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The thin phenomenology of bodily self-awareness and its thick content

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Abstract: To what kind of knowledge does bodily self-awareness amount? Is bodily self-awareness representational, perceptual or a form of pre-reflective self-consciousness? Can we attribute intentional value to it? I will aim here at offering an answer to these questions by developing the thesis that, despite of its vagueness and the difficulties that occur when trying to define it, body experience refers to a genuine ontological layer, irreducible to that of the objective body, which has to be recognized in what, following the phenomenological tradition, can be called the subjective body, that is the lived body as experienced by its bearer. Body ownership has not to be understood as a repertoire of miscellaneous facts about the phenomenology of mineness but is a structured way of perceiving the body as the one's own from a first-person perspective and in a way of access immune to error through misidentification. As for the question about what makes up a positive phenomenology of bodily self-awareness, I shall try to give an account of it based on the conceptual tools provided by Husserl's analysis of lived body and Brentano's theory of double intentional reference.

Keywords: Bodily first-person perspective; Bodily self-awareness; Body-as-object; Body-as-subject; Body representation; Immunity to error through misidentification; Inner and outer direction of perception.

1. Introduction

To what kind of knowledge does bodily self-awareness amount? Is bodily self-awareness essentially representational in nature? Does it rather consist in a kind of perceptual act? Can we attribute intentional value to it? Or should we rather conceive it as a pre-reflective form of self-consciousness which does not refer to any identifiable object? I try here to offer a tentative answer to these questions by developing the thesis that, despite of its apparent vagueness and the difficulties that occur when trying to define it, bodily self-awareness refers to a genuine ontological layer, irreducible to the one of the objective body, which has to be recognized in what, following the phenomenological tradition, can be called the subjective body, that is the lived body as experienced by its bearer. This layer is the intentional term of a particular kind of inner perception, quite different from the perceptual and representational processes that constitute it as a physical object among the others, although

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there is nothing that distinguishes it from the material body from a third-person point of view and both layers are instantiated by the same physical object. Hence, bodily self-awareness must not be understood as a generic label for a repertoire of miscellaneous facts about the phenomenology of mineness, but as a structured way of experiencing the body as the one's own.

2. Deflationary, inflationary and representational accounts of bodily self-awareness

Because of the elusive character of bodily self-awareness, many philosophers tend to deny that there is really something like a positive sense of belongingness related to our body. The "same old body" is "always there" (James, 1890) and discretely accompanies the fluent course of my feelings, thoughts and actions without interfering with them. Yet, despite of its ubiquity body escapes most of the time our attention, since its owner is constantly engaged in worldly action projects that absorb her cognitive resources. By focusing on the task I'm carrying out I only pay attention to its salient aspects, while the body slides away in a marginal awareness (Gurwitsch, 1985). Only in limit situations such as fatigue, sickness, and sexual arousal the body reveals itself in its material thickness and demands overbearingly for care and attention.

In the wake of classical phenomenology S. Gallagher has more recently developed an explanation of bodily ownership that his critics define "inflationary". Experiencing the body as mine involves a non-observational and pre-reflective awareness of it that cuts across the distinction between body schema and body image (Head and Holmes, 1911-1912). Body schema is a set of sensory-motor functions acting at a sub-personal level without direct conscious access to them, whereas body image amounts to an ensemble of perceptions, beliefs, aesthetical and value attributions thematically regarding both the one's own body and that of others. Surely experiencing the body as 'mine' requires the representational resources provided by the body image, that has its source first of all in on-line perception of my body. However, with that we have a mere objectified body that happens to be mine and covers only the content side of a self-reflective intentional relation. What really qualifies the subjective body as mine is rather a non-intentional and pre-reflective attitude toward my actions, sustained by tactile, proprioceptive and kinaesthetic information at the level of body schema, which provides the most fundamental experience of the body as one's own: in other words, an unthematic sense of mineness is possible also in absence of any kind of body image (Gallagher, 2005).

Opposite to Gallagher's view is the deflationary account proposed by M.G.F. Martin and J.L. Bermúdez. According to the first one, there is

nothing special in bodily sensations that attests a phenomenological hallmark of mineness fluttering on them. All that distinguishes these sensations from the ones intentionally directed to external objects is the bare fact that they fall within the boundaries of our physical body. In other words, bodily self-awareness is a kind of sense perception which differs from that directed to external objects by having as its unique object our body (Martin, 1995).

