Should the Number of Overlapping Thinkers Count?

Arturo Javier-Castellanos

According to the cohabitation account, all the persons that result from a fission event cohabit the same body prior to fission. This article concerns a problem for this account, and a response to that problem. Suppose Manuel and Jimena are suffering from an equally painful migraine. Unlike Jimena, however, Manuel will undergo fission. Assuming you have a spare painkiller, whom should you give it to? Intuitively, you have no more reason to give it to one or the other. The problem is that the cohabitation account suggests otherwise. According to the account, there are two persons cohabiting Manuel's body, in which case you should arguably give them the pill, since doing so alleviates the pain of more beings. One response argues that the two persons cohabiting Manuel's body share one pain. Thus, giving them the pill alleviates no more pain than giving it to Jimena, and therefore you have no more reason to do one or the other. The goal of this article is to show that this response fails.

According to the cohabitation account, all the persons that result from a fission event cohabit the same body prior to fission.[1] R.A. Briggs and Daniel Nolan (2015) have argued that, in conjunction with certain other theses, this account has deeply counterintuitive normative consequences.[2]

Here is my preferred statement of the problem.[3] Manuel and Jimena are suffering from an equally painful migraine. Unlike Jimena, however, Manuel will undergo fission. The doctors will split his brain and transplant each half into a different body. Fortunately, you have a spare painkiller. But whom should you give it to?

Let us make certain stipulations. Nobody's well-being is at stake besides Manuel and Jimena's. Neither has done anything special to deserve their suffering, or to deserve your help. Neither is worse-off than the other.[4] You have no special obligations to either; they are equally close friends, and you have made no promises that would commit you to helping one or the other.

Intuitively, you have no more reason to give the pill to one or the other. To all appearances, the only difference between them is that one will undergo fission, and how could that have any moral significance?[5] The standard cohabitation account is at odds with this intuition. On standard versions of the account, how many persons cohabit someone's body depends on whether she will undergo fission.[6] Thus, while there is only one person in Jimena's body, there are two in Manuel's.[7] But then you should give Manuel the pill after all, since doing so alleviates the pain of more beings.

Suppose that Manuel is sitting to your right and Jimena to your left. The problem, then, is that the following three claims are inconsistent:

More Experiencers: There are more beings in pain to your right.[8]

Numbers Count: If there are more beings in pain to your right, you have more reason to give them the pill.

No More Reason: You have no more reason to give them the pill.

The cohabitation theorist is arguably committed to the first, and yet the other two seem highly plausible.[9]

What can the cohabitation theorist say in response? First, she could reject **More Experiencers**. The cohabitation account is usually paired with four-dimensionalism, according to which every object has an instantaneous temporal part at every time at which it exists. Given four-dimensionalism, the cohabitation theorist could say that the subjects of pain are not strictly speaking persons, but their instantaneous temporal parts, or 'stages'. There may be two persons to your right, but there is only one being in pain, namely their shared stage. Thus, **More Experiencers** is false.

Second, the cohabitation theorist could reject **No More Reason**. Briggs and Nolan suggest a few ways of motivating this sort of response (2015: 405). For instance, the cohabitation theorist could argue that when considering strange cases, it is hardly surprising that we arrive at strange judgments. Strange as it may seem, you *do* have more reason to give Manuel the pill, and **No More Reason** is therefore false.

Though I do not myself endorse these responses, I shall not take issue with them here.[10] Rather, I wish to focus on a third response—namely, that while there are indeed more beings in pain to your right, those beings share one pain. Thus, giving Manuel the pill alleviates the same quantity of pain as giving it to Jimena. Since all that matters is the quantity of pain, you have no more reason to give it to one or the other. Hence, **Numbers Count** is false. I shall call this the 'one-pain response'.

The goal of this article is to show that this response fails. Focusing solely on the quantity of pain is objectionably fetishistic and has deeply counterintuitive consequences in certain conjoined twinning scenarios.

In arguing against the one-pain response, I aim to defend **Numbers Count**, but I shall not defend it from all serious objections here. John Taurek (1997) famously argues that numbers do not count. Given a choice between saving two groups of beings from equal harm, we do not have an obligation to save the greater number. This kind of numbers skeptic is likely to deny **Numbers Count**. I happen to think that numbers skepticism is false, but this is not the place to weigh in on this debate. In what follows, I address myself to those who believe that numbers *normally* count, but who wish to make an exception for cases involving overlapping thinkers. My view is that there are no grounds to make this exception.

Roadmap: in §1, I flesh out and motivate the one-pain response, drawing attention to certain assumptions it is premised on. In §2, I argue that these assumptions have deeply counterintuitive consequences in certain conjoined twinning scenarios. In §3, I argue that the one-pain response presupposes an objectionably fetishistic view of pain.

1. The one-pain response

According to the cohabitation account, there are two persons cohabiting Manuel's body—or two 'Manuels', as I shall call them. The one-pain response makes two claims: (i) these two persons share one pain, and therefore (ii) you have no more reason to give the pill to them rather than Jimena.

