

Bodily Sensations II

1. Privacy & Subjectivity

It is often claimed that bodily sensations are *private* and *subjective*.

Privacy of sensation

- a.) Only *you* can know if you are in pain (others can only have reasonable belief)
- b.) You have a special authority over whether you are in pain or not
- c.) You cannot be mistaken about whether you are in pain
- d.) You are aware of your pains in a way that no one else can be aware of them

Are sensations private in any or all of these senses?

Subjectivity of sensation

(I) *Perspectival* conception of subjectivity:

To know what pain is, you have to know what it is like to feel a pain

(II) *Metaphysical* conception of subjectivity:

- a. Pain exists only if one feels pain
- b. To feel pain is sufficient for there to be pain

Contrast:

One can see a table, but also have an illusion of seeing a table (when one sees something which isn't a table but misperceives as one), or even have an hallucination of a table (when one is aware of nothing at all in the world around us).

Is pain subjective in sense (II)?

- a.) What of misclassified pains? (Paul Churchland, *Matter & Consciousness*, an example of hazing)
- b.) What of the soldier wounded in battle?
- c.) What of being woken up by a pain in your left shoulder?

What is the connection between privacy and subjectivity?

2. The Adverbial Conception of Bodily Sensation versus The Mental Object Conception

If a sensation of pain is just a painful sensation, then feeling pain may just be

(i) to have a certain sort of sensation, a painful one,

or

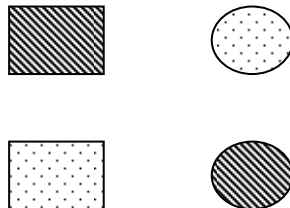
(ii) to feel in a certain way, painfully

What is felt exists just in case one has the feeling (subjectivity), because it is a way in which one feels. (Compare: when one dances a tango, is there a particular entity a tango, that one dances, or does one move in a particular manner, dancing tango-ly.)

Adverbial conceptions of sensation are applied more widely than just to bodily sensation, for example to visual experience. According to an adverbialist to have a visual hallucination of an expanse of red is to sense in a red manner, or redly.

Can an adverbialist give an adequate account of the variety of our sensations?

In the case of vision (G.E. Moore and Frank Jackson):



How does 'sensing rectangularly, ovally, slantly and spottily' distinguish between these two situations? A role for objects: gathering up properties together.

Question: how does this apply to the case of bodily sensation?

3. *The Location of Sensation*

Sensations are located in parts of one's body: one feels an itch in one's ankle; or a sore part on one's left knee; an area of tenderness on the back of your left arm; or a warm tickling sensation in the middle of one's back.

It is conceivable that one can have qualitatively exactly the same pain in one's left hand as in one's right. The difference between feeling it in one's left hand and in one's right hand is just that it is felt to be in the one place, one's left hand, rather than the other, one's right hand.

So the situation of feeling the pain in one or other of these places, or in both at once are different kinds of situation experientially. How does an adverbialist deal with this?

As with spatial location in the visual case, location of bodily sensation can play an *individuating* role.

Does this show that individual pains are objects? What is the role of bodily location here?

4. *Is a Pain Like a Marble in your Pocket?*

- (1) There is a marble in my jacket pocket
- (2) My jacket pocket is in Surrey Street
- (3) There is a marble in Surrey Street

- (4) There is a pain in Ellen's ankle
- (5) Ellen's ankle is in Surrey Street
- (6) There is a pain in Surrey Street

- (7) There is a hole in the button
- (8) The button is in the drawer
- (9) There is a hole in the drawer

What is it for a pain to move?

Suppose your knuckle is grazed and aches, and you move your hand is that a moving pain?

Compare: you have an itch just below your wrist, and the itchiness is then gradually in each place between your wrist and your elbow.

5. *Are pains necessarily located in the body?*

I find it all but impossible to comprehend a claim concerning sensation position that detaches it from actual or seeming limb, eg. "A pain to the right of my shoulder and not even in a seeming body part". Brian O'Shaughnessy, *The Will*, v. 1 p.162

Can you feel a pain in a location outside of your body?

(i) What of an amputee who has a phantom limb sensation? Where the amputee feels the pain to be located may simply be the block of concrete on which they rest their stump.

Can we make sense of the difference between the genuine location of pain and its apparent location?

(ii) Referred pain: heart damage can lead to pain in the shoulder for example. Is the pain really in the heart or in the shoulder?

Suppose someone complains of hurt in their fingernails. Perhaps this is brought about through agitation of the nerve endings at the cuticle. Can the fingernails really be the location of pain?

Two Questions:

- (A) Can one feel a pain to be located in a region which does not feel to be a part of one's body?
- (B) Can a pain genuinely be located in some region or item which is not properly part of one's body?

michael.martin@ucl.ac.uk

26/11/2004