Bermúdez starts from Anscombe's thesis that bodily sensations do not guarantee any epistemic access in proper sense to their object, so that it could be described by means of independent terms (Anscombe, 1962). The awareness that my legs are crossed is not equivalent to the knowledge about this fact, since such knowledge has to be expressed through an independent description in which the terms "my legs are crossed" do not occur. A good candidate to this role could be a statement like: "I'm feeling the pressure of the back of my right leg on the top of the left one", but this does not capture the property "my legs are crossed" and even less the quality of mineness that it should imply. So bodily self-awareness would amount to nothing but a non-observational knowledge about the disposition of our body in space without any need of perceptual content.

Bermúdez argues that bodily self-awareness does not arise at the level of an intuitive and immediate acquaintance with our own body but descends directly from the peculiar way we represent its spatial location, as opposed to other spatial objects, which founds our judgments of ownership. There is nothing like a qualitative feeling of ownership as a primitive phenomenological feature that should not require further explanation: such an alleged experience is a mere "philosophical fiction". Rather, there are judgments of ownerships occurring at a cognitive level, based on the experience of our body as represented within its anatomical boundaries and in its whole-parts structure. Therefore, I am aware that bodily sensations refer to my own body only thanks to an intellectual act of knowledge underpinned by certain facts about bodily processes that are in itself devoid of any personal feature (Bermúdez, 2011, 2015, 2017, 2018, p. 208 ss.).

F. de Vignemont has recently brought convincing arguments against the deflationary account by highlighting its incapacity of accounting in its own right bodily self-awareness. As for Martin, she argues that bodily sensations can occur without any associate feeling of ownership, like in asomatognosia. Vice versa, my experience of ownership can extend itself – deceptively or not – to objects that do not belong to my body, like tools, rubber hands or even mannequins (Vignemont, 2013, 2018, pp. 32-41). For his part Bermúdez fails to demonstrate that there is no experience of ownership at all. The only conclusion that can be drawn from his argument is that this experience has no epistemic value. However, as Vignemont rightly points

out, ontological questions, such as those about the existence of experiences of ownership, are not to be decided on the basis of epistemological claims. Indeed, there is a genuine intuitive awareness of our body as our own, endowed with representational properties instead of merely consisting of scattered raw sensations. The experience of bodily ownership is not to be confounded with a judgment of ownership, since it constitutes an autonomous non-conceptual component of bodily self-awareness that can be accounted for in its own nature.

Vignemont grounds her claim on the dissociation between bodily sensations and sense of ownership occurring in pathological conditions like somatoparaphrenia or in experiment-induced illusion like the rubber hand illusion (Botvinick and Cohen, 1998). She assumes therefore the existence of a “body map”, that is an off-line representation of the body which comprises its spatial and structural features. According to this explanatory model the experience of ownership arises from a spatial representation of body structure and location construed based on multimodal information (Vignemont, 2007, 2014, 2018). Brain processes sensory cues (visual, tactile and proprioceptive) in real time against the background of these previously stored off-line representations that retroact by moulding them (see too Tsakiris, 2010). In the origin of such a construct sight plays a crucial role, since touch and bodily senses give rise only to a very rough and unreliable outline of body, without rendering it in its actual shape and dimensions. Body map is thereby a high integrated, gestalt-like multimodal representation of body, which is constituted through the contribution of a manifold of sensory sources and acts as frame of reference for the information coming from the bodily senses. Vignemont insists on the fact that body map is something quite different from an on-line perceptual presentation of the body¹. It amounts rather to a default stored representation which is malleable enough to comprise tools, artifacts, prostheses, and fake limbs and does not wholly coincide with the actual biological body (Vignemont, 2018).

The representationalist approach professed by Vignemont is not exempt from inconveniences either. If we unilaterally highlight the role of representation as a pre-existing construction which precedes every concrete experience of own’s body at the expense of mode of presentation and first-person component, we raise counterintuitive consequences, because we would need to postulate an anonymous level of bodily representations not yet qualified as the one’s own. Moreover, the experience of being a bodily subject is not

¹ On the difference between on-line and off-line bodily representations see too Carruthers, 2008.

primarily and constitutively sustained by representations, either stored in brain or located at a computational level. On this point I agree with Gallagher's criticism against Goldman's and de Vignemont's (2009) theory of body-formatted representations. According to this account, body plays at most a marginal role as passive object in the processing of the representations which have it as content. It is the brain to do the main job in constructing body representations, which are non-conceptual and non-propositional, since they only portray body and body parts in their anatomical features, actions and action goals, proprioceptive, interoceptive and affective processes and the like from an internal perspective. This account does not render justice to the centrality of the body as fundamental condition for perceiving and acting, as far as it is downgraded to a mere external device, to which brain processes apply (Gallagher, 2017, pp. 28–34).