Let us begin with claim (i). Why think the two Manuels share one pain? Suppose two twins joined at the hip experience qualitatively identical pains. Presumably, they do not thereby share one pain. But why not? We need some account of when two beings share

one pain—overlap is not enough.[11] Catherine S. Sutton (2014) argues for the following account:

Supervenience Account: Two beings share one pain just in case they share a supervenience base for their pain.

Here, some objects, the *x*s, are a supervenience base for an object or quantity *y* just in case there cannot be a change in *y* without a corresponding change in the *x*s.[12] To use Sutton's example, the ingredients in a drink constitute a supervenience base for its calories because you cannot reduce the calories in a margarita without, say, using less tequila, or otherwise changing its ingredients (2014: 623-4). Sutton's argument is involved,[13] but since I am willing to grant her account, I need not reproduce it here.

Unlike the twins, the two Manuels have the same brain. Thus, if their pain supervenes on any part of their brain, they share a supervenience base for their pain. Given the supervenience account, it follows that they share one pain—that is the rationale for claim (i).

Let us turn to claim (ii). Assuming the two Manuels share one pain, how does it follow that you have no more reason to give the pill to them rather than Jimena? The idea is that if they share one pain—say, a 20-dolor pain—then giving them the pill alleviates no more pain than giving it to Jimena. Either way, you are only alleviating one 20-dolor pain. The only difference is that one of those pains is shared by two beings. Now Sutton writes, "how to figure a shared pain into a utilitarian calculus is an interesting but separate question that I will leave to the ethicists, but my first-pass response is to count by quantity of pains

rather than number of beings sharing that pain" (2014: 622). Counting by quantity of pain, you have no more reason to alleviate one pain or the other—that is the rationale for (ii).

Now what exactly does it mean to count by quantity of pain or by number of beings? Sutton does not say, but the intuitive idea is clear enough:

First-Pass Quantity of Pain: the amount of moral reason to alleviate one pain is given by the quantity of pain in question.

First-Pass Number of Beings: the amount of moral reason to alleviate one pain is a function of two factors: the quantity of pain and the number of beings sharing that pain.

Now these statements do not yet capture the target views. If we thought that we should count by quantity of pain, then given a choice between one 30-dolor pain and *two* 20-dolor pains, we should think there is more moral reason to alleviate the latter. But this does not follow from **First-Pass Quantity of Pain** because the latter speaks of individual pains, not *pluralities* thereof. To get the intuitive results, we must assume the following:

Aggregation: other things equal, the amount of moral reason to alleviate *some* pains (plural) is given by aggregating the amount of moral reason to alleviate each of those pains.

In what follows, I take the view that we should count by quantity of pain (henceforth '**Quantity of Pain**') to be the conjunction of **First-Pass Quantity of Pain** and

Aggregation. (*Mutatis mutandis* for the view that we should count by number of beings in pain).

As we have seen, the one-pain response claims that no matter whom you give the pill to, you are only alleviating one 20-dolor pain, and thereby concludes that you have no more reason to alleviate one or the other. However, whether this conclusion is warranted depends on whether **Quantity of Pain** or **Number of Beings** is true. It may be that, either way, you are only alleviating one 20-dolor pain, but one of those pains is shared by two beings. That may not give you more reason to alleviate it according to **Quantity of Pain**, but according to **Number of Beings**, it certainly does, in which case the one-pain response is mistaken: you *do* have more reason to alleviate the Manuels' pain.

The upshot is that the one-pain response is premised on both the supervenience account *and* **Quantity of Pain**, and therein lies the problem. In the next section, I shall argue that the conjunction of these views has deeply counterintuitive consequences in certain conjoined twinning scenarios, and that we must therefore reject one view or the other.

2. Conjoined Twinning

Let us begin with an actual case of conjoined twinning.[14] Krista and Tatiana Hogan are craniopagus twins, that is, they are joined at the head. Moreover, they have a unique brain situation. There is a web of tissue connecting one twin's thalamus to that of the other. When one twin drinks, the other feels it. When one eats ketchup, the other can taste it. And, when one is pricked for a blood test, the other starts crying.

It is tempting to describe the Hogan twins as sharing some thoughts. Indeed, that is how both popular media pieces and philosophical articles describe them.[15] Given the supervenience account, however, nothing we have said so far suggests that when they feel pain, there is only one pain. What is far more likely is that they share a pain only in the sense that they feel the same kind of pain in response to the same stimulus. This is because, in all likelihood, they do not share a supervenience base for their pain. As David Hershenov (2013: 207, ft. 17) points out, however, we can imagine a case where the overlap between their brains is so extensive that, when they experience certain pains, they *do* share a supervenience base for those pains. Let us call these hypothetical twins, 'Jean' and 'Claude'.

