures of recollection from memory (33c; 36b) or the storehouse where past sensations are preserved (34a); and the Socratic division of pain into “pain of the soul *alone*”

⁷Hippocratic medicine is structurally grounded within the triadic notions of *disease*, the *patient* and the *physician*, or what is often referred to as the ‘Hippocratic Triangle’. Within Hippocratic medicine, as Rey emphasizes, the patient’s description of his pain is of “greater significance than in other concepts of medicine” (1995, p. 20), and that within the Hippocratic system “pain signifies... which is certainly not to be taken as an isolated symptom but rather as part of an overall picture of how the patient looks, what his behavior is like compared to how he generally behaves, his stools, urine, sweat, etc.” (p. 20).

⁸The construal of pain in this manner is what would be later picked up by Epicureans and extended to its logical entailments.

(like fear and anxiousness) which are produced by expectations, and the “pleasures of the soul *alone*” produced by hope (32c), is a clear indicator that the notion of ‘pain’ as outlined in the *Philebus* is not confined to the bodily or physical pain in either of its modern categorization—*chronic* or *acute*. In fact, given the five-sense-organs framework within which they largely conceived sensations, and given the diverse functions that they allocated to the sense of touch, pain was more closely seen, within the thought schemas of the Greeks, in terms of its relation to the soul through the lens of passions, rather than an explicitly reductive correlate to what we would call ‘sensation’ today.

This broadening of the notion is more clearly discerned within Aristotle’s nuanced formulation of sensation in psychophysical terms, under the rubric of the hylomorphism that pervades his works, especially in his articulation of the key notion of *phantasia*—a notion that was to find a cardinal position in the doctrines of the Stoics. As Modrak elaborates, the perceptual faculty for Aristotle was not merely confined to sense perception but was rather seen as grounding our broader capabilities such as our ability “to imagine, to dream, to remember” and more importantly, it was seen as intricately woven with our ability to “engage in goal-directed behavior” (1987, p. 2). This, therefore, essentially positioned ‘sensation’, and there by ‘pain’ as a notion within the legitimate concerns of a moral framework in the Greek thought schemas in general. The psychologist Karl Dallenbach in his 1939 conceptual review article suggests that it was precisely this influence of Greek thought “on philosophical and scientific thought” that “delayed the recognition of pain as a sensory quality” (p. 331).

It would not be far off the mark to suggest that what contributed to this non-identification of pain with a narrower connotation of ‘sensation’ in Greek thought was the way in which sensations were understood through the ‘five-senses’. Their ‘sensory framework’ makes the rigid identification of pain strictly as a ‘sensation’ commonsensically problematic, since unlike other sensations, pain does not confine itself to any of the five-sense-organs as such, nor does it indicate a distinct sense organ for itself. Thus, the mode in which the ontology of pain is sketched in the *Philebus* is more holistic in its orientation to one’s *being* as such, rather than the modern day shaping of the notion in strict mechanical and physiological terms. Pain as outlined in the *Philebus*, thereby provides us a broader mode of conceiving it in terms of a diagnostic mechanism that is indicative of one’s deviation from, or conformity to, the path that is natural to one’s *being*. Within the Socratic thesis, pain is thus construed as a *relational* notion that is indicative of the movement of one’s being towards degeneration from what is ‘natural’ to it, irrespective of whether we take the Socratic hedonism as outlined in the *Protagoras* or his apparent non-hedonistic position in the *Gorgias*.

Further, the notions of ‘degeneration’ and ‘restoration’ are broader in their scope as far as the Socratic usage is concerned, for it includes not merely the bodily affections like hunger and eating (*Philebus*, 31e), or thirst and drinking, or heat and cooling (32a), but also the recovery of lost knowledge or sensations (34b). Notwithstanding the fact that it might be contentious to hold, as Rudebusch’s does, that the Socratic thesis on pleasure is to be read as an engagement with an exclusive

non-sensate notion of pleasure (see 1999, pp. 65–96) or a *modal* account of pleasure-pleasure as a mode of activity that orients the agent's being in a particular way (5); and notwithstanding the philosophical nuances involved in the various positions of pain that can be drawn out from these Dialogues, at the very least, it could be consistently held that the Socratic notion of pain pertains to the state of one's *being as such* and not merely to the physical body; and is essentially relational insofar as it is conceived primarily in terms of an activity or a process in relation to a being's natural state.

2.2.2 *In Nicomachean Ethics...*

Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* rejects the idea of conceiving pleasure strictly in terms of a 'coming-to-be' (1152b; 1173a–b) or as a state that comes about through the overcoming of a deficiency. In doing so, he does appear to distance himself from the Socratic position that relates the nature of pain and pleasure with each other and conceives them in terms of the notions of 'degeneration' and 'restoration', respectively. However, we must note that Aristotle's discomfort with the 'coming-to-be' modality of framing pleasure is precisely that even such a perspective bases itself primarily upon the pleasures concerning the body like those related to thirst and hunger, where the pleasure of replenishment is necessarily preceded by the pain experienced through a lack (1173b). For him, such a formulation articulates the nature of pleasure that holds in these cases as universal, and that it does so at the cost of ignoring those pleasures that are painless, and thus do not conform to such an articulation. Aristotle argues that such an approach dilutes the distinction between an "activity" or a process that gives us pleasure by virtue of replenishment and restoration and a "state" of pleasure (1152b–1153a) where no such prior demand of replenishment or pain-experience is required. Although for Aristotle, the necessity to maintain this division arises by virtue of the fact that the blurring of this division would lead to an over-emphasis on the bodily pleasures given that they neatly categorize themselves in the former kind, what it highlights for us is the fact that within Aristotle's formulation, pain, as is in the Socratic thesis, is still conceived *through* pleasure and not in isolation from it.⁹

Although Aristotle's division of pleasure does confine pain to the realm of 'pleasure activity', he does agree that within this realm of pleasure, we do experience pleasure through a process of replenishment. Thus 'pain' as deprivation or deterioration is necessarily connected to pleasure; the latter emerging precisely

⁹Further, his argument that conceiving pleasure strictly in terms of a 'coming-to-be' would fail to accommodate pleasures, like those of "contemplation", "learning", and "the pleasures of smell, and many sounds, sights, memories and hopes as well", on the ground that these are "painless pleasures" for "no deficiency of anything has arisen, of which there might come to be a replenishment" (1173b), rather resonates the Socratic classification of "pleasures and pain of the soul alone" in the *Philebus* (32c) instead of positioning itself in stark contrast to it.

through an overcoming of the former.¹⁰ Further, though in Aristotle's formulation, a 'pleasant state' does not presuppose pain-experiences, it does not completely exclude pain as such either. He abrasively states that "people who claim that the person being tortured, or a person who has fallen on very bad times [pain as deterioration], is happy if he is good [a pleasant state] are... talking nonsense" (1153b). This strongly suggests that though pleasure can be independent of pain in terms of a 'pleasant state', the ontology of pain in Aristotle is nevertheless, in some indirect way, still related to these states as a precursory requirement insofar as a 'pleasant state' presupposes that pains be overcome or that the 'incidentally pleasant' be restored first.

