

Bodily awareness without the body

Abstract

This chapter explores the consequences for bodily awareness of a plausible and influential metaphysics of the self. The first part of the chapter presents the animalist view that we are each identical to animals, and clarifies its relation to superficially similar metaphysical claims made in terms of 'one's body'. Reasons are given for animalists to adopt the anti-reificationist position that 'one's body' is no more an independent entity than 'one's mind'. Contrary reasons for reifying the body are found wanting. The second part of the chapter proposes that bodily awareness should accordingly be conceived, not as awareness of an entity called one's body, but as an animal's awareness of its own non-psychological condition. It is argued that this animal self-monitoring conception supports the view that bodily awareness is a form of self-awareness, and, despite certain differences from paradigm cases with respect to the independence of its objects, also a form of perceptual awareness.

Gareth Evans once claimed that reflection on bodily awareness yields 'the most powerful antidote to a Cartesian conception of the self'ⁱ. In practice, reflection on the epistemology and psychology of bodily awareness has failed to make much impact on metaphysical debates about the nature and persistence of the self. This is not surprising. Parties to these debates are likely to be able to account for the peculiarities of bodily awareness in terms consistent with their own theories. For example, the key element of Evans' anti-Cartesian case was the observation that a judgement such as 'my legs are crossed', when based on

bodily awareness, is 'immune to error through misidentification relative to "I"': roughly, that such a judgement cannot go wrong solely because it is someone else's legs one is aware of. The Cartesian dualist can plausibly account for this phenomenon in their own way: I am an immaterial soul in intimate causal union with one material object, 'my body', and it is an aspect of this union that I have bodily awareness of only this object and its parts. So my judgement 'my legs are crossed', when based on bodily awareness, cannot go wrong solely because it is someone else's legs I am aware of. I can only be aware of my own legs in that way.

This chapter makes the experiment of reversing the order of enquiry. Rather than attempting to draw metaphysical conclusions from bodily awareness, we will assume a plausible metaphysics of the self, and then ask what if anything follows about bodily awareness. The chapter has two parts. The first part, focused on metaphysics, introduces the influential 'animalist' thesis according to which we human persons are each identical to organisms of a certain sort. It is not immediately clear how this thesis relates to metaphysical claims traditionally put in terms of the 'body'. Is animalism committed to a 'bodily criterion' of personal identity? Does animalism claim that we are identical to 'our bodies'? These questions are answered in the negative. The recommendation is that animalists (and not only animalists) ought to be as wary of the sortal body as they are of the sortal mind. A body is not a sort of entity controlled by a mind, controlled by a soul, or—as the 'no self' trend in cognitive science might have it—controlled by nothing at all. For there is no such entity as one's body. 'Body' talk is a way of talking about the non-psychological aspects of humans and other animals.

This animalist metaphysical outlook has consequences for theorizing about bodily awareness. Some of this might seem a matter of mere verbal hygiene. For example, one encyclopedia of neuroscience describes proprioception as ‘the sense that lets us perceive the location, movement, and action of parts of the body’ⁱⁱ. The animalist will find the Encyclopedia Britannica’s form of words more metaphysically perspicuous: ‘Proprioception, the perception by an animal of stimuli relating to its own position, posture, equilibrium, or internal condition.’ⁱⁱⁱ It is explained in the second part of the chapter why the consequences are more than verbal. The animalist conception of bodily-awareness as a form of animal self-monitoring, not the monitoring of something called one’s body, gives new perspectives on two related questions: whether bodily awareness is self-awareness; and whether bodily awareness is perceptual awareness. The animalist is well placed to conclude that bodily awareness is both.