Suppose one day Jean and Claude begin suffering from a 20-dolor migraine, so they decide to go to the hospital. The doctor has bad news. The hospital has only one dose of migraine medication left, and their friend Sylvester just walked in with a 30-dolor migraine. Ordinarily she would not hesitate to give the medication to Jean and Claude, but in light of their extraordinary brain situation, she needs to run some tests. For there is a real chance that they share a supervenience base for their pain, and she doesn't want to risk wasting valuable migraine medication on a mere 20-dolor pain when she could use it to treat a 30-dolor pain instead. Jean and Claude agree to the test. After a few minutes, the doctor walks in and says, "congratulations. We have established to our satisfaction that you do not share a supervenience base for your pain". The twins sigh in relief.

Notice that the doctor's concern seems strange. Suppose that the studies were wrong—Jean and Claude share a supervenience base after all. Does that give the doctor less reason to treat their pain? Intuitively, the answer is "no". The fact that Jean and Claude

share one supervenience base doesn't change the fact that there are two beings in the waiting room such that what it is like to be each of them is really painful. So, the doctor has no less reason to alleviate Jean and Claude's pain if they happen to share a supervenience base than otherwise.

The conjunction of the supervenience account and **Quantity of Pain** is at odds with this intuition. If Jean and Claude share a supervenience base for their pain, it follows from the supervenience account that the doctor is dealing with one 20-dolor pain rather than two. Assuming everything else is equal, it then follows from **Quantity of Pain** that the doctor *does* have less reason to alleviate their pain. To preserve the relevant intuition, we must reject either the supervenience account or **Quantity of Pain**. Since the one-pain response is premised on both views, however, this undermines that response.

Now let me consider one objection. Suppose for a moment that the supervenience account is true. In that case, I claim we should reject **Quantity of Pain** in favor of **Number of Beings**. The problem with **Quantity of Pain** is that, given the supervenience account, **Quantity of Pain** wrongly entails that the doctor has less reason to alleviate Jean and Claude's pain if the two happen to share a supervenience brain for their pain. **Number of Beings** does not face this problem. If Jean and Claude share a supervenience base for their pain, then given the supervenience account, the doctors are dealing with one 20-dolor pain rather than two, but since that one pain is shared by two beings, **Number of Beings** does not entail that the doctor has less reason to alleviate it.

It might be objected that even if **Quantity of Pain** does worse than **Number of Beings** with respect to the present case, that does not mean we should reject one in favor of the other because when we turn back to Manuel and Jimena's case, the situation is

reversed.[16] Given the supervenience account, **Number of Beings** wrongly entails that you have more reason to give Manuel the pill, whereas **Quantity of Pain** correctly entails that you have no more reason to do one or the other. Thus, I have not shown **Number of Beings** to be preferable to **Quantity of Pain**. At best, I have shown there is a stalemate.

But there is no stalemate. I agree that you have no more reason to give the pill to Manuel or Jimena, but that does not tell against **Number of Beings** because the latter does not, by itself, entail otherwise—not even given the supervenience account. It does so only on the further assumption that there are two Manuels sharing one pain—if there is only one Manuel, **Number of Beings** correctly entails that you have no more reason to give the pill to Manuel or Jimena. Thus, the fact that you have no more reason to do one or the other is only evidence against the conjunction of **Number of Beings** *and* the assumption that there are two Manuels sharing one pain.[17] On my view, the right conclusion to draw is that there are *not* two Manuels sharing one pain. If there were, of course, then given the supervenience account, **Number of Beings** would indeed entail that you have more reason to give them pill, but that strikes me as exactly the right thing to say. Thus, **Number of Beings** delivers the intuitively right results in this case no less than in Jean and Claude's.

Thus, I conclude that given the supervenience account, we should reject **Quantity of Pain** in favor **Number of Beings**. Hence, we should reject either the supervenience account or **Quantity of Pain**, and since the one-pain response is premised on both, this undermines that response.

2.1 What if the case involves only one thinker?

In the previous section, I argued that the conjunction of the supervenience account and **Quantity of Pain** has deeply counterintuitive consequences with respect to Jean and Claude's case, and that we must therefore reject one view or the other. I endorse the argument as it stands. However, my formulation of the argument relies on a possibly controversial assumption, namely that the case involves two thinkers: Jean and Claude. In this section, I show how to formulate the argument even if we reject this assumption.

Why might anyone reject the relevant assumption? Alexandria Boyle (forthcoming) has recently argued that on any prominent account of biological individuation, cases of dicephalus conjoined twinning—where it appears that two heads share one body—involve a single human animal. This might lead someone to think that Jean and Claude's case involves one human animal, and hence one thinker.[18]

Consider the fusion of Jean and Claude—call it "Jean-Claude." Assuming that Jean and Claude's case is not too different from actual cases of craniopagus twinning, Jean-Claude is a functionally integrated whole. There are strong biochemical and immune interactions between his parts. The latter function together as a unit to maintain his overall structure. His skin forms a clear boundary between Jean-Claude and his environment. By contrast, neither Jean nor Claude forms an integrated whole. The biochemical and immune interactions between their parts extend to foreign objects. No skin or membrane separates one's parts from those of the other. In light of these considerations, various accounts classify Jean-Claude as an organism, but not Jean or Claude. Assuming that each one is an organism if and only if he is a human animal, it follows that Jean-Claude is the only human animal.