Further, Aristotle can still be read as upholding, though in a nuanced manner, the relational aspect of pain as seen in the Socratic thesis, where pain is construed in terms of the state of one's being and in relation to an activity or a process against the horizon of our ordained natural state. The centrality of the notion of 'impediment' in Aristotle's attempt to define pleasure in terms of completion of an activity as "an activity of one's natural state...that is unimpeded" (1153a), and his effort to make this definition generic and applicable to both the pleasures pertaining to the senses as well as those of "contemplation" and "thought" (1174b–1175a) highlights, an orientation that is similar to the one adopted within the Socratic thesis, notwithstanding its differences from it. Thus Aristotle too renders the notion of pleasure, and thereby derivatively the notion of pain, a much broader scope by positioning it essentially in relation to an activity of a doing-being and considers pain-experiences within the larger landscape of such experiences *qua* our being.

The ontology of pain thus far sketched addresses the question of pain, in terms of its role or place in affirming and conforming the nature that is peculiar to our *being* as humans *as such*, and grounds pain within the larger domain of *doing*, that is, within the realm of goal-oriented activities. This, as we have stated earlier, render the notions of pain and pleasure a position of cardinality within moral discourse. Within such a framework, the notion of pain becomes synonymous with the *unpleasant*, and the *feeling* or the experience of pain or *unpleasantness* is seen in an inalienable relation to the realm of *being* and *doing*. However, within this very ontology of pain, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, in tune with that which is suggested in the Socratic thesis too, explicitly closes off the possibility of an ontology of pain that is independent of its relation to pleasure. Particularly, Aristotle's explicit formulation of the division between that which is 'incidentally pleasant' and that which is 'naturally pleasant', clearly confines the conceptualization of any ontology of pain as being possible only when conceived in relation to pleasure. Given that the realm of pain is confined to the sphere of the incidentally pleasant alone (since only the incidentally pleasant emerges as a 'coming-to-be' through an act of restoration or through a negation of pain), the possibility of any ontology of

¹⁰For Aristotle, these pleasures are, however, 'remedial' in nature and are 'incidentally pleasant' and are not to be confused with the 'naturally pleasant' which is the mark of a 'pleasant state'. The latter is "pleasant by nature" and produces "action in a healthy nature" in contrast to the former which merely restores it to a state of healthy nature (1154b).

pain that is unrelated to pleasure is thus foreclosed. This closing of the possibility of a discrete ontology of pain in the Socratic thesis, and more forcefully in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, is of grave consequence to the very modes in which pain comes to be subsequently conceived.

2.2.3 *Ontology of Pain as Negation*

Both the Socratic and Aristotle's theses place the notion of pain centrally within a moral discourse, yet in them, the ontology of pain emerges *only* as the mirror negation of the ontology of its counterpart—pleasure. In them, the ontology of pleasure does not merely inform the ontology of pain but rather defines it. The ontology of pain here is but an inferential ontology that is sketched out via negativa. Thus, though it frees the notion of pain from the narrower modern connotation as *sensation*, which seeks to grasp it solely in terms of its pragmatic biological function of aversion from bodily harm, it nevertheless does not move towards a fuller articulation of the potentiality that is thus opened up by this freeing of the notion. This freeing of the notion of pain can itself be read as being incidental and brought about by virtue of the fact that the notion of pleasure refuses to contain itself within the bounds of 'sensation'.

Thus, the principle of contrariety, which was the central principle among the early Greek cosmologists, and which finds a modern voice in Hegelianism, is the principle that frames the notion of pain–pleasure here. Although the invoking of this principle is evident throughout the *Philebus* and explicitly so in the Socratic treatment of the possibility of an intermediate state between that of pleasure and pain (43eff.); one of the most articulate invocations of the above principle occurs in the *Phaedo* where Socrates, reflecting upon this relation of opposition between pleasure and pain, observes:

How singular is the thing called pleasure, and how curiously related to pain, which might be thought to be the opposite of it; for they are never present to a man at the same instant... their bodies are two, but they are joined by a single head... as I know by my own experience now, when after the pain in my leg which was caused by the chain, pleasure appears to succeed.... (*Phaedo*, p. 60)

The principle of contrariety opens up a peculiar possibility, namely, that of relating in an intelligible and harmonious manner, two relata of opposite natures in a singular plane of relation. Socrates metaphorically puts this across as being akin to the joining of two bodies with a single head. The enabling of this peculiar possibility of bringing together relata of opposite natures renders it as the favourite principle among the early Greek cosmologists, and one that is most thoroughly and emphatically employed by Aristotle. The development of his logic is grounded through and through in this principle. The Cartesian dualism too, as Ryle emphasizes in his *The Concept of Mind*, is based on the tacit employment of the principle of contrariety. Aristotle's employment of the principle in his engagement with the

notion of pain is undeniable throughout the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but its invocation is explicit in his brief explication of the notions of pain and pleasure as providing the needed conceptual grounds for the notion of “punishment” (1104b), and even more so when he holds that the objects of choice, namely, “the noble, the useful, and the pleasant” stand in a relation of contrariety with “their contraries, the shameful, the harmful, and the painful” (ibid., also see 1154b, 1175b).

Invoking the principle of contrariety in making sense of the notion of ‘pain’, in an important sense, impoverishes the possibility of its exploration since it comes to be conveniently framed as the ‘absence’ of pleasure.¹¹ Thus the exploration of pain comes to be reduced to an exploration of *that which is absent*, namely, pleasure; and pain, within such an enframement, comes to be essentially seen and understood *through* the lens of pleasure. Its nature, function and its relation to our *being* cannot be construed independently without the mediation of the nature of pleasure. The ontology of pain under the light of the principle of contrariety thus becomes an inferential ontology. Further under the ambit of the principle of contrariety, pain-experiences come to be essentially framed as negative experiences, though the possibility of their employment or their appropriation towards a positive end is acknowledged and fruitfully employed as well.

2.2.4 *In the Epicurean Formulation...*

This inferential ontology of pain, as deciphered above within the Socratic and Aristotle’s theses, forms the archetype for the later sketch of the ontology of pain, and is clearly traceable in the Epicurean formulation. The Epicurean articulation, though distinct from the Socratic and Aristotle’s formulations, can still be read as a fuller mapping out of the terrain of pain-experiences within the dominant purview of the principle of contrariety. The principle of contrariety here explicitly governs the conceptualization of the notions of pain and pleasure, and further secures these two notions in an inalienable relation of a twin pair: ‘pain-pleasure’. It is within the Epicurean thesis that we find, for the first time, a sustained effort to place the twin notions in the highest cardinal place within the domain of ethics. Furthermore, it is in the Epicurean doctrines that the structure of the inferential ontology of pain that is implicitly present in their predecessors’ theses finds an avenue for a fuller articulation in their identification of ‘good’ with that which is ‘natural’ to one’s being and the ‘good’ being explicitly dictated by the twin notions. In other words, the Epicurean discourse is the first in the history of ideas that consciously attempts to formulate the notion of pleasure as the ultimate human *telos* and given that the Epicurean discourse conforms to the principle of contrariety, it too, thereby, posits pleasure as the negation of pain. Volitions, which are indicative of our conscious

¹¹In a sense, this is akin to the impoverishment of aesthetics that comes about when one treats shadows as an ‘absence’ of light, as highlighted by Tanizaki (1977).

goal-oriented actions, for the Epicureans, are necessarily governed by the primordial and inviolable dictates of securing pleasure (*hedone*) for one's self. It is this inviolable nature of our volitions that necessitate any conception of good to be inevitably related to pleasure. The congeniality of a choice towards the securing of one's pleasure, which is but the negation of one's pain, thus becomes the yardstick for every judgment concerning the good within the Epicurean discourse. Epicurus is explicit in his words of advice to Menoeceus;

For it is to obtain this end that we always act, namely, to avoid pain and fear... For we recognize pleasure as the first good innate in us, and from pleasure we begin every act of choice and avoidance, and to pleasure we return again, using the feeling as the standard by which we judge every good... (*Epicurus to Menoeceus*: [cited henceforth as ME], pp. 31–32).