1. Animalism without the body

Animalism is the thesis that we are animals. Our nature and persistence conditions are those of certain animals, in particular organisms of the species homo sapiens. The thesis excludes every view on which our nature and persistence conditions are those of things other than organisms of the species homo sapiens, for example the views that we are immaterial souls, Lockean non-animal persons, Humean bundles of perceptions, or brains. There might be a derived sense in which we would count as ‘animals’ on these other views, in virtue of being embodied, constituted, or housed, by organisms of the species homo sapiens. The animalist view is that the relation these organisms bear to us is numerical

identity. We are not things in the world to be counted in addition to members of homo sapiens.^{iv}

Why believe animalism? This chapter focuses on what follows on the assumption of animalism, but it may be helpful to say something about its basic motivation. A common way of describing the basic motivation for animalism is in terms of the apparent coincidence between ourselves and certain animals in all ordinary extrinsic and intrinsic respects.^v In ordinary life, wherever you go, in whatever condition, there goes an individual human animal, in the very same condition. The obvious explanation for this coincidence is that these things are identical. But this way of describing the motivation for animalism rather underplays the case. It suggests that the motivation is like the support for an empirical identification, like the discovery that the Evening Star is the Morning Star, where the evidence builds up that an object thought about in one way, 'as myself', is in fact one and the same as an object thought about in another way—as 'this animal' or as 'my animal'. But as the evident artificiality of the latter 'modes of presentation' ought to make clear, this is not the situation. There is a given concrete thing, thought of as oneself, and the evidence builds that it is also an animal. We do not ordinarily form a conception of an even notionally distinct particular animal, such that the question could then arise whether to merge this conception with our conception of ourselves. We don't make the distinction between self and animal in the first place. The onus is on the opponent of animalism to give some reason to make the distinction.^{vi}

How does animalism relate to philosophical claims expressed in terms of the 'body'? A familiar twentieth-century debate pitted Lockean memory-based, or more broadly

psychological, criteria of personal identity against 'bodily' criteria, the latter analysing personal identity over time in terms of wholly non-psychological continuities.^{vii} Does animalism entail a bodily criterion of personal identity? If organisms of the species homo sapiens persist solely in virtue of non-psychological continuities, then animalism is committed to something like a bodily criterion of personal identity (a bodily criterion of our identity).^{viii} However the claim that organisms persist solely in virtue of non-psychological continuities is not entailed by animalism and there is no obvious reason why animalists should insist upon it. Animals (as opposed to plants) are distinctively characterized by more or less sophisticated sensorimotor capacities and cognition. So why shouldn't psychological continuities count among a cluster of animal-characteristic continuities in virtue of which an animal persists? The contention that an animal was once a non-psychological fetus, and could one day persist in a severely brain-damaged state, only shows that in extremis the non-psychological elements of the cluster can be sufficient for our persistence. In more ordinary cases, the psychological elements of the cluster of continuities may make a constitutive contribution. In cases of radical non-psychological change, amputation, perhaps even brain-transplantation, that contribution may be predominant. Animalism is not committed to a bodily criterion of personal identity.^{ix}

Is animalism committed to the claim that we are identical to bodies? Is animalism committed to the claim that we are identical to our bodies?

These are not obviously the same question. There is a reading of the first question on which 'body' means material body. A material body is a cohesive thing with mass, subject to associated laws of physics. In this sense one talks about the trajectory of a moving body.

Now animals, whatever else they may be, are cohesive things with mass. So animals are material bodies. So animalism is committed to the view that we are identical to material bodies.

Does it follow from this that animalism is committed to the claim that we are identical to our bodies? This does not seem to follow from any general truth about material bodies. It is not true that every material body is identical to its body. Most material bodies do not have bodies. A pebble does not have a body. Is this because a pebble does not have a physiology and anatomy? No. A tree has biological function and structure but it cannot be said to have a body either. In the sense in which 'bodies' are 'owned', only kinds of thing with a psychology can be said to have a body. The kind of body at issue we might call a psychological body. To a vague first approximation, a psychological body is the non-psychological aspect of a thing which has (or normally has) a psychology.

How should the animalist think about the psychological body? On many metaphysical theories of the self, the non-psychological aspect of a psychological subject features as an independent entity which lacks psychological properties. This is most obvious on a Cartesian dualist theory, but it also true of a range of theories on which a single individual of our kind could own distinct bodies at distinct times. For example, on a standard neo-Lockean view, there is a distinct non-psychological entity which stands to the human person in the same kind of 'constitution' relation in which the lump of clay is supposed to stand to the statue. A single person could on this view come to be constituted by different such entities at different times.^x On other theories, the body is a slightly smaller object. For example on a brain-theory of personal identity, there is a complementary non-psychological

housing. A given brain could come to be appropriately 'embodied' in different such entities at different times.^{xi} On other theories, while the person is not to be identified with a special central psychological part, it is the central part which individuates the person, and again, one and the same person may come to be equipped with distinct non-psychological entities which interface between this central part and the rest of non-psychological world.^{xii}

Animalism per se is not obviously inconsistent with thinking of our non-psychological aspect as an independent entity lacking psychological properties. An animalist could regard the human animal as the substantial union of immaterial soul and material body; or as something constituted by a body; or as the composite of a brain or functioning integrating apparatus and body. But I shall argue that animalists need not, and probably should not, regard 'body' talk as picking out an independent non-psychological entity.

