



Review of *Pain: New Essays on Its Nature and the Methodology of Its Study* (ed.) Murat Aydede

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REVIEW OF: *Pain: New Essays on Its Nature and the Methodology of Its Study*. 2005. Murat Aydede (Ed.) Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. xvii + 423 pages. ISBN # 0-262-51188-6. \$35 pbk.

Murat Aydede's edited volume *Pain* comes as close as one can get to a comprehensive treatment of the philosophical issues surrounding pain and still remain one volume. Aydede has done a masterful job in pulling together many disparate perspectives and has created a book that includes everything from an introductory piece on the history of the philosophy of pain to philosophical commentary on some of the articles to science articles with a philosophical bent. This is a book with something for everyone in it, and the question immediately arises whether this book might be an instance of by trying to please everyone, Aydede has pleased no one. My own conclusion is that while Aydede skates close to that position, ultimately this book pleases more than it disappoints.

Aydede's introduction to the philosophy of pain is overly wordy and repetitious. (I am somewhat surprised by this fact, since his article on pain in Stanford's on-line philosophy encyclopedia on the philosophy of pain is sharp and tight—and these two pieces have essentially the same content.) Regardless of style, however, his article does cover the major turns in philosophical analysis. Not surprisingly, I think he gives perspectives at odds with his own short shrift and fails to discuss difficulties with views he aligns with, but everyone who writes summary introductions does that.

The next three chapters, by Dretske, Hill, and Tye, concern straightforward philosophical treatments of pain. These are fine chapters, but nothing really new comes out in them. And anyone who has been doing philosophy in the past twenty years will find them "old school," for they are very traditional, arm-chair, treatments of our concept

of pain and all its paradoxes. I suppose that any comprehensive volume of the philosophy of pain must include them, but I for one will be really glad when philosophy moves completely beyond its fascination with folk concepts.

If anything cries out for an empirical treatment, it is the phenomena surrounding pain. If the data scientists uncover are at odds with our folk concepts of pain, then so much the worse for our folk concepts, I should think; we folk should dream up new ones and be done with it. It is true that the science of pain fits only uneasily with our normal psychological concepts—pain is only sort of representational; it is only sort of a perception; it might only sometimes be a conscious experience, and so forth. But this says more about our own linguistic failures than anything particularly deep about pain itself. If philosophers want to clean up our language, then they should pay closer attention to the scientific data and less attention to each other.

The first set of commentaries follow Tye's article on his representational view of pain. There are four brief commentaries, followed by a reply from Tye. I am not sure why some articles were selected for commentary in this volume, but this is one aspect of the book that does not work well. Here we have a standard defense of representationalism about pain, with a standard set of critiques of this view, and then a standard reply.

But following Tye's reply, we find the true gem of this book: Austen Clark's article entitled, "Pain Is Not A Quale." This truly is the best thing I have read in philosophy in a long, long time. It is insightful, original, and wonderfully, beautifully written. This essay alone makes the book worthwhile. Clark argues that, given what we do know about pain from a scientific perspective, it makes much more sense to think of pain as an emotion rather than a phenomenal experience. From a philosophical point of view, this is a novel idea and one that breathes new life into the tired old debate over whether and how pain might be representational or not. I recommend this article to anyone even remotely interested in the metaphysics of pain.

The remainder of the book follows Clark's lead and offers fresh approaches to understanding pain and its surrounding complexities. Most of the rest of the book analyze issues tangential to the metaphysics of pain, looking at how our notions of pain have changed throughout history and how we are ripe for another conceptual shift, whether we can study pain scientifically using first-person perspectives (another article with commentaries), how understanding pain might diminish the explanatory gap, and what studying other animals in pain might tell us about human pain and suffering.

All of these articles are good and worth considering. Gustafson's article on the history of the concept pain follows nicely after Clark's, for it ends where Clark's really begins—evidence is starting to accumulate that tells us that pain is more like an emotion than anything else. Gustafson makes a good case that our concepts of pain are tightly linked to other contemporaneous views about seemingly unrelated issues and that as our views about these other things change, so too our views of pain change as well.

Price and Aydede argue that it is possible to integrate first-person accounts into what are normally third-person experimental methodologies and they provide one model for doing so. The commentaries are what you would expect—the scientists thinking that this is a good idea, since they do it already; the philosophers complaining about some conceptual sloppiness or other. Though I think the Price and Aydede article is a nice

exploration of these ideas, again, I am not sure including the commentaries and replies adds much to the discussion.

Polger and Sufka use recent scientific studies of pain as an example for how one might approach closing Chalmers's infamous "gap" in explaining consciousness. This article too is fresh and interesting and takes a very reasonable tack in articulating how science should and is coping with putative philosophical gaps. It too is worth reading by anyone interesting in how consciousness studies should function empirically.

The final two articles concern animal pain. Allen et al.'s piece explains how animal models might help us fill in our understanding of human pain. I was a little surprised that there were not more contributions from animal studies that they pointed to, for they really just noted that animal studies can help confirm what we already suspect to be the case in our human studies of pain. My own personal view of animal experiments is that often the direction of inspiration runs the other way: studies of animals can give us new insights into what is happening in our own brains. But in either case, animal studies are vital components in our investigations of human experience and their contributions should not be overlooked.

Panksepp's article discusses how emotional pain is very similar to physical pain, in both humans and perhaps other animals as well. Panksepp tells some just-so evolutionary stories for why this might be the case, as well as outlines some minimal experimental data that supports this claim. This closing piece is vintage Panksepp: always provocative, always pushing the boundaries in how we should think about human and animal experiences and desires.

Overall, the second half of the edited volume is much more interesting, thought-provoking, and original than the first. The volume is at its best when its articles talk about the larger issues in which understanding pain is embedded. There are some chapters in this second half that I think should be read and discussed for years to come. For anyone interested in the study of pain, this is a book that should be on your shelf.