Thus, the Epicurean formulation naturalizes the ontology of pain by positioning pain and pleasure as the originary or the primordial affections that are natural to us, and thus by the same stroke, they pave the way for the possibility of formulating a naturalized ethical discourse that would later come to be fully explored and exploited by the likes of Hume and Bentham. But the connotation of the terms 'pleasure', as evoked in the Epicurean discourse, is much more sophisticated and nuanced than a simplistic allusion to the satisfaction of one's appetites of the senses and the flesh, and does not entail the identification of the 'good life' as an unbridled partaking and promoting of the enjoyment of a subjective feeling brought about by the satisfaction of the choices that afford them. Thus, in tune with their predecessor formulations, neither pleasure, nor pain (which is treated as its contrary), is confined to the experiences of the flesh alone.

Even though the Epicurean doctrine inverts the predecessor formulation that *virtue* is what imparts pleasure to the fact of acting virtuously by conversely upholding that virtue is the negation of pain (or that it is the resultant pleasure that determines certain actions as virtuous), it still conceives of pleasure and pain in the light of 'right understanding' of desires¹² and as being rightfully in need of mediation through a conscious exercise of the prudence in our choice to either pursue or avoid them. Epicurus thus warns Menoeceus:

...And since pleasure is the first good and natural to us, for this very reason we do not choose every pleasure, but sometimes we pass over many pleasures, when greater discomfort accrues to us as the result of them; and similarly we think many pains better than pleasures, since a greater pleasure comes to us when we have endured pains for a long time. Every pleasure then because of its natural kinship to us is good, yet not every pleasure is to be chosen: even as every pain also an evil, yet not all are always of nature to be avoided.

¹²The Epicureans distinguish desires into two major classes: one that is *natural* and the other that is *vain* or empty. The class of natural desires is further divided into two classes, namely, *necessary natural desires*, and the class that lacks this necessity. Depending upon what these desires are necessary for, the class of necessary natural desires is further divided into three kinds: desires that are necessary for happiness, for the repose of the body, and the third for life itself. Although Epicurus is not explicit about the hierarchy of these desires, it is clear that the hierarchy moves from those necessary for life itself, to those that pertain to the body and happiness, with desires that are empty or vain placed at the lowest rung of the scale.

Yet by a scale of comparison and by the consideration of advantages and disadvantages we must form our judgment on all these matters... (ME, p. 32).

The *prima facie* paradoxical Epicurean thesis that even though pleasure is the highest good, not all pleasures are to be chosen, is better made sense of, if we bear in mind that Epicurus, under the influence of Aristotle's thesis, sought to distinguish *kinetic* pleasures from *static* or *katastemaic* ones. Furthermore, the Epicurean formulation is also under the influence of Aristotle's thesis that choice and action unfold in the direction of a *telos* or a final state that we *ought* to move towards. These bring forth the implicitly operative thesis that the good life is not a chaotic fulfilment of desires, or a whimsical pursuit of pleasures, but is rather that which is to be achieved through a deliberated strategy of attaining a state of pleasure that is an *end-in-itself*, thus rendering prudence as a virtue that is inalienable from a good life. Epicurus' advice to Menoeceus thus runs:

When, therefore, we maintain that pleasure is the end, we do not mean the pleasures of profligates and those that consist in sensuality, as is supposed by some who are either ignorant or disagree with us or do not understand, but freedom from pain in the body and from trouble in the mind. For it is not continuous drinkings and revellings, nor the satisfaction of lusts, nor the enjoyment of fish and other luxuries of the wealthy table, which produce a pleasant life, but sober reasoning, searching out the motives for all choice and avoidance, and banishing mere opinions, to which are due the greatest disturbance of the spirit.

Of all this is the beginning and the greatest good is prudence... for from prudence are sprung all the other virtues, and it teaches us that it is not possible to live pleasantly without living prudently and honourably and justly, nor, again, to live a life of prudence, honour, and justice without living pleasantly. For virtues are by nature bound up with the pleasant life, and the pleasant life is inseparable from them. (ME, p. 32)

The passage clearly suggests that for Epicurus, the most pleasant state is not a state of accumulated pleasures achieved through the satiation of our sensuous desires as such. It is rather a state which is pleasant by virtue of *aponia* (freedom from bodily dis-ease) and *ataraxia* (freedom from mental dis-ease), that is, as Cicero puts it in his *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum (On Ends)* [cited henceforth as DeFi.], a state that is marked by a "complete absence of pain" (DeFi., Vol. I, p. 38).

The Epicurean adherence to the principle of contrariety as the overarching principle governing the very ontology of 'pain-pleasure' relation is clearly manifested in their non-recognition of a neutral state that is marked neither by pain nor pleasure. It is the upholding of the principle of contrariety as the governing principle that permits the Epicureans to assert that a complete absence of pain would also consequently entail a 'complete absence of pleasure'.¹³ It is this firm adherence

¹³Although the absence of pain entails an absence of pleasure, given that the recognized *telos* of human life within the Epicurean formulation is a *desirable* state, *pleasantness* must be predicated of it. Such 'pleasantness' though distinct from the *kinetic* pleasure that is experienced in the negation of pain, must nevertheless be a pleasant state. It is the recognition of this tacit demand grounded in the nonnegotiable relation between *desirability* and any conceived *telos* of one's existence that forces the Epicureans to enigmatically uphold the 'state of complete absence of pain'

to the principle of contrariety, by virtue of which the Epicureans are perhaps, by far, the staunchest polarizers of the ‘pain-pleasure’ duality. For within the Epicurean framework, pain is explicitly seen as the precondition for the possibility of pleasure. Thus, in a sense, the Epicureans uphold the primacy of pain over pleasure given that within their conceptual frame, the latter is essentially the fallout of the removal of the former and hence presupposes it. Hence, if pleasure is but the ‘negation of pain’, an absence of the possibility of negating any pain given its ‘complete absence’ would also lead to a state, that is paradoxically, not pleasant. Epicurus enigmatically declares that “we feel pain owing to the absence of pleasure; but when we do not feel pain, we no longer need pleasure...And for this cause we call pleasure the beginning and end of the blessed life...” (ME, p. 31).