The comparison with 'mind' talk is suggestive.^{xiii} There is widespread agreement with the anti-reificationist sentiment expressed here by different writers: 'there are no such things as minds, but people have mental properties, which is to say that certain psychological predicates are true of them'^{xiv}; '[T]he mind is not a thing, talk of our minds is talk of world-involving capabilities that we have and activities that we engage in'^{xv}; '... talk of a mind is overly reified talk of an aspect of some minded thing'^{xvi}. On this plausible view, 'mind' talk is really just a way of talking about the mental aspects of a thing. To say that someone has a brilliant mind, for example, is to say little more than that they are brilliant in some mental respect.

Perhaps one could still regard the mind as an 'object' in some thin sense in which modes of individuals are objects, perhaps as a person's particular instantiation of a total psychological profile. But such an 'object' would be metaphysically derivative upon the psychologically-endowed entity. It would not be an independent entity. Modes are essentially of their bearers.

The animalist ought to take the complementary anti-reificationist attitude to 'body' talk.^{xvii} It is just a way of talking about the non-psychological aspects of humans and other animals. There is no such entity as one's body. To say that someone has a powerful body, for example, is to say little more than they are powerful in some non-psychological respect. As with 'mind' talk, it may be open to claim that 'body' talk defines a mode, something like a thing's particular instance of a total non-psychological qualitative profile; but such an owned 'object' would be derivative upon, or essentially of, the animal.

A great advantage of this way of thinking is that it deflates the question which is pressing for every metaphysical view which holds that a body is an independent non-psychological entity: how must such an entity be related to a subject in order to count as owned by that subject?^{xviii} On the present view, a psychological body, if it is anything at all, is trivially 'of' a given human or other animal. To the question of whether animalism is committed to the claim that we are identical to our bodies, comes a resounding 'no'. Nothing is numerically identical to what is metaphysically derivative upon it.

Besides deflating the metaphysical question of 'ownership', the anti-reificationist view of the 'body' sidelines other potentially embarrassing questions. If an animal's body is an

independent entity then it doesn't it have the physical parts of the animal as its parts? The brain is a physical part of the animal. So the body has a brain. But then wouldn't the body have psychological properties after all? But if it does have psychological properties, then on what grounds could the animalist identify us with the animal? How could you possibly know whether you were the thinking animal and not the thinking body?^{xix}

Are there arguments against an anti-reificationist approach to bodies? It might be thought that possibilities of body-switching, or of being outlasted by one's body, prove that bodies, unlike 'minds', really are independent entities.

This would be a mistake. The most salient possible case which might be described as 'people switching bodies' involves two functioning brains switching place with respect to the other parts of two human animals. But there is no need to invoke the ideology of bodies in order to describe this case. The animalist can say of each animal first that it shrinks to the size of its brain and next that it gains various new parts (limbs, organs, etc.).^{xx}

But couldn't an animal be outlasted by its body? Doesn't the presence of a corpse remaining after the non-violent death of an animal prove that the body is an independent entity distinct from the animal? No. It is a reasonable view that the corpse is not a distinct thing at all: it is one and the same thing as the animal which was once living, only now dead.^{xxi}

Finally it can be noted that the anti-reificationist need not deny that there are possible circumstances in which an independent entity might reasonably be called 'one's body'. For

example suppose that an otherwise insensible and paralyzed human animal is connected by control and feedback radio links to a remote submersible equipped with video camera and pincers. Suppose that this situation is settled and longstanding. We might say that the submersible, which is evidently an independent entity not a mode of an animal, has become the animal's body.