3. Bodily awareness as direct presentation of the body-as-subject: perception and first-person perspective

As regards the question if the experience of body ownership has intrinsically representational properties, a negative answer is mandatory, if under representation we mean a mental construct whose objective content is something separated from the subject that is entertaining it here and now. The feeling of mineness about the body I am living through is no extra-quality added to or supervening the experiences we have of it. At the phenomenological level I cannot distinguish both aspects since every ongoing experience of my body is pervaded from the very beginning by the awareness of ownership. Thus, the distinction can be only a conceptual one. Surely there is somewhat that makes bodily representations special, as far as what they reveal is the same embodied subject that is entertaining them. Yet, it is debatable whether these states deserve the name "representation" and which of them. What is more, the body can be the content of a huge number of kinds of representation, as shown by the manifold classificatory attempts that have followed one another since Head and Holmes' distinction between body image and body schema².

Does make sense at all to speak of bodily self-awareness, if we take into account the represented spatial content alone? In my opinion the perceptual mode of presentation and the first-person perspective which is grounded on it play a major constitutive role in generating this experience. As regard the first point, I argue that body is not only represented off-line but rather directly

² For the sake of simplicity, I refer in this paper only to this conceptual couple taking it for granted and without intervening in the complex debate on the issue.

perceived, although in a very peculiar way. Following Brentano and some suggestions coming from the writings of Husserl, I distinguish between an inner and an external perception, the first one directed to oneself as a bodily subject, the second one to any other object than the own body as experienced in inner perception. I refer here to the main phenomenological distinction, introduced by Husserl and further developed by Merleau-Ponty, between the lived body, or body-as-subject, and the physical body, or body-as-object (Husserl, 1991; Merleau-Ponty, 1945).

These conceptual tools seem more apt to answer the question about what makes up a positive phenomenology of bodily experience than the notion of representation. If Merleau-Ponty describes the fact of body experience in our everyday intercourse, Husserl adopts the standpoint of a regressive analysis that aims at reconstructing the constitution of body starting from a fully developed and explicit awareness of it. Each of these approaches has its pros and cons: though Merleau-Ponty remains more faithful to the concrete ways in which body comes to manifestation and highlights the role of bodily action, he shows some difficulty in recognizing its distinct constituents that in ordinary experience appear mostly muddled up. Husserl's detailed genetic reconstruction succeeds in meeting this requirement, but it neglects the trivial fact that our normal experience of body involves a marginal awareness and cannot account for its transparent character. At any rate, I prefer here to resort to Husserl's approach, since it seems more suitable for the aim of clarifying the structural-formal features of bodily self-awareness and their relations.

Husserl begins his task of tracing back the genesis of bodily self-awareness by introducing the capital distinction between the body-as-subject (*Leib*) and the body-as-object (*Körper*). These aspects are inextricably intertwined in our common experience. Our attention switches continuously from one to another, depending on which one is more relevant in the occurring situation. Roughly speaking, body-as-subject and body-as-object correspond to body schema and body image, since objectifying the body requires a self-reflective stance that only a detached point of view makes possible. Yet, contrary to what Gallagher says to this regard, the property of self-reflection is not an exclusive feature of body image, but suppose the dual structure *Leib/Körper*, given that both aspects are always simultaneously given. Conversely, *Leib* covers the recessive aspect of body experience and lies principally on the side of action awareness and bodily feelings, first of all kinaesthetic and proprioceptive sensations.

In order to sharpen our observational focus on this aspect, we need to isolate the peculiar experience that more aptly allows for its manifestation. Both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty have identified it in the phenomenon of

touchant/touché or reflexive touch. The haptic self-exploration of my body is what marks the transition from a recessive awareness of it to its thematic self-presentation: when I palpate my left hand with the right one I can notice that a multitude of localized tactile sensations – which belong to inward touch – spread out on its surface. Together with the associated kinaestheses, these sensations serve as a basis for the proprioceptive and interoceptive ones, as well as for outward perceptions. By expanding throughout the body these sensations make possible its apprehension as a whole and ground an inner bodily space that, unlike the external one, lacks perspective orientation and is structured thanks to absolute coordinates – up and down, right and left, before and behind. In considering the specific way I'm experiencing this space it makes no sense from my point of view asking myself whether my trunk or my leg is nearer or farther to me. In both kinds of space *Leib* and *Körper* play different functions: to the former belong proprioception, inward touch, kinaestheses and to the latter external touch and sight. In peripersonal space sight and visual proprioception are constitutive, but not in the bodily one. The dominance of sight is here not relevant: visual capture and proprioceptive drifts occurring during partial or full body illusions enable the extension of the sense of ownership to the fake limb or body because this lies in peripersonal space.