In other words, their notion of pleasure, both *kineticas* well as *katastemaic*, highlights the belief that while the ontology of pain is firmly grounded in the *actual*, the ontology of pleasure finds its locus in the domain of the *potential*. This entails that for the Epicureans, all desires for pleasure are ontologically tied to pain and that the satiation of these desires come about solely through the removal of pains that ground them. Thus within the Epicurean formulation, the negation of pain *is* pleasure. This renders them rather close to the Buddhist ontology of pain.¹⁴

(Footnote 13 continued)

as being marked by *ataraxia* and *aponia*, while at the same time as being *pleasant*. It is also for this reason that the division of pleasure into the two classes of *kinetic* and *katastemaic* becomes central in the Epicurean doctrines. This division is made clearer in *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, where Lucius Torquatus, an Epicurean, clarifies the division to Cicero, who is unwilling to accept the Epicurean identification of pleasure with a state of complete absence of pain. Torquatus explains that the highest good which could be negatively characterized as the complete absence of pain, and positively as a state of *aponia* and *ataraxia* is a case of ‘static’ (*katastemaic*) pleasure, comparable analogically to a state of pleasure when one experiences no thirst at all that demands to be quenched, while the pleasures that one experiences from the satiation of anticipated or intended desires are ‘kinetic’ and can be compared analogically to the pleasure experienced when one drinks when thirsty (DeFi.: II.9). Torquatus’ explanation is rooted in the Epicurean thesis that the highest good cannot vary in intensity or degree and is “the limit and highest point of pleasure” (DeFi.: I.38–39); a state that does not seem to hold true for pleasures emanating from gratification, given that one can re-project the limit of one’s desire to be gratified and thereby redefine the degree to which it is gratified either in terms of its intensity or its degree. The highest pleasure, on the other hand, that ensues from the complete removal of pain is a state of *ataraxia* and *aponia*, which the Epicureans, therefore, hold to be a state that cannot be conceptually improved upon through an act of reinventing the limit of one’s feeling of a *lack* of anything, and therefore, the state too dissolves any possibility of reinventing the limit of one’s feeling of being satiated.

¹⁴The Buddhist perspective, irrespective of the various sectarian affiliations, is firmly rooted in the fundamental belief that existence *is* suffering (*duḥkha*) and that the ultimate telos of human life, that is *nirvāṇa*, lies in the cessation of this suffering (*duḥkhanirodha*).

2.2.5 *Pain and the Principle of Naturalness*

Although the Epicurean thesis is responsible for casting the notion of pain to a cardinal position within moral discourse, the ontology of pain that can be elicited from within their ethical formulation is a rigidly constrictive one owing to their staunch adherence to the thesis of an inalienable relation between pleasure and pain, which is itself construed under the influential purview of the principle of contrariety. Thus the Epicurean formulation emphatically forecloses any possibility of an opening up of the structures for a discrete ontology of pain that is not routed through an ontology of pleasure. In other words, the Epicurean doctrine poses an even grimmer possibility for an ontology of pain that is not inferential via negativa than that which is pictured within Aristotle's formulation.

Furthermore, in the upholding of the primordality of pain and pleasure as originary affections, the entailing corollary thesis, viz., of an inherent natural capacity in us to discern the nature of affections and the impossibility of any incorrect identification of pleasure *as* pleasure and pain *as* pain, also comes to be consequently upheld within the Epicurean framework. Thus, it not merely secures the principle of contrariety, but in addition, it fundamentally promotes the legitimacy of identifying pain and pleasure as originary affections that are *natural* to us. And therefore, by virtue of their immediate accessibility, any possibility of error in our discernment of pleasure *as* pleasure and pain *as* pain is foreclosed.

This invocation of legitimization of the *natural* by virtue of its *immediacy* is what, I call, the invocation of the *principle of naturalness*. The *principle of naturalness* is upheld in the Epicurean doctrine to primarily assert the primordial nature of pain and pleasure, and thereby to uphold the cardinality of the conceptual pair within moral discourse by virtue of it being *natural* to us. However, in doing so, it also tacitly positions these notions as those whose conceptual clarity cannot be further improved upon. The *givenness* of these affections that is ensured by the Epicurean *principle of naturalness* also implies that these cognitions are never marked by any ambiguity or vagueness insofar as their cognition is concerned. Thus, within the Epicurean framework- though one could legitimately raise questions that pertain to the function of these affections, their categorizations, and our responses to them- the question of *whatness* of that which is signified by the terms 'pain' and 'pleasure' would be a completely superfluous one. The *principle of naturalness*, by relating the *natural* with the *immediately given*, further legitimizes the inferential ontology of pain as the *natural mode* of engaging with the notion of pain. In other words, the principle of naturalness, when held together with the principle of contrariety, as in the Epicurean engagement, renders the very relation of contrariety posed between pain and pleasure as *natural*, and as the only legitimate mode of construing an ontology of pain.

Although it is evident that the principle of naturalness as invoked in the Epicurean doctrines is grounded on the understanding of *nature* as it figured in the Presocratic cosmologists, it must be conceded that the Epicureans contributed in a significant way towards its revival by prominently foregrounding the cardinality of

the value of ‘nature’ and the ‘natural’, and its necessary relation to the notion of the ‘good’ through their engagement with the conceptual pair of ‘pain-pleasure’ in their ethical discourse.¹⁵ It is in the wake of this revived interest in the Presocratic cosmological doctrines, and especially in those propounded by the Presocratic metaphysical atomists, that the doctrines of both the Epicureans and the Stoics emerge. However, despite their common ground, the divergent positions adopted by the Epicureans and the Stoics on the ‘pain-pleasure’ pair are well-known. The crucial difference between the two lies in the fact that unlike the Epicureans, the Stoics do not hold the primordially of pleasure and pain as central ethical categories within their ethical formulations. It must, however, be recognized that the basis of this difference lies precisely in the fact that both uphold the principle of naturalness. It is this insistence in the doctrines of the Stoics, as noted by Diogenes Laertius in his *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* (cited henceforth as DL), upon the inalienability of the ‘good’ from that which is ‘natural’ that pivotally punctuates their discourse. It highlights their firm conviction about the commitment of natural beings to their own preordained nature and, thereby, to Nature itself.¹⁶

2.2.6 In the Stoic Formulation...

The Stoics, despite their differences with the Epicureans, are in complete agreement with the latter insofar as the legitimacy of this identification of the ‘good’ with ‘that which is natural’ is concerned. The stoic discourse in its finer nuances unfolds precisely from this thick assumption of the *principle of naturalness*. In other words,

¹⁵It is this ontological trait of the inalienability of a being from Nature, or what is natural to its being and attunement with the rhythm of Nature, that forms the ground for all variants of the ‘cradle argument’.