But this gives no reason to reify 'my body' in ordinary cases. For an analogy, consider the 'dark side' of one's ethical character. One's dark side is plausibly regarded as one's particular instantiation of a profile of properties which lead one to unethical behaviour. That is to say, one's dark side is merely a mode of a person, not an independent entity. Still, it can be conceded that there are possible circumstances in which an independent entity might reasonably be called 'one's dark side'. Suppose that I have a mischevious friend who is a very bad influence on me. I might convey my knowledge of this situation by calling him 'my dark side'. But this is not a serious reason to suppose that in the ordinary case each of us is similarly related to a independent entity called a 'dark side' (somehow much more proximal than my friend) which leads us to unethical behaviour. Rather, we have simply extended the use of an expression across categories, from naming an aspect of a person, to naming a wholly independent entity which here plays something like the causal role normally associated with an intrinsic aspect of the person. Similarly, in the submersible case, we name an independent entity which plays some of the causal role usually played by intrinsic non-psychological aspects of an animal—by the animal's sensory surfaces being in a certain state, its limbs moving, and so on.

In summary: this first part of the chapter has made a case for developing animalism in a way which does not recognize independent entities called 'our bodies' corresponding to our non-psychological aspects. Besides simple ontological economy, 'animalism without the body' has the advantage of sidelining spurious puzzles about defining an embodiment relation, and about thinking bodies. Cases of 'body-switching', corpses, and 'remote bodies' do not give any strong contrary reason to reify the body.

2. Bodily awareness without the body

Discussions of bodily awareness in philosophy and psychology typically make free use of the notion of 'one's body'.^{xxii} This might be thought to have some utility beyond mere verbal convenience. If 'one's body' names an entity which one owns, then forms of awareness might be theoretically classified together as 'bodily awareness' on the basis that they are all dedicated forms of awareness of entities of this sort.

However on the recommended animalist way of thinking about one's body there is no such entity as one's body. There is the human animal (which is a material body) and there are the non-psychological aspects of this animal, which at best define a kind of abstraction, complementary to 'one's mind'. So what unifies forms of awareness as 'bodily awareness'? They can hardly be said to be forms of awareness of a certain abstraction. Nor are they united simply by being forms of awareness of the animal: on the animalist view that we are animals, even our introspective awareness of thinking and experiencing is a

form of awareness of an animal. But introspection of one's thoughts and experiences is not bodily awareness.

What the animalist should say is this: forms of bodily awareness are unified by being all ways for an animal to be aware of its own non-psychological aspects. There need not be any more unity to 'bodily awareness' than this characterization. In general a negative characterization should not be expected to collect things with much else in common. (The non-cats for example include clouds, castles, and cosine functions.) But in this respect the characterization fits the philosophical and psychological literature. Bodily awareness is typically taken to comprise awareness of conditions which fail to be psychological in all sorts of different ways: limb position, limb motion, overall balance, orientation with respect to gravity, systemic conditions of fatigue, hydration, nutrition, and more local conditions of skin, muscles and viscera. Awareness of these aspects is correspondingly varied in both phenomenology and underlying sub-personal mechanisms.

Now awareness of skin, muscles and viscera might naturally be taken to involve awareness of bodily sensations in these parts, as well as (or perhaps instead of) correlated objective conditions such as damage, temperature, pressure, digestion etc.. This might be thought to be a problem for defining bodily awareness as an animal's awareness of its non-psychological condition: sensations such as tickles and pains, unlike limb position, are plausibly constitutively dependent for their existence upon the animal's concurrent awareness of them. However, although in that sense subjective, bodily sensations should not for that reason be classed as psychological conditions of the animal. More plausibly, the episodes or states of awareness of such sensations are the properly psychological conditions

of the animal. For only these exhibit standard 'marks of the mental' such as intentionality and consciousness. A tickle in one's foot is not in turn 'directed upon' anything, nor does it really make sense to claim that 'there is something that it is like to be in' a sensation in one's foot. Subjective sensations can thus be counted, along with non-subjective conditions of the animal such as limb position, part of the subject matter of bodily awareness according to the recommended construal.

Thus, I suggest, we don't need to appeal to the ideology of 'one's body' in order to define bodily awareness. The body is as dispensable to the philosophy of bodily awareness as it is to the metaphysics of the human person.