I shall not discuss here the complex issue of the relation between sight and touch in constituting bodily self-awareness. I just want to mention the fact that it can be shown how far the inner bodily space differs from the external one. Unlike any other material thing, our felt body is experienced as a whole, according to the model of figure/ground relation. Conversely, I perceive a material thing only through a sequence of partial aspects which I can experience in complete evidence only one at a time, while the others remain hidden. In variable degrees some body parts fall under the ray of my current attention, while others move back toward a marginal awareness, but this does not prevent me from having a unitary experience of my body already at the level of the somatic sensations. Only in rare occasions, like when at awakening I feel that my left leg is numb after lying on it all night long with my whole weight, I experience my body and its parts as something fragmented and alien.

After these considerations about the distinction between body-as-subject and body-as-object, it should be clear that bodily self-awareness lies primarily on the side of the first mode of experiencing our body and can be attributed only in a derivative way to the second one. Body-as-subject and body-as-object, although instantiated by the same physical thing, amount to two distinct and reciprocally irreducible ontological layers, as far as they are both accessed and constituted by different perceptual channels – the

proprioceptive ones for the body-as-subject and the outward senses for the body-as-object, that is by an inner and an outer way of perception which correspond to body schema and body image. One could wonder if postulating the existence of such layers on the basis of the phenomenological difference between two distinct ways of experiencing them does not entail a reduction of ontology to epistemology or, more radically, whether bodily self-awareness deserves to be understood as a kind of genuine knowledge with a positive intentional content.

4. Bodily self-awareness as a genuine kind of perception and its intentional character

Many philosophers deny without hesitation that bodily self-awareness – and self-awareness in general – are perceptual in character and endowed with a clearly recognizable intentional content. The perception of an external object does satisfy the requirements needed by a positive knowledge, since it is describable in a separable way from the experience I am entertaining. In other words, I can define a given perceptual content like “the book lies on the table” independently from the sensory materials which constitute it and my qualitative experiences. Conversely, I go in serious troubles if I apply this to bodily self-awareness, simply because the body ‘as my body’ is not an external thing other than myself as a bodily subject. Moreover, I would make a gross categorical mistake if I search for the ineffable mark of mine-ness by resorting to informational cues like proprioceptive, kinaesthetic and tactile sensations taken as detached items referring to a certain object that at a later stage happens to be my body.

Every bodily sensation is recognized as mine without any doubt and right from the start, according to the principle of immunity to errors through misidentification (Shoemaker, 1968). In following Gallagher’s view that bodily self-awareness is pre-reflective and not intentional in character, D. Legrand (2006) applies Shoemaker’s argument to it. As self-awareness in general sense, bodily self-awareness too is immune to error through misidentification, since it does not refer perceptually to an object, but consists in an immediate acquaintance with the experience of being a bodily self, or a kind of introspective access which does not require that the own body is identified as such. There is a substantive difference between the body I am and the body which happens to be mine (cf. Perry, 1998), that is, between body-as-subject and body-as-object. It does not make sense to cast doubt upon the identity of the bearer of a bodily state, since I am aware here and now that it is my tooth and not somebody’s else tooth the one that hurts. There is nothing like a two-stage process, as if I began to entertain an anonymous pain that in a second step I would recognize as belonging to myself.

Immune self-consciousness, including the bodily one, is pre-reflective in character and both enjoy a kind of logical or absolute immunity and not only circumstantial, i.e. due to the fact that the body as one's own is accessible by means of proprioception: this would open a rift between body and self-consciousness, since the latter would be only contingently connected with a body that happens to be one's own. Moreover, body-as-subject is not the target of perception, but its source, and as such can neither be perceived nor be experienced intentionally, contrary to the external things, otherwise it would be reified like them and transformed in an intentional object. "Non-intentional consciousness thus corresponds here to pre-reflective bodily consciousness" (Legrand, 2006, p. 99). The body-as-subject is therefore not the object of intentionality, but, as the "vehicle for being-in-the-world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 94), constitutes its point of origin. Legrand proposes the somewhat paradoxical notion of a subjective body that is at the same time intentional and not intentional, as far as it can both intentionally experience itself and any other material thing as object and not intentionally but pre-reflectively itself as subject.