¹⁶This of course assumes that the nature of particular things is in some way uniform so as to ensure a harmonious nature as a whole, which is to say that the varieties of natures of particular beings reconcile and manifest the neat Nature of the whole, or explicate the cosmic nature as such. This seamless blending of the anthropic into the cosmic is a central feature of the Stoics as well as the Epicureans. The Stoics, as Long stresses, firmly held that “from the long-term point of view nothing... is independent of Nature’s ordering... From the perspective of the part, poverty and ill-health are unnatural to mankind. But such an analysis is only made possible by abstracting human nature from universal Nature. From the perspective of the whole even such conditions are not unnatural, because all Natural events contribute to the universal well-being” (p. 180), even if it runs counter to the human perspective. One must note that for the Stoics it is “the harmonizing of the dissonance, not the creation of dissonance” that is the primary task of Nature. Addressing this issue of the accommodation of distinct and sometimes contrary particular natures within the universal nature in the discourse of the Stoics, Long remarks that, “...[i]t is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Stoics’ desire to attribute everything to a single principle has produced a fundamental incoherence... But to this they would reply that the harmony of the universe as a whole is something which transcends any attempt to view the world from the perspective of a particular part [and that if] ... we view Nature’s activities as contradictory this is due to the limitations of human vision” (p. 182).

the explorative efforts of the Epicureans, and the Stoics, to bring forth a naturalistic ground for ethics concurrently become the very ground for embedding the *principle of naturalness* within the structures of an ethical discourse, even if it be that such a foregrounding can be interpreted to be epiphenomenal to their project. It is hard to contest that the ethical is deeply grounded in the category of ‘nature’ in Stoicism.¹⁷ The identification of the ‘good’ with ‘nature’ runs consistently throughout the discourse of the Stoics, starting in the fragmentary works of Zeno (who proclaims that the end of life is to strive for a living that is in agreement with nature) to the later matured thesis of Chrysippus of Soli (who claims that the end of life is to strive for a living that is in agreement with nature) (DL VII, pp. 86–88). It is the Stoics’ amalgamation of the Socratic insistence with Aristotle’s teleological approach that results in their primal thesis that *virtue is natural to us*. The doctrines of the Stoics can be read as the unfolding of the Socratic insistence on the immanence of virtue, and the pursuit of the good as being the *telos* that is fundamentally natural to us, under the purview of the principle of naturalness. In essence then, the principle of naturalness, in the hands of the Stoics, translates into the formulation of their cardinal thesis that the fundamental structuring of Nature is such that the good for one’s own being is immediate. For them our being is driven by a ‘primary impulse’ to conform to its own particular nature in preserving the constitution of its being *qua* Nature (DL VII, pp. 83–86), though they uphold reason in lieu of the Epicurean ‘prudence’ as the primary discerner of ‘what is, in fact, natural.’¹⁸ One can discern the play of the principle of naturalness within the discourse of the Stoics in their adherence to the thesis that values are of value insofar as they promote a “state of mind which tends to make the whole of life harmonious” (DL VII, pp. 104–106)

¹⁷The emphasis on ‘nature’ as a philosophical category within the doctrines of the Stoics and the Epicureans is also, as Inwood suggests, a move to satisfy the philosophical urge of stability, a characteristic that is taken to be the hallmark of any sound philosophical paradigm by the Greek thinkers (1985, p. 224).

¹⁸Ethical perversion, for the Stoics is thus symptomatic of dissonance between human nature and Nature brought about by undisciplined impulses (*oikeiosis*) that either misleadingly seem geared towards our primary impulse, or move away from our primary impulse, which is to be in harmony with one’s true nature that is pervaded by Nature itself. The Stoic, as Inwood reads, thus understands the unnatural, or the irrational, as a case of *oikeiosis* emerging from misunderstandings (1985, p. 184). Therefore ethical perversions for the Stoics result from ‘falsehoods that extend to the mind’ and are the root cause of passions or emotions, which are but perversions that emerge, as Zeno claims, by virtue of ‘an irrational and unnatural movement in the soul’ (DL VII, pp. 110–112). It is this discerning of what is really choiceworthy that is the hallmark of a wise man. It is this perceptiveness on his part that rescues him from the infirmity that arises out of an error of discerning that which is natural and thus choiceworthy, that is sought to be highlighted in the declaration of the Stoics that ‘the wise man is passionless’ (DL VII, pp. 114–117) and can never err (DL VII, pp. 121–123). The centrality of Reason for the Stoics emerges precisely due to the fact that the route to the discernment to what is natural is through it alone. Reason is thus seen as the supervening craftsman that enables the agreement of human beings with their true nature that is in resonance with the immanent order of Nature. The primordial inalienability of the virtuous from Nature is reinforced by the Stoics’ insistence that “when a rational being is perverted, this is due to the deceptiveness of external pursuits or sometimes to the influence of associates. For the starting points of nature are never perverse” (DL VII, pp. 88–90).

and accordingly, the ‘good’ comes to stand for an “aptitude for one’s proper function” (DL VII, pp. 100–102).

However, pleasure and pain for the Stoics, in contrast to the Epicureans, arise precisely due to the grave deficiency on the part of an individual to discern what is natural to its being,¹⁹ thus giving the *principle of naturalness* and its relation to pleasure and pain a peculiar twist. They argue that the Epicureans miss the finer fact that pleasure “never comes until nature by itself has sought and found the means suitable to... [our] existence or constitution [and is therefore] an aftermath comparable to the condition of animals thriving and plants in full bloom” (DL VII, pp. 86–88). The Stoics thus object to the Epicurean identification of a mere byproduct (pleasure/pain) that comes about in the pursuit of the goal, with the goal itself, which is to be in harmony with one’s nature. However, in taking pleasure and pain to be a supervening product in our pursuit and attainment of what is, or is not natural to our very being, they nevertheless confer an indirect naturalness to the

¹⁹Given the close relation that was sought to be established by the Stoics, following Zeno’s *Exposition of Doctrine*, between what they considered as the three principal parts of philosophy, namely, the logical, the physical and, the ethical, first explicitly demarcated by Xenocrates [Zeno’s discourses at the Stoa following that precise order as we are informed by Diogenes Laertius (DL VII, pp. 39–41)], the naturalistic grounding of the ethical in their hands pivotally depended upon the epistemological positions (DL VII, pp. 48–51) that followed from their adherence to the principles of metaphysical atomism. Hence, in the discourse of the Stoics, the ethical is deeply grounded in their understanding of the nature of the knowing subject and the modes of knowledge production. This epistemic emphasis thus catapults the theory of senses to a place of primacy within the discourse of the Stoics, much prior to the position of cardinality conferred to them during the modern period by thinkers now categorized as ‘Empiricists’ (Hume in particular, who was familiar with their works). This epistemic grounding of the ethical is highlighted by the central position occupied by the doctrine of presentation (*phantasia*) and sensation (*lekta*) in their discourse and its relation to their atomistic metaphysics (see DL VII, pp. 43–54). This can also be read alternatively from the point of view of the primacy of logic within Stoicism, which they hold to be the underlying structure, the “bones and sinews”, the protective “shell” or “fence” (DL VII, pp. 39–41) that makes possible the access to, and the flourishing of, truth and the grasping of nature as such, be it within the province of Physics or Ethics (VII, pp. 81–83). If one bears in mind the fact that the logic, at the least for the Stoics, did not confine itself to its present day narrowly delineated province of propositions, and argument forms, but denoted a much broader domain of the science of the study of *logos* or the study of the rational order of the cosmos or nature, along with the art of articulating the same in speech. Thus, it is useful to remind ourselves, as suggested by Inwood, that for the Stoics, “speaking well also meant speaking truly and virtuously” (p. 226). Thus, the discerning and disciplining of the movement of reason is an essential precondition for the attaining of true presentations of nature without precipitancy of the mind’s *assent* to sensations (DL 46–48), which is to say the acceptance of the mind to take the sensations as faithful representations of the object or nature. And given that our actions are governed by sensations or what we make of presentations, “unless we have our perceptions well trained, we are liable to fall into unseemly conduct and heedlessness” (DL VII, pp. 46–48). Hence, for the Stoics the wise man is synonymous with a true dialectician (DL VII, pp. 81–83). Following Ian Mueller, Ianwood remarks that for the Stoics, “logic had both an epistemological and a moral significance... [for]... it helps a person to see what is the case, reason effectively about practical affairs, stand his or her ground amid confusion, differentiate the certain from the probable, and so forth” (p. 229).

