

1. *Pain Without Awfulness*

Pain Asymbolia

In spite of apparently normal pain perception of superficial and deep pain, the patient showed a total lack of withdrawal responses. He tolerated prolonged pinprick or soft-tissue pinching in all four limbs, without adequate grimacing or defensive movement of his limbs. Neither did he show any response after sternal or supraorbital pressure, thus indicating a generalized defect. Such abnormal findings were constantly recorded throughout the daily evaluations of pain. On occasion, the patient willingly offered his hands for pain testing and laughed during stimulation. He had no concern about the defect and appeared highly cooperative during pain evaluation. (Berthier, Starkstein and Leiguarda, 'Pain Asymbolia: A Sensory-Limbic Disconnection Syndrome', *Annals of Neurology*, 24, 1988, p.42.)

Pain stimulation proceeds through broadly two dissociable pathways in the brain – a lateral and a medial route. The latter is connected to cingulate and insular cortices and the limbic system in general which is associated with affect and emotional response; the former connects to somatosensory areas of the cortex and to our capacity to discriminate location and qualitative aspect of sensation. Sufferers from pain asymbolia have intact lateral response but inhibited medial response.

The pain asymbolics experience is not the same as a normal person. Pain doesn't have the same impact on how they feel. There is no reason to think that ordinary pain experience can occur without the operation of the limbic system and so without the sense of awfulness.

2. *The Elusive Quality of Pain*

So could one have a pain which is just like the pains we all normally have but which had entirely the reverse psychological consequences?

The concern model would seem to deny that – it suggests that what it is for something to be a pain experience involves a complex psychological state of affairs.

Isn't there an identifiable quality of pain sensation independent of that complex state of affairs, a quality we can conceive coming apart from the normal impact of pain?

Does the concern model deny that there is something it is like to feel pain?

- (i) For each pain there is a noticeable sensuous occurrence which allows of a description (cf. the pain asymbolics) – for any given feeling of pain there will be qualities of this sort;
- (ii) But its being pain, and its feeling to hurt are not explained by that but by reference to the fact that the sensation is one arising from the pain system, and thereby one with a distinctive pattern of concern – surely neither of these are qualities of what an experience is like

3. 'What it is Like' & Qualities of Consciousness

We can have different conceptions of the qualitative component of experience, and 'what it is like to experience *F*'. We apply talk of 'what it is like to *F*' across a wider range of cases than is often discussed.

- (1) If you have never eaten it, you just don't know what it is like taste pineapple
- (2) You don't know what it is like to be the third son of the 25th Earl of Bladon
- (3) You just don't know what it is like to be abducted by aliens in your sleep, have your internal organs inspected and then returned to your bed before waking up

Is there something that it is like to think a particular proposition? E.g.

- (A) The average rainfall in August is less than ½ inch

One might sub-vocalize the English sentence; one might just be staring out at a wet March scene; or one might actively visualize the cricket on a scorching summer's day.

Not clear that there is one way that all episodes of thinking this have to be – that they have a conscious feature in common which marks them out as cases of thinking (A).

Is there something that all perceptions of red have in common?

There needn't be a special quality associated with any kind of conscious episode in order for there to be something that it is like for one to be so. But, nonetheless, is there some such quality in the case of pain?

4. Bodily Sensation & Bodily Awareness

a.) Two Senses of 'Internal':

- i.) *Sensations are internal because*: they are within the mind; in contrast perception relates one to the world independent of the mind;
- ii.) *Sensations are internal because*: they present what is within the body; sense perception relates one to the world beyond the limits of one's skin.

We have explored ways in which we may think of bodily sensations as internal in the second sense: when one has sensation one is aware of how things are within the limits of one's own skin.

b.) Some bodily sensation may be perceptual: it may inform one as to the state of one's body independent of that awareness. For example, one's awareness of the position or movement of limbs; one's awareness of warmth in body parts or skin.

c.) Pain sensation is not manifestly perceptual awareness. It may rather be a form of affective or motivational awareness.

But is there a special quality or feeling that we are aware of in the case of pain that is independent of the psychological role of pain?

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