For the rest of this chapter I want to suggest that this animalist conception of 'bodily awareness without the body' makes a fairly strong basis for the claim that bodily awareness is self-perception, where self-perception is understood to be self-awareness that is perceptual. So two claims will be defended. First, that bodily awareness is self-awareness. Second that bodily awareness is perceptual.

2.1 Self-Awareness

What is self-awareness? In a central although undemanding sense, x is self-aware just in case x is aware of x. In this sense one counts as self-aware when in a hall of mirrors one catches sight of what is in fact oneself while failing to recognize oneself as oneself. While this is in fact an occasion on which a subject is self-aware, there is some good sense in which

the visual experience is not the exercise of a capacity for self-awareness. It is in some sense 'accidental' that the object of vision is the subject of vision itself. There are two general directions in which to develop this thought into a more demanding understanding of self-awareness, corresponding to two senses in which the object of vision 'might not' be the subject of the visual experiences.

Here is an epistemic definition of a capacity for self-awareness: A is a capacity for self-awareness just in case it is not possible for the subject of an exercise of A to doubt that she herself is its object.^{xxiii}

This definition excludes vision because the subject of any visual experience can doubt that she herself is among its objects. It is usually obvious that what is seen is not oneself. And even when it is oneself, in the bathroom mirror for example, one could doubt that it really is.

Here is an alternative metaphysical definition: A is a capacity for self-awareness just in case in virtue of the nature of A, the subject of an exercise of A is its object.^{xxiv}

This definition excludes vision because it is compatible with the nature of vision that the subject of a visual experience is not its object. Vision is not essentially reflexive.

Both definitions exclude what intuitively should not count as self-awareness. But the metaphysical definition is preferable because the epistemic definition imposes a condition arguably impossible for any form of awareness to satisfy.

Take a paradigmatic capacity for self-awareness: one's introspective capacity to know about one's own present experiences. Not even this capacity compels certainty that what one is aware of is oneself. Here is an example to make the point. Although Descartes persuaded some that the human being could be divided into mind and body, he insisted on the unity of the subject of distinct mental capacities. Others might be persuaded of the further divisibility of the mind in turn. It might be supposed that there is one entity which is the 'undergoer' of the stream of consciousness, and a distinct entity which is the 'introspector' of the stream.^{xxv} According to this hyper-dualist philosophical theory, the object of introspection is distinct from the subject of introspection. The point is not that this is a plausible, or even ultimately coherent, theory. The point is that it shows how it might be possible for the subject of an exercise of introspection to doubt whether she is herself its object. So introspection does not count as a capacity for self-awareness according to the epistemic definition. But if introspection is not self-awareness, then nothing is.^{xxvi}

Similar difficulties are likely to afflict variant epistemic definitions. For example one might try to define a capacity for self-awareness as a capacity, the subject of any exercise of which is thereby in a position to know that she is its object—where one is in a position to know that p just in case one meets all conditions for knowing that p besides believing that p. But now suppose that one's trusted and typically reliable philosophical guru gives one a convincing case in favour of the aforementioned hyper-dualist theory of introspection. In that case, one would not be in position to know that one is the object of an exercise of introspection even if one in fact is. One would be irrational to believe it in these circumstances. So again, even introspection fails to count as a capacity for self-awareness.

It is a reasonable conjecture that there is no capacity for awareness, exercises of which are 'luminously' reflexive in that sense.

The metaphysical definition does not make these unrealistic epistemic demands. What matters is simply the nature of the capacity; are its exercises essentially reflexive? But it has epistemic consequences. The exercises of a capacity for self-awareness so understood will be naturally suited to ground knowledge appropriately expressible using the first person pronoun. For if the exercises of the capacity are metaphysically guaranteed to be about the subject then articulation of awareness by means of the first person will of course tend to yield knowledge of the subject if they yield knowledge of anything. Such awareness is thus reasonably called 'first personal', even if no one can be forced to respond to it with first person judgement.