Both Gallagher and Legrand draw on the notion of pre-reflective self-consciousness defended by D. Zahavi in his personal interpretation of classical phenomenology, especially of Husserl and Sartre. Pre-reflective self-consciousness, including the bodily one, is a form of immediate and direct acquaintance with oneself devoid of any intentional character and therefore not comparable at all to an inner perception. He argues against the superimposition on pre-reflective self-consciousness of a "perceptual model of self-knowledge" (Shoemaker, 1996, p. 226) which postulates a causal relation between mental states and self-awareness. In my view, Zahavi (2005, pp. 22-23) supports a too narrow view of perception by claiming that it refers only to object unities constituted in immanent consciousness and that intentionality applies only for them. Moreover, equating perception to a form of knowledge implies a misunderstanding both of its very function and content: every form of perception amounts to a direct acquaintance rather than to a conceptually mediated knowledge, insofar as it presents us directly in the flesh with some ontological item whatsoever, before any explicit distinction between subject and object, consciousness and conscious content, has taken place.

Perception is not limited to things in surrounding environment but can be directed too to myself and my inner states, thus retaining its intentional reach. Perception of own inner states and of thing-like objects are both specifications of the same type of cognitive state. Following Brentano (1874), it can be distinguished an external from an internal form of perception: the former expresses a direct way of intentional reference (*modo recto*) of a mental state

to external objects and the latter an indirect one (*modo obliquo*) toward itself (and its bearer). The difference between both kinds of perception enables to the primordial distinction between what is proper and what is alien. In the case of bodily self-awareness, I have a sense of ownership for my body proprioceptively felt from within, and only derivatively for my body seen as every other material object, because the latter happens to be strictly conjoined with the first one, whereas other bodies fall under external perception.

Elsewhere, Zahavi raises an objection against Brentano's model of two-fold intentional directedness, by pointing at the fact that a conscious experience must have itself as object in its entirety and not only the part intentionally directed to another object, which involves the threat of circularity. However, this would be the case only if, as Zahavi himself acknowledges, one thinks this relation by insisting sharply on the opposition between subject and object and by reifying the first term. One can admit two distinct ways of intentionality, as far as the former constitutes the object in its presence for an embodied subject and the latter the whole embodied subject itself, according to its powers of conscious experiencing and acting. The first kind of intentional direction moves forward from the embodied subject to the world, the second one, which can be defined as a "reverse" intentionality, comes from within and consists in a reflective process of bodily self-affection. The use of the term "reflective" here does not refer to a deliberate act of thematic reflection, but to a structural feature, i.e. the way of intentional directedness. I am conscious not only of my experiences as intentionally referring to objects, but also of the bodily processes – sensations of inward touch, kinaestheses, proprioception, affective qualities etc. – which constantly accompany them. As an embodied being I do not simply coincide immediately with them, because it is not entirely in my power to elicit or inhibit them. True, the body I am perceiving from within does not stand in front of me like an object, since I am "existing" it or, put in Merleau-Ponty's words, it is "a permanence on my part" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 104), but nevertheless affects me as something alien in a peculiar mode of givenness. As Zahavi himself admits (Zahavi 1999, p. 30 ss.), self-awareness, including the bodily one, is surely immediate and pre-reflective in character, but by no means not relational, hence – contrary to what he claims – it must imply a form of intentionality, although of a not objectifying kind.

5. Bodily self-consciousness and bodily constitution as the very foundation of first-person perspective

It is the inner direction of bodily perception, together with the fact that I alone can access to my lived body, what grounds its first-personal character. Zahavi (1999, 2005) and Baker (2013) have highlighted with well-grounded

arguments the role of our bodily constitution in the origin and development of first-person perspective. First-person perspective enables to perceive the world from the standpoint in which every subject is located thanks to her body. Having a first-person perspective supposes therefore being embodied and embedded in an environment. First-person perspective is a non-conceptual feature that descends directly from our embodied constitution and only derivatively a property of explicit judgments expressed in sentences. The same holds for the property of immunity to error through identification which essentially belongs to it. First-person perspective is co-given with the self-manifestation of the body, which not only appears in a first-person perspective, but acts as its condition of possibility by virtue of its sensory-motor constitution (Zahavi, 1999). Self-attribution of body and body parts, which supposes at least a minimal form of bodily self-awareness, does not require the mastery of the pronoun “I”, and generally spoken the full possession of linguistic capacities, but is rooted in a more basic experiential layer. A further proof of the central function played by first-person perspective already at this level comes from recent experimental results that shows how multi-sensory integration processes require right from the start an ego-centric frame of reference in order to produce the experience of body ownership (e.g. Petkova et al., 2011).