Of course, it does not yet follow that Jean-Claude is the only *thinker*, but this does seem somewhat plausible given certain views of personal ontology. According to animalism, we are human animals. If Jean-Claude is the only human animal involved, then given animalism, it follows that he is the only person involved.[19] On the assumption that every mental state we would normally ascribe to Jean and Claude must belong to a person, it then seems that Jean-Claude must be the only thinker. On the resulting view, Jean-Claude is profoundly psychologically divided. He has two sets of mental states—those we would normally ascribe to Jean and those we would normally ascribe to Claude—that do not interact the way someone's mental states typically interact with each other.

Thus, it may be argued that the case involves only one thinker, namely Jean-Claude. Though there are lots of places to challenge the reasoning leading up to this conclusion, I shall assume for the sake of argument that Jean-Claude is indeed the only thinker and reformulate my argument accordingly.

Consider the 20-dolor pain we would normally ascribe to Jean (the 'J-pain'), and the 20-dolor pain we would normally ascribe to Claude (the 'C-pain'). As a matter of fact, both pains belong to Jean-Claude—or so we are assuming—but there is still a question as to how much pain Jean-Claude is experiencing. I shall assume that, given the supervenience account, the answer depends on whether the J-pain and the C-pain have the same supervenience base. If they do, Jean-Claude is experiencing a single 20-dolor pain—otherwise, he is experiencing two. As we shall see, this assumption may be questioned, but I shall briefly postpone its defense to streamline exposition.

I shall now argue that proponents of the supervenience account—or 'supervenience theorists', as I shall call them—should reject **Quantity of Pain**. To see this, consider a

retelling of our previous story. Imagine that as Jean-Claude begins to experience pain in both heads, he decides to go to the hospital. The doctors explain that there is only one dose of migraine medication left, and that he must therefore wait for the doctors to see if his pains have different supervenience bases. If they do, the doctors will give him the medication. If they have the same supervenience base, however, they will instead give it to his friend Sylvester, who is suffering from a 30-dolor migraine.

I submit that the doctors' approach is misguided. Intuitively, whether Jean-Claude's pains have the same supervenience base makes no difference to how much reason they have to alleviate those pains. What matters is how bad Jean-Claude's situation is for him, and that does not depend on whether his pains happen to share a supervenience base. If the supervenience theorist accepts **Quantity of Pain**, however, she must side with the doctors. Given the supervenience account, how much pain Jean-Claude is experiencing depends on whether his pains have the same supervenience base—if they do, he is experiencing a single 20-dolor pain rather than two. It then follows from **Quantity of Pain** that the doctors have less reason to alleviate his pains, which is intuitively wrong. Hence, the supervenience theorist should reject **Quantity of Pain**.

As I said, my argument assumes that, given the supervenience account, how much pain Jean-Claude is experiencing depends on whether his pains have the same supervenience base. Strictly speaking though, this does not follow from the supervenience account. As stated, the account is silent on whether Jean-Claude is experiencing one or two pains because the account speaks of two thinkers, and Jean-Claude is one. For this reason, it is in principle open for the supervenience theorist to accept the following view instead:

Same Quantity: Jean-Claude is experiencing the same quantity of pain no matter whether his pains share a supervenience base.

If the supervenience theorist accepts **Same Quantity**, accepting **Quantity of Pain** no longer commits her to saying that the doctors have less reason to alleviate Jean-Claude's pains if those pains happen to share a supervenience base. Nevertheless, she should not accept **Same Quantity**. Before arguing for this, however, let me first draw out an implication of **Same Quantity** that will later play a role in my argument.

Prima facie, there are two ways **Same Quantity** could be true: Jean-Claude could be experiencing a single 20-dolor pain whether or not his pains share a supervenience base, or he could be experiencing two 20-dolor pains regardless. However, we can quickly rule out the first possibility. Suppose that Jean-Claude's pains do *not* share a supervenience base—that is, that the J-pain and the C-pain supervene on different parts of his brains. By Leibniz's law, it follows that these pains are nonidentical. Thus, if Jean-Claude's pains do not share a supervenience bases, he is experiencing two 20-dolor pains, which rules out the first possibility. If **Same Quantity** is true, therefore, Jean-Claude must be experiencing two 20-dolor pains no matter whether those pains share a supervenience base—this will matter shortly.

I shall now argue that the supervenience theorist should not accept **Same Quantity**. The supervenience account may be paraphrased as saying that one being's pain is identical to another being's pain just in case the pains in question have the same supervenience base. This claim is unsatisfying in isolation. If it is true, it should be true because it falls out of a more general individuation criterion for pains, one that applies no matter whether the pains

in question belong to the same or different beings. The obvious candidate is that, without exception, pains *x* and *y* are identical iff they have the same supervenience base. However, this criterion is obviously inconsistent with **Same Quantity**—if all pains are individuated by their supervenience bases, then whether Jean-Claude is experiencing one or two 20-dolor pains depends on whether the J-pain and the C-pain have the same supervenience base. If the supervenience theorist accepts **Same Quantity**, therefore, she cannot individuate pains by their supervenience bases, in which case it is unclear how she intends to do so.