experience of pain and pleasure (DL VII, pp. 94–97).²⁰ It is this entailment of the naturalness of pain and pleasure, bereft of the ontologically primordial force of *ought* in governing our actions that gives rise to an air of insipid *givenness* of pain and pleasure within human existence. It is by virtue of this denial of *any* prescriptive force to pain and pleasure in the doctrines of the Stoics, unlike in the doctrines of the Epicureans or their predecessors, that ultimately grounds the attitude of the Stoics' *indifference* to pain and pleasure.

It is this indifference towards pain and pleasure that comes to be the dominant prescribed attitude towards pain during the early period of the Roman Empire, which can well be said to have adopted Stoicism as its 'official' philosophical position following the likes of Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius. Highlighting this attitude of indifference propounded by Stoicism, Aurelius in his *Meditations* recommends:

Let the part of thy soul which leads and governs [the rational part] be undisturbed by the movements in the flesh, whether of pleasure or of pain and let it not unite with them, but let it circumscribe itself and limit those affects to their parts. But when these affects rise up to the mind by virtue of that other sympathy that naturally exists in the body which is all one, then thou must not try to strive to resist the sensation, for it is natural: but let not the ruling part of itself add to the sensation the opinion that it is either good or bad. (1940, Book V, p. 26)

It is in this rendering of the Stoics' attitude of *indifference* towards pleasure and pain, within their ethical doctrines, in contrast to their hitherto conferred cardinal position as the locus of the ontologically primordial force of *ought*, that brings about an important turn in the historical trajectory of the ontology of pain. Through their assertion that the experience of pleasure or pain is in itself not a mark of being in accordance, or in dissonance with what is natural to us in the larger schema of Nature, the discourse of the Stoics relegates the pursuit of an ontology of pain to a position of marginality, if not to a position of redundancy, within the domain of the ethical, while upholding both the principle of naturalness, as well as the principle of contrariety.²¹ Furthermore, the Stoics' thesis of *givenness* of pain within human

²⁰The Stoics' denial of pleasure and derivatively of pain is a nuanced rejection and cannot be treated as a wholesale one. That is, what is rejected in Stoicism is the Epicurean positioning of pleasure as the primordial goal of life's pursuit and not the experiencing of pleasure itself. For the Stoics, in its former positioning as a goal, pleasure is symptomatic of lack of mediation of impulses by reason, and thus is indicative of disease that the mind is capable of falling into, just as the body is susceptible to diseases like "gout" and "arthritis" (DLVII, pp. 114–117). It is the disease of the soul when its impulses transgress into the domain of irrationality and transform itself as an "irrational appetency" or desire or craving (DLVII, pp. 112–114). Thus, pleasure is but the pursuit of an "irrational elation at the accruing of what seems to be choiceworthy" when in fact it is not, and conversely, pain or grief is "an irrational mental contraction" (DL 117–119), which for the Stoics are both marks of perversion of one's being. However, as a supervening byproduct, they do hold, 'joy', as a 'counterpart of pleasure' which is a 'rational elation' of being in harmony (DL 114–117) with one's nature and thereby with Nature as such.

²¹The mode of 'contrariety' is one of the six modes of meaning or sense production within their epistemological apparatus, the others being, "direct contact, resemblance, analogy, transposition, [and] composition" (DL VII, pp. 51–52).

existence renders it natural, while at the same time, without much significance. It is this unique blend of upholding the naturalness of pain while at the same time denying it much signification that opens up the possibility of providing it significance.

Such a construal of pain when placed on an explicit plane of theological transcendence is what allows for the Christian interpretation of its signification, and the Christian attitude towards pain during the mediaeval times, treating it as a divine sign of exclusive happiness in the hereafter. It is this interpretative turn made on the plane of theological transcendence, *sans* the axial role of reason, that precisely enabled the Christian discourse to project a new mode of engaging with the thesis of the *givenness* of pain, which as Perkins (1995) argues, prevailed and led to the steady growth of Christianity. Further, given the close affiliation between the Stoics' thesis of the *givenness* of pain and the recognition of the givenness of evil in the world, the ontology of pain gets comfortably conflated with the ontology of evil within the Christian theodicy, and with it the notion of evil too comes to be construed under the dictates of the logic of the principle of contrariety. It is this recognition of the givenness of evil in the world when seen against the horizon of the principle of contrariety that provides the germane grounds for the rise of privation theories of evil in Christian theodicy, beginning with Augustine who saw in the privation theory the only possible mode of accounting for the problem of evil. Although it cannot be doubted that Aquinas' formulation of the privation theory of evil in his *Summa Theologica* is more nuanced; since it explicitly invokes the idea that privation is not identical to a mere absence or the negation of a presence, but rather is to be conceived as an absence of that which is naturally due to the nature of a being (1952, Part I. Ques. 48. Art. 5), it too is rooted on the givenness of evil in the world and is dealt with in the horizon of the principle of contrariety.

Notwithstanding the fresher interpretations provided to the notion of pain in terms of its significance to one's 'being-in-pain' within the Christian theodicy, the overarching ontology of the 'divine', however, completely subsumes the ontology of pain. Here, the 'being', as well as 'pain', of the 'being-in-pain' comes to bear an ontological import only within the logic of the ontology of the 'divine'. Thus the metaphysical concerns of theology further suffocate the possibility of a discrete ontology of pain by subsuming it completely within the bounds of signification that could be afforded to it within the broader contours of religion.

2.2.7 *The Revival in Hume and Bentham*

The ontology of pain finds a forceful attempted return into the domain of 'secular' discourse of the ethical through the writings of those like Hume and Bentham. Hume, in an important respect, revitalized the importance of the conceptual 'pain-pleasure' pair. While still engaging with the intricate relationship between pain and evil and their centrality to the foundations of religion and to theodicy as such (see Hume 2007a, Parts IX and X; also his manuscript titled, *Fragment on*

Evil; Hume 2007b), he nevertheless managed to place pain and pleasure once again in a cardinal position within ethical discourse by arguing for the primordially of passions over reason within the sphere of human actions.²² Hume writes: “there is implanted in the human mind a perception of pain and pleasure as the chief spring and moving principle of all its actions” (1911, Book I, Part III, Sect. X).