L.R. Baker distinguishes between a rudimentary and a robust first-person perspective, which correspond to consciousness and self-consciousness. Rudimentary first-person perspective does not involve any explicit reference to oneself as oneself and requires neither full-fledged self-concepts nor language, since it is wholly defined by the essential feature of having a point of view from the particular spatiotemporal location the organism occupies and from which she perceives the world and interact with it. What is needed here are only sentience and intentionality, as well as the capacity for goal-directed behaviour to which both enable. Instead, robust first-person perspective supposes the capacity of using defined concepts and a fully developed language to refer to oneself as oneself from one’s point of view. A typical example of this ability is the usage of the pronoun “I” which occurs within a complex first-person sentence introduced by a “that”-clause and governed by a psychological main verb. Such sentences express I-thoughts which consist in self-attributions of a first-person reference. “I” denotes a peculiar logical category that cannot be replaced either by nouns or by descriptions in which it does not occur. First-person statements have referential, ontological and epistemological priority over all names and descriptions, so that every form of object awareness presupposes self-awareness as its ground (Castañeda, 1966).

I do not think that rudimentary first-person perspective lacks ‘self’-consciousness at all, no matter how rough and unrefined it can be, since in non-human organisms and in infants too consciousness always involves a form of self-reference, although not reflective in character and not developed through linguistic resources. In order for an infant or an organism to be self-conscious, what is required are basic representations gained through repeated acts of self-recognition that are of sheer perceptual nature and imply an indirect intentional reference to the own body, beside of the direct one to the external objects. At this level, self-awareness does not require high-level conceptual and linguistic capacities, like the mastery of the first-person pronoun “I”, and this holds even more for bodily self-awareness, which constitutes on the contrary the necessary condition for its proper use.

The factual and contingent condition of possibility for the use of “I” by a personal subject is its rootedness in a moving and perceiving body. As an indexical zero-point of orientation, the body anchors us in our surrounding environment as far as it allows us to refer to every perceptual object and conversely to locate ourselves against them. At the level of language, the presence of indexicals expresses before a rule of use (Kaplan, 1989) the bare fact that I, as an embodied subject, have a first-personal perspective on myself and on the world. In every act of perception directed toward the particular object, which is my body, a reference to myself and to the zero-point where this is located here and now is essentially implied. In this sense, the use of demonstratives like “this” and “that” acquires its proper function only in relation to pure and absolute (i.e. “essential”) indexicals like “I”, “here” and “now” (Perry, 1979). To be acquainted with the rules that govern the use of indexicals presupposes to exist as a bodily subject which is confronted at the same time with herself and the worldly context where she perceives and acts. Just because first-person perspective is built into a moving and perceiving body, it is no ineffable feature which is fused with the contents of experience, but rather, in spite of its pre-reflective character, a structural datum to which one can turn one’s own thematic attention.

By way of summary, I began this contribution by displaying the most widespread accounts of bodily self-awareness – deflationary, inflationary and representational – with the aim to highlight their shortcomings in describing in its genuine first-personal and intentional character. The deflationary account simply rejects the view that there is a real form of bodily self-awareness endowed with the mark of “mineness” and reduces it to a kind of intellectual judgement about the fact that some sensations refer uniquely to the body rather than to other material objects. The representational account admits that there are some non-conceptual and not-propositional representations specifically concerning the body. However, it entails a drawback to the

extent that the role of bodily representations is overemphasized at the expense of bodily perception and such representations are devoid of every reference to a personal bearer. I expressed some preference for the “inflationary” account as far as it does justice to the very first-personal nature of bodily self-awareness by pointing to its fundamental role as a non-thematic and pre-reflective form of self-consciousness. Nevertheless, this account eventually renders unintelligible the content of bodily awareness, by denying its intentional and perceptual character. By combining both Husserl’s distinction between body-as-subject and as well as Brentano’s one between direct and indirect intentional reference, I tried instead to show that bodily self-awareness is a kind of perception endowed with an intentional content, although atypical because of its direction “from within”, and that this perception refers to an embodied subjective bearer who is already endowed with a first-person perspective and is able to refer to herself as to an “I” thanks her basic sensorimotor capacities.

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