

## Bodily Sensations IV

### 1. *Feeling Pains in Others Bodies; Feeling Others Pain*

*Wittgenstein's example:* Jones feels a pain and when asked to indicate where the pain is points to Brown's body. We can imagine that there is a reliable correlation between damage to parts of Brown's body and Jones's pain responses.

Brown – neurotransmitter; Jones – neuroreceptors; a form of wireless extension to the nervous system: there is a reliable correlation between, e.g., sticking pins in Brown and Jones's reaction. Jones answers, 'It is my other leg that hurts.' If Jones and Brown are always close then perhaps Jones can indicate where the leg is which hurts – but perhaps we don't need that, we can't always exactly indicate where the place is that hurts.

*Is this a case in which Jones genuinely feels pain in Brown's body?*

*Does Jones thereby feel Brown's pain? If not, why not?*

### 2. *Body and Self*

In self-awareness, each of us has a way of being aware of him or herself in which we are aware of no one else. I can know my thoughts, sensations, feelings in a way that you cannot know mine; though you know yours in a way that I do not know them.

In relation to our own bodies we also have a distinctive awareness which is shared with no other.

- (i) You see the world with your body as origin; you hear things with your head as the centre of the auditory world; no one else sees or hears the world in this way;
- (ii) You are aware of the disposition and movement of your limbs in a way that no one else is aware of them;
- (iii) You are aware of the orientation of your body relative to the gravitational field in a way that no one else is

(Note that there is still an interesting contrast between the privacy of your thoughts and the privacy of your body: it is conceivable that Siamese twins share body parts and each have awareness of the disposition, movement or orientation of those body parts. Does it make sense to suppose that two thinkers could share the same thought episode or feeling?)

How can sensations provide for this special awareness of one's own body?

### 2. *How Are Sensations Located within the Body?*

What is it for a sensation to feel to be within one's body – that the location seems to be a bodily one rather than anything else?

One answer is – it is in a recognisable limb or body part.

How does this relate to privacy? Why does this fix that there is one body which the sensation would be felt in?

Is there any extra quality of 'ownership' or 'mine' which is associated with the body parts sensations are located in?

(Note that if this were an additional qualitative component of sensation or awareness, then it should be conceivable to be aware of a bodily location but for it not to feel positively part of one's body, or even for it to feel to be distinct from one's body.)

### 3. *Can I Really Only Feel Pain in My Body?*

Filling out the details in Wittgenstein's example:

Three Options

- a. What Wittgenstein describes is not only possible, it reveals that it is contingent which body one feels a pain to be located in. Perhaps it needs a seeming body part but not a body part which belongs to one's own body;
- b. Wittgenstein's description is not coherent as it is glossed here. That is because LW assumes that Brown's leg is not part of Jones. However, if Jones can really feel a pain in Brown's leg, then Brown's leg is a part of Jones's body, even if it is still a part of Brown's body too;
- c. Wittgenstein's description is not coherent as described here. That is because LW assumes that there can be genuine awareness of pain in Brown's leg. But while Jones can feel pain, and mislocate it in a body part extending to where Brown is (phantom limb), he can't be aware of Brown's leg if it is not part of his body.

What would show either that Brown's leg had to be part of Jones's body if Jones comes to be aware of it; or show that if it wasn't part of Jones's body Jones couldn't be aware of it?

What are the primary objects of awareness?

*Option 1: Parts of the body are the primary objects of awareness*

Suppose that they are bodily parts such as fingers, toes, hands, legs or arms. Whether one is aware of a body part is determined by whether there is an appropriate link between how things are in that body part and one's experience of the body part. Cf. causal theories of perception. If the neurotransmitters have been set up correctly we will get such a connection between Brown's leg and Jones's experiences.

Either being aware of the limb is sufficient for it to be part of one, or not. We have (a) if the latter, otherwise (b). Why accept the sufficiency claim? Normally we think of the body as a physical thing whose limits and nature are determined independently of the scope of our awareness. However there are examples of seeming extension of awareness, say in the learned use of a prosthetic limb, where we might want to say that the limb becomes part of the body. Is awareness sufficient, though? What of the connection with action?

*Option 2: The body as unit is the primary object of awareness; its parts are objects of awareness only through being parts of it*

Two consequences: one is aware of a mere part of the body in as much as the part is a part of the body, i.e. a part of the object which is being monitored as a whole. Which object is being monitored may be determined by more than causal facts – e.g. what the function or point of bodily awareness is. This favours option (c).

### 3. Sensations as perceptions

Different varieties of sensing:

Object perception – *S* senses *o* (Ellen sees the truck)

Fact perception – *S* can sense that *p* (Brian can feel the hole in his tooth)

The appearance of objects of perception – how *o* appears to *S*, *S* senses *o* as *F* (Brian feels the cavity as large)

*What are the objects of bodily sensation?*

The explanation of the role of bodily location suggests either: option 1 or 2 above (body parts or the body as a whole). (But contrast Merleau-Ponty who denies that the body can be an object of awareness (*Phenomenology of Perception*, Part One))

*What information, i.e. what facts about the objects of perception can bodily sensation and other forms of body awareness reveal?* State of body, or of parts of the body – whether it is well or ill; what its general disposition is. (Note that all motor control, even simple movements exploit constant sensory feedback (see, e.g., Marc Jeannerod *The Cognitive Neuroscience of Action*), but an agent need not be conscious of how things appear in so acting.)

*How do body parts or the body appear to one through such sensation? What are the observable aspects in such awareness?* What of the spatial properties of the body, what of the qualitative character of sensation?

### 4. Sensation as Representation of Awareness-Independent Qualities: Pure Objectivism

Philosophers such as David Armstrong and George Pitcher claim that bodily sensation presents mind-independent aspects of the body to a perceiver. Sensations of hunger reveal absence of nutrients; pain reveals bodily disturbance or damage.

In the case of pain, there are familiar problems with this proposal, ones which motivate subjectivism:

a.) it is possible to have pain without there being bodily damage – our concern is not merely with the feeling of pain (a proponent of a pure objectivism can admit that experience of damage can occur without damage; and our interest in pain is partly an interest in feeling pain) but with how the body part is. When I have a pain in my jaw, my jaw *hurts*.

b.) it is possible to have pain as the result of damage but in a part of the body other than the damaged one – the case of referred pain. We *don't* treat the hurt as if its location is misperceived; (*How to respond?* - i.) suggest a different physical state for pain to be the perception of – micro-disturbance, or the activation of nociceptors; ii.) try to divide the attitudes towards the mental act of feeling pain and those towards the body or body part pained.)

c.) There are qualities of sensation which have no obvious objective correlate: e.g. that a pain is dull or sharp; that it is stabbing.

(*How to respond?* - Some philosophers claim that this vocabulary is used to indicate the typical cause of that experience; an objectivist could then claim that such a feeling is partly a perception of the presence of such a causal history. However, the claim is false. Stabbing pains are not those which are typically caused by being stabbed.)

d.) What it is like to feel pain: the aspect of some body part revealed through itching is something one has knowledge of through feeling an itch; its nature does not seem knowable independent of how one feels. What explanation can an objectivist give of this? (Subjectivity in the perspectival sense.)

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