Second, if the supervenience theorist accepts **Same Quantity**, that commits her to a mysterious asymmetry between cases involving one thinker and cases involving two. As we have seen, the proponent of supervenience account wants to say that the two Manuels are experiencing one and the same pain. In two-thinker cases, then, sameness of supervenience base is allegedly sufficient for identity of pains. If the supervenience theorist accepts **Same Quantity**, however, then when we turn back to Jean-Claude's case—which, as we are assuming, involves only one thinker—she must now say something completely different. She must say that Jean-Claude is experiencing two pains even if those pains have the same supervenience base. (This is an implication of **Same Quantity**, as I argued above). Suddenly, sameness of supervenenience base is no longer sufficient for identity of pains. What could possibly explain this striking asymmetry?

I conclude that the supervenience theorist should not accept **Same Quantity**. Rather, she should say that the amount of pain experienced by Jean-Claude depends on whether his pains share a supervenience base. But then accepting **Quantity of Pain** commits her to saying that the doctors have less reason to alleviate Jean-Claude's pains if

those pains happen to share a supervenience base, which is intuitively wrong. Thus, she should reject **Quantity of Pain**. Since the one-pain response is premised on both the supervenience account and **Quantity of Pain**, this undermines that response.

This concludes my reformulation of the argument I gave at the beginning of §2. In the next section, I respond to an objection.

2.2 An objection

In the previous section, I argued that accepting **Quantity of Pain** commits supervenience theorists to a deeply counterintuitive claim, namely that the doctors have less reason to alleviate Jean-Claude's pains if those pains happen to share a supervenience base. In response, it may be argued that that is not yet a reason for them to reject **Quantity of Pain** because accepting **Number of Beings** commits them to the very same claim.

As I have argued, supervenience theorists should say that the amount of pain experienced by Jean-Claude depends on whether his pains share a supervenience base. That means that if his pains share a supervenience base, the quantity of pain is lower than otherwise—he is experiencing one 20-dolor pain rather than two. However, since the number of beings experiencing that pain remains the same—either way, Jean-Claude is the only experiencer—**Number of Beings** entails that the doctors have less reason to alleviate it.

I agree that **Number of Beings** commits supervenience theorists to the same counterintuitive claim as **Quantity of Pain**. However, that is no reason for them to stick with **Quantity of Pain** because there is a third alternative that does not face the same problem.

Suppose you face a choice between giving Jean-Claude some migraine medication and giving it to someone else—say, Chuck, who is also suffering from a 20-dolor migraine but has only one head. Now whom should you give the medication? Intuitively, you have more reason to give it to Jean-Claude. And that is so even if Jean-Claude's pains happen to share a supervenience base. This raises a puzzle. If Jean-Claude's pains share a supervenience base, then given the supervenience account, we should think that he is experiencing a single 20-dolor pain. However, that means both options—giving the medication to Jean-Claude or giving it to Chuck—involve the same amount of pain as well as the same number of beings. But then how come you have more reason to give it to Jean-Claude? The most natural answer, I submit, is that Jean-Claude is experiencing a 20-dolor pain *twice over*. Unlike Chuck, Jean-Claude has two streams of consciousness, and he is experiencing the same pain in both streams. These considerations motivate the following view:

Number of Beings*: the amount of moral reason to alleviate one pain is a function of three factors: the quantity of pain, the number of beings sharing that pain, and the number of times each being is experiencing the pain in question.[20]

This view nicely explains why you have more reason to help Jean-Claude rather than Chuck. Unlike **Number of Beings**, moreover, accepting **Number of Beings*** no longer commits supervenience theorists to the claim that the doctors have less reason to alleviate Jean-Claude's pains if those pains happen to share a supervenience base. If they share a supervenience base, Jean-Claude is experiencing one 20-dolor rather than two, but

he is now experiencing that one pain twice over, rather than experiencing each of two pains once. Thus, the doctors do not have less reason to alleviate his pain.

I conclude that just because accepting **Number of Beings** commits supervenience theorists to the same counterintuitive claim as **Quantity of Pain**, that does not mean they should stick with **Quantity of Pain**. Instead, they should endorse **Number of Beings***.

To be clear, I claim that supervenience theorists should endorse **Number of Beings***, but only on the assumption that Jean-Claude's case involves a single thinker. If the case involves two thinkers, there is no longer any reason to be dissatisfied with **Number of Beings**. If the case involves two thinkers, then as we saw at the beginning of §2, **Number of Beings** does not entail that the doctors have less reason to alleviate Jean and Claude's pain if they happen to share a supervenience base for their pain. Nor is there a puzzle as to why you have more reason to give the medication to Jean and Claude rather than Chuck—given the supervenience account, both options involve the same amount of pain, but not the same number of beings. Thus, there is no longer a clear motivation for **Number of Beings***, in which case the supervenience theorist should probably endorse **Number of Beings**.