However, given the initial lack of interest in his works and thereby its constrained dissemination, it is only through the works of Bentham that the primordially of the conceptual pair of pain–pleasure comes to be popularized.²³ The axial role of this conceptual pair in Bentham’s *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* is evident from the fact that it begins with the proclamation of the primordially of pain and pleasure as the “two sovereign masters” that solely govern “what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do” (1932, p. 1). Bentham’s writings are suggestive of a ‘social’ ontology of pain given the fact that his ‘Principle of Utility’ was not merely meant as a guide for the pursuit of an individual’s virtue, but rather was extended as a legislative principle of social and political governance. In this sense, Bentham clearly opens up the ontology of pain to a broader domain of the socio-political, from the narrower confines of a Greek framework of virtues that is primarily centred upon the individual.²⁴ This move was hitherto not achieved by the virtue-ethics orientations that were available within the dominant ethical discourse operating with the pain–pleasure pair. Bentham, in this regard, goes further than Hume, for he does not merely revive the primordially of the notions of pain and pleasure (subsumed in his works under the category of “interesting perceptions”) (1907, Chaps. V, I). In his works, one can read the movement of the ontology of pain from the purview of a *being-in-the-natural-world* to a domain of the *being-within-the-social-world*. It is in Bentham that the

²²Although it is evident that Hume was influenced more by the doctrines of the Stoics than by those of the Epicureans, insofar as his epistemology is concerned, his extensive elaboration of the psychological machinery of human beings that positions *passions* as the primordial ground of the will is starkly Epicurean in its outlook (see *A Treatise of Human Nature*, BK II, Part III, Sect. III). However, Hume’s treatment of pain and pleasure as the primordial grounds of our actions is more intricate and nuanced than the Epicurean account. Hume’s division of pain and pleasure in terms of an *experience* of pain and pleasure *vis-à-vis* an idea of pain experience, and the differing impact of these on us (see 1911, BK I, Part III, Sect. X), and his elaborate framing of his nuanced *double theory of passions* in terms of this division in Part I, Book II of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, clearly illustrate this.

²³Bentham’s *Principle of Utility* is resoundingly close to one of Hume’s own notes on Bayle (Mossner No. 19), now available to us as *Hume’s Memoranda*. Hume notes there, “[m]en might have been determined to avoid things harmful and seek the useful by the augmentation and diminution of pleasure as well as by pain...” (2007c, p. 107).

²⁴Although Bentham’s categorization of pain and pleasure and the discussions revolving around it centre on the individual, we must note that Bentham conceives the term community as a *fictitious* term (1907, Chap. I. IV) or a “noun-substantive which is not the name of a real entity, perceptible or inferential... a conception of which can be obtained by consideration of the relation borne by it to a real entity...” (1932, p. 12). For Bentham, the interest of community can only be grasped through the concrete interest of the individual, and hence the community can only be understood through the reality of the individual.

conceptual pair of pain–pleasure gets represented as notions that move beyond the individual, and as having direct social import. Bentham’s work seeks to underline how the *social-space* as such is fundamentally governed by ‘interesting perceptions’ or by the ‘pain/pleasure’ pair, and how one could possibly legislate the individual within a social order through them. This turn that Bentham gives to ‘interesting perceptions’ liberates the ontology of pain from its ordained position within a strict discourse of the ethical, moving it to a cardinal position in the socio-political domain. However, having said that, despite his elaborate classifications of the varieties of pain and pleasure as ‘efficient causes or means’ of actions, Bentham still hazily conceives of the conceptual pair in a relation of contrariety insofar as he conceives pleasure as “immunity from pain” (1907, Chaps. III, I) which is also evident in his definition of *utility* which places the two notions in a stark relation of contrariety (1823, Chaps. I. III). Bentham clearly conceives of pain as not merely governing the *being* of the individual but the social as well. But given that Bentham primarily conceives the *being* of the social (taken in the sense of a community) as being wholly derivative from the *being* of the individual, he falls short of exploiting the entailments of his own thesis. It is well-known that Bentham conceived the individual and the social in terms of a conceptual unity, where to imagine one was to imagine the other. The ontology of pain that can be traced in Bentham’s work fails to conceive of the social *as such* and therefore within the Benthamite formulation, it would be impossible to imagine the social *as such* as having any impact upon the *nature of pain*. It is this impenetrable nature of pain, fundamentally seen in its corporeality, which makes it impervious to any alternation in its nature, and that leads him to argue for the foundational role of the *physical sanction* as the ground over the *moral*, the *political* and the *religious* ones (1907, Chaps. III, XI). This unalterable nature of pain, as he conceives it to be, is of consequence to his ontology of pain, when we recall that the *principle of naturalness* upheld by Bentham as the first principle in relation to pleasure and pain. This essentially means that the nature of pain is a *given* for Bentham with no possibility of alteration, and that nature, given his adherence to the principle of contrariety, is to generate an *aversion* towards it. Simply put, for Bentham, pain can change the modality in which a being engages with the world, but the modality in which the being engages with the world cannot change the nature of pain.

This is not to highlight the comparatively trivial point that Bentham conceives the engagement of the social being as completely regulated by the experiences and expectations of pains and pleasures, but rather to emphasize the fact that pain is fundamentally conceived of in its corporeality by Bentham. His ontology of pain conceives the nature of pain to unfold *only through* the concrete individual. It further foregrounds the fact that given the unalterable nature of pain within the Benthamite framework, to grasp the nature of pain in one of its manifestations is to understand the nature of pain in its entirety. The *religious*, the *moral* and the *political* structures within Bentham’s formulation are merely regulative channels of exploiting the *singular* nature of pain, viz., its aversive nature, for the establishment of order in the society or to fashion the behaviour of the individual by acting as a deterrent force (1907, Chaps. III, I). These *sanctions* of legislation are not, in

Bentham's formulation, constitutive mechanisms of pain-production, but merely regulative ones. The Benthamite formulation even in its richness thus impoverishes the ontology of pain by conceiving the triadic relation between pain, the individual, and the social as merely flowing in a linear, singular direction. In it, the only response to pain is to avoid it and the only function of pain is to deter, even if this deterrence in some rare cases takes on the form of ensuring a positive action like forcing someone to speak the truth by inflicting pain (torture).²⁵ In Bentham, the ontology of pain thus becomes the ontology of the relation between the individual's will and the social order. Bentham does recognize the fact that pain can transgress the bounds of the personal into the broader space of the social, as is highlighted in his classical utilitarian move of broadening, the scope of his principle of utility from the individual to the community. However, his ontology of pain fails to explore the modalities in which one could expand the domain of play of pain from the 'personal' to the 'social' by precisely working through the space that is opened up by the structure of the 'inter-personal' often evoked by pain-experiences, either in a mode of 'closing off of the other' or 'closing off from one's self', or in a mode of 'calling unto the other'.

