

Bodily Sensations I

Some questions we will address:

1. What are bodily sensations?
2. What is it for a bodily sensation to have a location?
3. How is bodily sensation related to embodiment?
4. How do sensations relate to perception and to emotion?

We will compare *subjective* and *perceptual* accounts of sensation and question whether there are any alternative approaches.

1. Preliminaries

Some examples of bodily sensation: Itches, tickles, nausea, headaches, burning sensation, orgasm, warmth, butterflies in your stomach.

A Distinction – Intransitive versus Transitive Sensation
Contrast sensations of pain with sensations of warmth.

How do sensations relate to perception?

Often we speak of sensations of taste; sensations of smell and sensations of touch. But we don't always talk about sensations of vision (but what about sensations of light).

Some philosophers think that all perception involves sensation. Is the sensation in that case *bodily* sensation? What makes a mental event *sensation*? What makes it *bodily*?

There are two senses of sensations being internal in contrast to the externality of perception:

- i.) they are within the mind; perception relates one to the world independent of the mind;
- ii.) they are within the body; sense perception relates one to the world beyond the limits of one's skin.

(cf. Thomas Reid on touch *An Inquiry into the Human Mind*, Indianapolis: Hackett Ch. 5.)

Some examples of bodily awareness:

Proprioception – an awareness each has of the position of his or her own limbs and body parts (the term 'proprioception' contrasts with the term 'exteroception' for perception of the world outside of one's skin; but this is a term philosophers rarely use).

Kinaesthesia – an awareness each has of the movement of his or her limbs and body parts
Vestibular sense – the sense of balance and orientation each of has; the sense of which way is 'up'

In each case, one is aware of one's own body in a way that one is aware of no one else's body and no one else can be aware of one's body in this way. (But cf. the possibility of Siamese twins who partly share a body.)

2. Privacy & Subjectivity

It is often claim 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?

3. *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

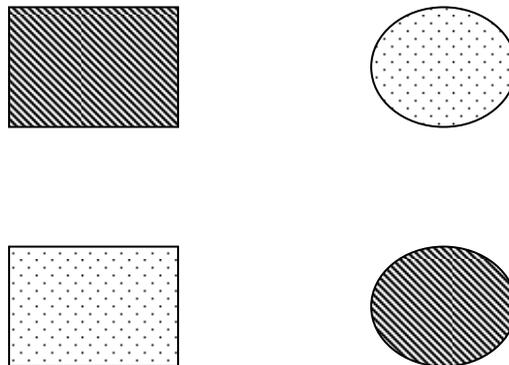
What is felt exists just in case one has the feeling (subjectivity), because it is a way in which one feels.

(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, slantily 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?

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19/11/2004