Thus, whether supervenience theorists should endorse **Number of Beings** or its starred counterpart depends on whether Jean and Claude's case involves one or two thinkers. For reasons that need not detain us here, I happen to think the case involves two thinkers. Accordingly, I shall focus on **Number of Beings** throughout the remainder of this article.

Let us take stock. In §1, I argued that the one-pain response is premised on both the supervenience account and **Quantity of Pain**. At the beginning of §2, I then argued that

the conjunction of these views has deeply counterintuitive consequences with respect to Jean and Claude's case, and that we must therefore reject one view or the other. And then throughout §2.1-2, I argued that, *mutatis mutandis*, the same argument goes through even if relevant case involves only one thinker. This concludes my first argument against the one-pain response—in the next section, I offer a second argument.

3. Fetishism

As I have argued, the one-pain response is premised on both the supervenience account and **Quantity of Pain**. My previous argument was aimed at the conjunction of these two views. Thus, the argument could in principle be avoided by pairing **Quantity of Pain** with a different account of pain sharing. By contrast, my next argument is aimed directly at **Quantity of Pain**. Thus, it is meant to apply no matter whether **Quantity of Pain** is paired with the supervenience account or a different account.

To recapitulate, the one-pain response claims that giving the pill to the Manuels alleviates no more pain than giving it to Jimena—either way, you are only alleviating one 20-dolor pain. The only difference is that the Manuels' pain is shared by two beings. The question now is whether that gives you more reason to alleviate that pain. As we have seen, **Quantity of Pain** and **Number of Beings** disagree. From the perspective of **Quantity of Pain**, **Number of Beings** overestimates the amount of reason there is to alleviate the Manuels' pain, whereas from the perspective of **Number of Beings**, it is the other way around. I suggest that in order to motivate either view, we should at least be able to explain *why* the other view either overestimates or underestimates the amount in question. I shall argue that whereas proponents of **Number of Beings** can easily answer this challenge,

proponents of **Quantity of Pain** can only do so by assuming an objectionably fetishistic view of pain.

Suppose there is a pipe carrying a dangerous gas running through an apartment complex. (Perhaps the building was repurposed from an old chemical plant). Unfortunately, there has recently been a series of leaks. If there is one leak in an apartment, its tenants are thereby in danger, but the gas quickly fills up the apartment, so further leaks do not increase the danger. The tenants are too frail to leave the building, so they need someone to come fix the leaks instead. The task is given to Arnold. He is short on time, so he needs to prioritize certain apartments. He reasons that since he has reason to fix the leaks, he will prioritize the apartments with the most leaks. Thus, he will start with Apartment A, which contains four leaks but only one tenant, and finish with Apartment D, which contains only one leak but four tenants.

Arnold seems to have severely underestimated how much reason he has to fix the leaks in Apartment D. Where did he go wrong? It's not that he has no reason to fix the leaks. Rather, it's that his reasons for doing so derive from the fact that the leaks put the tenants in danger. When your reasons for getting rid of certain things are merely derivative, it is a mistake to focus on the number of those things except as proxy for what ultimately matters.

Now if **Quantity of Pain** underestimates how much reason there is to alleviate the Manuels' pain, there should be a similar story to tell. And in fact, there is. Suppose for a moment that your reasons for alleviating any given pain derive from the fact that the pain in question is bad for the beings who experience it. What ultimately matters are not the

pains themselves, but the beings in question. Following Richard Yetter Chappell, I shall call this view 'welfarism' (2015: 325).

Given welfarism, it is a mistake to focus on the number of pains except as proxy for what ultimately matters, namely the beings who experience them. In treating the Manuels' pain on a par with Jimena's pain, **Quantity of Pain** thereby ignores an obvious difference in what ultimately matters: whereas Jimena's pain is bad for only one being, the Manuels' pain is bad for two. From a welfarist perspective, this is akin to Arnold treating singly- and doubly-occupied apartments alike just because they both contain one leak.

One might object that the analogy begs the question in favor of welfarism because unlike the leaks, it isn't obvious that pains are derivatively bad, but this is to misunderstand the point of the example. The point isn't to argue for welfarism, but to illustrate a natural explanation of how someone might underestimate how much reason he has to do something. My claim is that, *assuming* welfarism, we can give exactly the same sort of explanation as to why **Quantity of Pain** underestimates how much reason there is to alleviate the Manuels' pain.

The proponent of **Quantity of Pain** might object that even if what ultimately matters are the beings in pain, the two Manuels should nevertheless count as one being. But why should they? Unless the proponent of **Quantity of Pain** can answer this question, the present suggestion seems objectionably arbitrary, if not perverse.