The example of the hyper-dualist theory illustrates a general consequence of the metaphysical understanding of self-awareness: one may not be able to settle whether a capacity for awareness is self-awareness wholly independently of settling questions about the metaphysics of the self. In this example, in order to maintain that introspection is essentially reflexive, one has to reject the metaphysical theory that introspectors might be numerically distinct from 'their undergoers'. It is in fact perfectly plausible to do so, for example on the basis that conscious experience is itself the awareness upon which introspective judgements are based, so there is no possibility of the subject of experience and the subject of introspective awareness coming apart.

Now we can return to bodily awareness. On the recommended animalist view of bodily awareness we have a metaphysical theory on which bodily awareness is by its very nature reflexive. Bodily awareness is no more awareness of an entity called 'one's body' than introspection is awareness of an entity called 'one's undergoer'. Bodily awareness is an animal's awareness of itself in non-psychological respects. On this view, our bodily awareness is of the same general nature as homeostatic monitoring found throughout the biological world. Organisms quite generally are self-monitoring things. They have a range of sub-systems with the determinable function of self-monitoring and various more determinate functions, of monitoring one's motion, one's nutrition, one's temperature, and so on. The historical success of these systems in performing organism-monitoring is what explains their place in organisms today. That's what they're for. On the animalist view that we are animals, it is in the nature of our bodily awareness that its exercises are acts of awareness of the very thing which is aware, the self-monitoring animal. Bodily awareness is self-awareness, not per accidens, but essentially so.

It might be objected that even if bodily awareness is ordinarily organism self-monitoring, it is not essentially so. It might be claimed that it is metaphysically possible for the relevant systems of an organism to be causally hooked up to an evidently numerically distinct organism, in such a way that the first organism is aware of the second organism and its parts, and not aware of itself in that way. Therefore bodily awareness is not self-awareness according to even the preferred metaphysical definition.

In response the animalist can point out that not every cause of an experience is an object of awareness. If a poisonous gas causes my ears to ring it doesn't follow that I hear the gas.

What does seem metaphysically possible is that an organism should be caused to have bodily experiences as the result of some reliable causal chain or other tracing from the non-psychological condition of a distinct organism. It does not follow that the first organism is thereby aware of the second organism. Moreover there are positive grounds for saying that it is not. If, as seems plausible, the function of these systems is self-monitoring, the outcome is a malfunction of the relevant systems: the causal processes underlying bodily awareness are non-deviant just in case they subserve self-monitoring; self-monitoring is the norm relative to which causal processes count as 'right' or 'wrong'. So the causation involved in this case is not the right kind of causation for awareness of the relevant object. The first organism is simply being caused to have a hallucination or illusion.

The position here is similar to Martin's 'sole-object' view of bodily awareness.^{xxvii} But there is a difference. As he describes it, the function of bodily awareness is to monitor 'one's body'.^{xxviii} This is prima facie consistent with distinct instances of this sort of entity being the object of a subject's bodily awareness at different times, were the subject to 'change bodies'. But on the present animalist view, the function of bodily awareness is self-monitoring. This means that bodily awareness is 'sole-object' in a stronger sense. As a matter of the logic of identity, no thing can self-monitor distinct things at different times.

Here is a follow-up objection. The response from the self-monitoring function of bodily awareness only establishes that bodily awareness is essentially reflexive on the assumption that this form of awareness has its function essentially. But is this assumption correct? Couldn't bodily awareness have had a different function in some counterfactual scenario? What if organism cross-wiring had been the norm?

In order to support this objection some grounds would need to be given for supposing that it would still be the very same form of awareness in the envisaged counterfactual scenario. Here a theoretical appeal to phenomenological similarity is tempting, but on further reflection dubious. One can certainly coherently imagine an episode of bodily experience that feels like this occurring as a result of stimulation of another animal. But is hard to come up with a story of how a system could have developed in an organism which is like organism self-monitoring but somehow usefully works to monitor other organisms. And even if a story could be told in which such a system somehow successfully serves the needs of the organism, the system would surely have to do so through immediate connections to thoughts and actions of the organism very different in kind to the thoughts and actions related to self-monitoring. Given these differences, it does not seem very plausible to suppose that it would be phenomenologically similar to our bodily awareness. The prospects for the objection do not look bright.

In sum, animalism without the body supports the position that bodily awareness is self-awareness.

2.2. Perceptual awareness

What does this mean for the question of whether bodily awareness is perceptual?