2.3 Part-II

2.3.1 *Conclusion: Moral Theories and the 'Asocial' Ontology of Pain*

Pain, as conceived of within these moral theories, can thus be seen as consistently construed in an inalienable relation with pleasure under the overarching principle of contrariety. Thus, notwithstanding the broader and thicker signification that they impart to the notion of pain, they nevertheless approach it through a preconceived lens that shades it through, and against, the nature of pleasure. This, thereby, brings about a foreclosing of the possibility towards any form of discrete ontology of pain within these moral theories. For instance, given that they conceive of the pain-pleasure pair in light of the *principle of contrariety*, the complex and enigmatic act of voluntarily welcoming of pain and its function therein, be it in its religious or spiritual manifestation, or in masochism, would be, with a single stroke, reduced to a case of ulterior pleasure within the reductive modality of these moral discourses.

Further, within these theories, pain emerges against the principle of naturalness which is co-opted as its other horizon of unfolding. It thus comes to be treated as a *fact*, either mental or physical, that in its ordinary stance, pertains and confines itself to a *subject* that is immediately conscious of pain and its nature. And given that the notion of pain that is invoked within these theories are embedded with a

²⁵Bentham, while expressing his view on torture, justifies its use in rare cases (see Twining and Twining 1993, 519ff.).

framework dominated by ethical concerns, they thereby construe pain through a *singular function*, namely that of its import upon the ethicality of an individual. The issue here is not that the ontology of pain within these moral discourses assumes the primacy of the *subject* in pain in their discourse. In fact, from the first law of *patheimathos* (learning through suffering) of Aeschylus' Zeus to the present day discourse on pain, the centrality of the *subject* emerges rather forcefully and places the *subject in pain* at the very centre of any ontology of pain. In fact, the very experience of pain, and the primacy of the *subject* in pain (seemingly impervious to any conceptual manoeuvre of isolating pain as such from the structure of its experience, and thereby its interwovenness with the experiencer), is what grounds the preponderating modality through which the notion of pain is explored, and sought to be made sense of, since antiquity. Bluntly put, pleasure and pain is a predicate of the living and thus seems to invoke the representation of an inalienable relation of pain to the *subject in pain* in its phenomenality. However, the ontology of pain within these moral discourse centres upon a particular kind of subject, namely, the 'ethical'. The ontology of an 'ethical-being-in-pain', here, is taken to stand as the proxy for a 'being-in-pain' *as such*. Thus the depth and the intricacies of the ontology of pain in these theories come to be intrinsically woven with the scope of the ethical framework itself, consequently making it fall short of attaining its fullness. Of course, it would have been an unproblematic truism if this reductive construal of pain, in its terms of its singular import on the ethical, was to simply mean that an ethical theory construes the individual *as* ethical. But the problematic curtailing brought about here, by such a reductive construal of pain that is suffused solely in terms of its ethical import and necessarily anchored in a 'particular ethical subject', is in terms of the nature and the very *significance of pain*, which it drastically alters. These theories completely appropriate pain-experiences towards a singular import upon the individual. The reductive ontology of pain in these moral theories fails to address and accommodate the diverse modalities through which pain makes our world, and we in turn, the world of pain. In this regard, they immiserizes the ontology of pain. After all, pain-experiences are not merely significant to the individual in terms of its ethical import. It, in many ways, as highlighted by Scarry, constitutes the very nature of the individuality of the individual. In fact, in some cases of extreme pain, it may be the grounds for the very loss of individuality itself.

Further, the anchoring of pain in the concrete 'ethical subject' brings about a notion of pain that is essentially corporeal, where pain-experiences can only be construed in terms of a particular 'subject in pain'. 'Pain', within the ontology of pain in these moral theories, deny any 'abstract pain' that is unrelated to a particular individual; 'beyond' and 'without' a *particular subject*. It is this lacuna that fore-closes the possibility of construing any genuine notion of 'pain of a community'. Thus, the ontology of pain within the moral discourse falls short of a social ontology of pain. Although they do acknowledge the relation that obtains between pain and the 'social', this construal is essentially mediated by an embodied particular subject in pain, who then in turn, is either rooted within the woven bounds of a society or a culture, and is thus *necessarily* the metaphysical basis for it

(as epitomized in Bentham). For instance, within the virtue-centric theories, the ontology of pain remains tightly constrained within the bounds of the 'individual' and fails to transcend it, and to raise itself to the level of the 'social'. Even within the richer ontology of pain in Bentham, the 'social' dimension of pain is as good as absent given that the 'social' is seen as no more than an aggregate of 'individuals'.

More importantly, the 'other' in pain here can only be construed in terms of an unproblematic comparison with the 'I', and the *other in pain* merely is the image of the *self in pain* with no distinctness in either its structure or in its function. Within these frameworks, the pain of the other is real only in the precise modality in which it affects the self. No pain of the *other* can be a pain that the 'I' is alien to; and more problematically, no pain is unique to the *other* by virtue of *being* precisely that specific other. Given the presupposition of the universality of ethical prescriptions that ground these theories, the ontology of pain within them forecloses all possibilities of any pain that is not open to universalization. The modalities and the nature of affectivity of *seeing* the other in pain is literally immiserized by equating it with *other* as the *self in pain* that is just another.

The forestalling of any possibility of an 'abstract pain' that is 'beyond' and 'without' a *particular subject* also entails the abjuring of the possibility of any 'collective memory' of pain as such, and consequently precludes the possibility of a 'socio-cultural' ontology of pain. It thus fails to see the possibility of pain without *particular owners* precluding all incorporeal 'floating collective memories of pain'²⁶ which is the central pillar of a cultural ontology of pain.

Given the horizon of the *principle of naturalness* against which these theories unfold, the ontology of pain that can be deciphered within these moral theories, therefore, take the *subject* who experiences the pain as its intended object rather than 'pain' itself. They are consequently incapable of envisaging a discourse that could emerge in an engagement with pain *as such*, like the thick discourse on pain that follows from the realization of, what Scarry marks as (1985, 162ff.), the 'objectless' nature of pain. Thus, ontology of pain within these moral theories in its failure to push this centrality of the 'particular subject' to the background fails to foreground the socio-cultural aspects of pain-experiences, through an evasive act of foregrounding without negating the *subject* as such, and thus remains at best, an asocial ontology of pain. Notwithstanding the experiential richness of pain that is acknowledged in these theories to be not merely a punctual sensation, this complexity is nevertheless taken to be arising out of a substantial, asocial and essentialist individuality. Thus, sociality has nothing to do with the phenomenality of pain and the self as the underlying substance is the sole locus of pain. Here, pain

²⁶It must be noted that 'collective memory' is not 'collective' because it is shared; rather it is precisely because it is 'collective' that it is shared. It is not that one must, as a 'particular subject', have a pain-experience that has been had by others as well that comes to constitute a 'collective memory of a pain-experience'. Rather, it is in the partaking of the particular subject in this collective memory of a pain-experience that enables one to experience it.

never transcends the self, is never vague and ambiguous, and is devoid of the mystery and the enigmatic structures in which it makes our world and we, in turn, make our world of pain.

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