In response, the proponent of **Quantity of Pain** might say that the two Manuels should count as one because they share one pain. However, I do not see how to make sense of this answer once the proponent of **Quantity of Pain** has conceded that what ultimately matters are the beings in pain. Imagine that Arnold's boss later confronts him as to why he

left Apartment D for last given that it contains four occupants, and Arnold answers: "I can see that what ultimately maters are the occupants, not the leaks, but the four occupants count as one because their apartment contains one leak". Surely this answer is confused. Arnold cannot satisfactorily answer his boss's question by appeal to something that, by his own lights, is only derivatively bad. Likewise, once the proponent of **Quantity of Pain** has conceded that the pains are only derivatively bad, she cannot satisfactorily answer our question by appeal to the number of pains involved.

I conclude that, by assuming welfarism, proponents of **Number of Being** can explain why **Quantity of Pain** underestimates the amount of reason there is to alleviate the Manuels' pain. What about proponents of **Quantity of Pain**? In order to explain why **Number of Beings** supposedly overestimates the amount in question, they must assume that our reasons for alleviating any given pain don't derive from the fact that the pain in question is bad for the beings who experience it. What ultimately matters are the pains themselves. Following Chappell, I shall call this 'utility fundamentalism' (2015: 325).

Given fundamentalism, it is a mistake to focus on the number of beings in pain except as proxy for what ultimately matters, namely the pains themselves. In prioritizing the Manuel's pain over Jimena's, **Number of Beings** thereby ignores the fact that there is no difference in what ultimately matters. From a fundamentalist perspective, this is akin to Arnold prioritizing one singly-occupied apartment over another simply because the former contains more leaks.

So, proponents of **Quantity of Pain** can explain why **Number of Beings** overestimates the amount of reason there is to alleviate the Manuels' pain, but only by

assuming fundamentalism. The problem is that, as Chappell points out, the latter seems objectionably fetishistic:

> By taking the value of pleasure (and disvalue of pain) as fundamental, and not to be explained in terms of their value *for* individuals, Utility Fundamentalism seems objectionably fetishistic. It treats individuals as intrinsically valueless 'receptacles', of moral interest only insofar as they provide a space or habitat for what (supposedly) really matters: the brute promotion of pleasure over pain. This moral perspective strikes us, I think rightly, as perverse (2015: 325).

The underlying intuition here seems to be that pains are only bad because they are bad for the beings who experience them. By placing the emphasis on the pains themselves, fundamentalism gets things exactly backwards.

One might worry that the relevant intuition is, if not at restatement of welfarism, then close enough to make it question begging to wield it against fundamentalism. In a debate between committed welfarists and fundamentalists, this might be so, but only because the fundamentalist would presumably have some independent motivation for her view. What motivation is there for fundamentalism?

One might argue that any argument for utilitarianism is thereby an argument for fundamentalism. After all, utilitarianism may be characterized as the view that ultimately, what matters is the quantity of pleasure and pain.[21] This is a fine slogan, but to take it as a serious definition is to gratuitously saddle the utilitarian with an implausible view. As Chappell argues, nothing prevents the utilitarian from adopting welfarism (2015: 325).

Another argument for fundamentalism may be extracted from Mark Johnston's (2016) discussion of the personite problem. Four-dimensionalism is standardly paired with unrestricted composition, according to which any plurality of objects has a mereological sum. Given unrestricted composition, four-dimensionalism is committed to what Johnston calls 'personites', that is, "shorter-lived very person-like things extending across part, but not the whole, of [the] person's life" (2016: 1). The longer someone's life is, moreover, the more personites there are within that life (2016: 24). This raises a problem analogous to the one we have been discussing. If two persons—say, Ana and Felipe—are suffering from an equally painful migraine, but Ana's life will be longer than Felipe's, then other things equal, it seems follow that you have more reason to alleviate Ana's pain, since she is coincident with more personites. Now in his discussion of the problem, Johnston writes:

> [Isn't this just massive over-counting of what really counts ethically?] Yes, and we are done, *if* all that counts ethically is the magnitude, quality and extent of the purely hedonic qualitative state that inhabits a person, and so also inhabits her personites. […] The present paper might be read as an argument for this most primitive hedonistic account of the good-making features. In the light of the problem of personites, what is widely regarded as the most telling objection to hedonism, namely that it regards persons as mere receptacles of good-making features, now looks like hedonism's major advantage! (2016: 26, fn. 5)

It is not clear whether Johnston endorses the argument, or that "this most primitive hedonistic account" refers to fundamentalism, but in any case, a Johnston-style argument could be made for the view. The argument would be that the personite problem is so

pervasive that fundamentalism is the only way out. Although Johnston mostly focuses on four-dimensionalism, he argues that given naturalism, the same problem will arise on all competing theories (2016: 25). Unless we accept fundamentalism, we are forced to the absurd conclusion that you *do* have more reason to alleviate Ana's pain after all.

I agree that given a choice between fundamentalism and the absurd claim in question, we should choose fundamentalism, but we are not forced to choose. As Alex Kaiserman (2018) has recently argued, there is a version of four-dimensionalism that does not face a personite problem, namely the stage theory. Thus, the premise that fundamentalism is the only way out is false.