The animal self-monitoring view, like any sole-object view of bodily awareness, is committed to a contrast with the visual and tactual paradigms of perception. These

modalities permit selection from a huge multiplicity of possible objects of awareness. If this were the only contrast, then the more basic similarity of being a belief-independent presentation of a here-and-now sector of spatial reality would make the classification of bodily awareness as 'perception' still perfectly reasonable.^{xxix} However the animal self-monitoring view explored here might be argued to generate a more fundamental contrast. Perception presents an independent reality. Perceptual forms of awareness are 'of what is there anyway'. On the current view of bodily-awareness as self-monitoring, its object is precisely not an entity independent of the subject. It is the subject.

But can we find a clear 'independence' condition which is plausibly constitutive of perception? The following would too strong:

(Irreflexivity) If x perceives y then x ≠ y

One can sometimes see oneself in a mirror. We might instead require that a form of awareness is perceptual only if it is not by its nature reflexive.

(Non-Reflexivity) If A is a form of perception, then it does not follow from the nature of A that the subject of an exercise of A is its object

However, with self-awareness understood to be a form of awareness which is by its nature reflexive, Non-Reflexivity makes the incompatibility of self-awareness and perception trivial.^{xxx} Why not think instead that non-reflexivity holds of forms of perception only for the most part?

Here is a more subtle way of requiring that perception is of a metaphysically independent reality:

(Nature Independence) A form of awareness is perceptual only if it is not part of the nature of its objects to be objects of that form of awareness.

To illustrate, Nature Independence promises to classify action awareness and introspection as non-perceptual. On the Anscombean view that an action is essentially such that its agent is action-aware of what they are doing, action awareness is of events which are by their nature objects of action awareness. On the view that conscious experience is intrinsically self-intimating, introspective awareness of conscious experiences is awareness of what are by their nature objects of that awareness.

Where does bodily awareness fall? On the view that the object of bodily awareness is 'one's body' conceived of as an independent entity which may be causally unhooked from any given subject, it is reasonable to see it as a mere accident of bodies that they are captured by subjects' body-monitoring systems. Bodily awareness is not excluded by Nature Independence. But things look different on the animal self-monitoring view. It is plausibly part of what it is to be an organism to be a bodily self-monitoring thing. An organism need not always self-monitor, but it is part of its nature to be at least disposed to do so. So it is part of the nature of the object of bodily awareness to be an object of that form of awareness. This is a less trivial way in which the animal self-monitoring view has the

consequence that bodily awareness does not live up to an ideal of metaphysical independence.^{xxxi}

However it seems to me that the foregoing failures of independence ought to be seen as mere curiosities in comparison to the basic way in which bodily awareness lives up to independence. Perception 'is of what is there anyway' in the basic sense that the object of a given episode of perception exists and is largely the way it is perceived to be independently of the occurrence of that particular episode.^{xxxii} When on a certain occasion one sees an object, it exists and is largely the way it is seen to be, independently of the occurrence of one's concurrent visual experience. The qualification 'largely' allows for the possibility that it might have some secondary qualities which are a projection of that experience.

(Episodic Independence) A form of awareness is perceptual only if the object of an episode of that form of awareness exists and is largely the way it seems to be independently of the occurrence of that episode.

Episodic Independence does not exclude bodily awareness. Even if it is true that bodily sensation is a subjective aspect of the object of awareness, so that there may be some ways the animal seems to be which are dependent upon the occurrence of an episode of bodily awareness, the animal exists and is largely the way it seems to be (in boundaries, limb position, motion, balance, orientation) independently of the occurrence of that episode. In this basic sense, bodily awareness, like the paradigms of sense perception, is of what is there anyway.

To sum up, although animalism generates some mild opposing considerations, it seems reasonable for the animalist to classify bodily awareness as a capacity for self-awareness, which is at the same time perceptual.