I conclude that there are no good arguments for fundamentalism. And since the view strikes us as objectionably fetishistic, we should therefore reject it. As we have seen, however, **Quantity of Pain** can only be motivated by appeal to fundamentalism—otherwise, proponents of **Quantity of Pain** cannot explain why **Number of Beings** supposedly overestimates the amount of reason there is to alleviate the Manuels' pains. Therefore, **Quantity of Pain** cannot be adequately motivated. And since the one-pain response is partly premised on **Quantity of Pain**, this undermines the response in question. This concludes my second argument against the one-pain response.

4. Concluding Remarks

I have argued that the one-pain response fails. Barring number skepticism, I take this to be the most promising objection to **Numbers Count**. Accordingly, I think **Numbers Count** is probably true. If so, then cohabitation theorists must either show that they are not, in fact, committed to **More Experiencers**, or else bite the bullet and deny **No More Reason**.

Endnotes

[1] Cohabitation theorists include Perry (1972, 2002) Lewis (1976), Robinson (1985), Mills (1993), Noonan (2003: 139-42), and Langford (2007).

[2] To be precise, Briggs and Nolan's target is Multiple Occupancy, which is the weaker thesis that "two or more distinct, temporally extended persons can completely overlap for a span of time" (2015: 393), but the difference will not matter for our purposes.

[3] I give a different statement of the problem because I wish to carve up the space of responses differently from how Briggs and Nolan do it. Also, I write as though these are different statements of the same problem as opposed to different problems, but I realize there are important differences.

[4] See Parfitt (1997: 213) for why this may matter.

[5] Here is one way it could have some moral significance. Suppose that whoever receives the pill today will, two weeks from now, relish in the pleasant memories of the evening, whereas whoever fails to receive the pill will suffer further distress from the painful memory of the evening. One might then argue that you *do* have more reason to give Manuel the pill, since doing so will bring about more pleasant memories and fewer painful memories than the alternative. To get around this problem, let us simply stipulate that Manuel and Jimena will have their memories of the evening wiped out the next morning.

[6] See Mills (1993) for an exception.

[7] Here I am counting by identity. Following Lewis (1976), the cohabitation theorist could argue that we should instead count by the weaker relation *identity-at-t*, where persons *x* and *y* are identical-at-t iff each has a stage at *t*, and all and only stages of *x* at *t* are stages of *y* at *t*. As Briggs and Nolan argue (2015: 403), however, this move does not provide a solution to the problem.

[8] Monton and Goldberg (2006) argue that every person overlaps with infinitely many thinkers, in which case **More Experiencers** is arguably false. This may solve the present problem, but it leads to a problem of infinitarian paralysis (Briggs and Nolan 2015: 397-402; Johnston 2016: 21-23). At any rate, here I assume that ordinary human persons do not overlap with infinitely many thinkers.

[9] One reflex response is: "So much the worse for the cohabitation account!" But the problem is not exclusive to the cohabitation account. Zimmerman (2002: 317) raises a version of the problem for Baker's (2002) constitution view of human persons; Johnston (2016: 23-4) for four-dimensionalism (cf. Olson 2010; Taylor 2013); and Simon (2017) for various solutions to the problem of the many (cf. Hudson 2001: ch. 1, §5; Unger 2004; Smith 2007; Zimmerman 2010, 2011). Here I focus on the cohabitation account, but much of the subsequent discussion should carry over to these other versions of the problem.

[10] For what it's worth, I endorse Sider's stage-theoretic account of fission (1996; 2001: §5.8). Thus, on my view, there is only one person to your right, and therefore **More Experiencers** is false. This view is very similar to the first response I consider, but I do not consider it a response to the problem because I do not consider the stage theory a version of the cohabitation account.

[11] Simon (2017: 454) makes essentially the same point.

[12] As Sutton points out, supervenience is usually defined in terms of properties rather than objects—see Sutton (2014: 624, fn. 5) for her reasons to use a non-standard notion of supervenience. Also, Sutton uses an individual variable ('*x*') to define supervenience, but she often uses a plural description to pick out an object's supervenience base—e.g., 'the calories' (2014: 623), 'the parts' (2014: 625), 'the cells' (2014: 625)—which is why I prefer to use a plural variable ('*x*s') instead.

[13] See Sutton (2014: 624-5).

[14] Thanks to Catherine Sutton for bringing this case to my attention.

[15] For media pieces, see Dominus (2011) and Roberts (2011). For academic discussion, see Hershenov (2013).

[16] Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this objection.

[17] Plus the supervenience account, which I am currently taking for granted.

[18] Thanks to an anonymous referee from the *Philosophical Quarterly* for raising this objection.

[19] The appeal to animalism might seem strange here since the claim that dicephalus cases involve a single organism is sometimes supposed to make trouble for animalism—see Campbell and McMahan (2016). However, there is trouble only if dicephalus cases involve two persons, something that animalists can deny.

[20] For reasons I give in §1 above, I officially take **Number of Beings*** to be the conjunction of the claim in the body of the article and **Aggregation**.

[21] Thanks to Hille Paakkunainen for discussion.

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