The idea of perceptual self-awareness has been historically unpopular. Hume for example argued against the view that 'we are ourselves the object of our senses'. He appealed to a prior role for metaphysics:

'Tis certain there is no question in philosophy more abstruse than that concerning identity, and the nature of the uniting principle, which constitutes a person. So far from being able by our senses merely to determine this question, we must have recourse to the most profound metaphysics to give a satisfactory answer to it; and in common life 'tis evident these ideas of self and person are never very fix'd nor determinate. 'Tis absurd, therefore, to imagine the senses can ever distinguish betwixt ourselves and external objects. (Treatise of Human Nature 1.4.2.6)

If the present chapter is on the right lines, then the animalist should disagree with Hume's conclusion that the senses can never 'distinguish betwixt ourselves and external objects'. Hume's argument mislocates the role for metaphysics. We 'must have recourse to the most profound metaphysics', if animalism can be called that, not in order to distinguish ourselves from external objects in the first place, but in order to see more clearly that in bodily awareness that's what we already do.

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ⁱ Evans 1982: 220.

ⁱⁱ Taylor 2009, emphasis added.

ⁱⁱⁱ Britannica 2015, emphasis added.

^{iv} For important book length defences of animalism, see van Inwagen 1990, Olson 1997 and Snowdon 2014. Bailey 2015 and Blatti 2020 are each useful overviews of arguments for and against animalism.

^v Snowdon 2014: ch 4. Bailey 2015.

^{vi} Thanks to Alex Geddes for discussion here. The strongest arguments philosophers have given for somehow splitting off a conception of 'this animal' from one's conception of oneself are based on (i) unusual cases of 'disunified consciousness', which might be described as two of us and one animal; and (ii) imaginary 'Lockean transfer' cases, which might be described as one of us persisting without 'this animal'. For a recent example of the former argument against animalism see Peacocke 2014: 76-7. For a recent example of the latter argument against animalism see Parfit 2012. For judicious and thorough animalist replies to both kinds of argument see Snowdon 2014, esp. chs 8-11.

^{vii} For a bodily criterion, see Williams (1956–7). For a psychological criterion, see Shoemaker (1984).

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- ^{viii} Olson's seminal 1997 defence of animalism, subtitled 'Personal Identity Without Psychology', took a wholly non-psychological view of the persistence of animals.
- ^{ix} For further defence of the thesis that psychology is constitutively involved in the persistence of human animals see Madden 2016.
- ^x Baker 2000. Shoemaker 2008
- ^{xi} McMahan 2002. Parfit 2012.
- ^{xii} Peacocke for example holds that a subject is individuated by its psychological 'integrating apparatus' and may control 'different bodies at different times' (2017: 185).
- ^{xiii} Olson (2006) helpfully makes this comparison.
- ^{xiv} Davidson 1995: 231.
- ^{xv} Putnam 1999: 169-70.
- ^{xvi} Johnston 1987: 79.
- ^{xvii} For sustained scepticism about 'one's body' as an owned entity, see Long 1964 and van Inwagen 1980. An 'anti-reificationist' view of bodies is in the spirit of McDowell's scepticism about the 'philosophically generated concept of a human body': the 'concept of a human being ... is a seamless whole of whose unity we ought not to have allowed ourselves to lose sight in the first place' (1982: 384). Another influence is P.F. Strawson's (1959: ch 3) view that a person is conceptually prior to both body and mind, although as Snowdon (2014: 129) observes, Strawson's key idea of a single two-sided entity fits animals in general and not only persons.
- ^{xviii} For an example of the hard work this question creates, see Shoemaker 1976.
- ^{xix} These questions would be especially embarrassing for animalists because they parallel the 'thinking animal' problem which animalists (Olson 1997 for example) have pressed against the anti-animalist neo-Lockean view that we are persons spatially and mereologically coincident with distinct animals.
- ^{xx} See Madden 2016 for this animalist perspective on 'body-switching'.
- ^{xxi} For discussion of other animalist options regarding corpses, see Olson 2004.
- ^{xxii} To pick one of many examples, the common noun appears (with no explanation) in the opening sentences of the 'Bodily Awareness' entry of [The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) (de Vignemont 2020) 'At the sensory level we continuously receive a flow of information about our own body through external and internal perceptions. Not only can we see our body and touch it, but we also have several inner receptors that convey information about the position of our limbs, the balance of our body, and its physiological condition.'
- ^{xxiii} Martin assumes that a form of awareness is not self-awareness if it is so much as 'open to the subject to wonder' whether the object she is presented is not herself (1995: 284). The same assumption is operative in Martin 1998.
- ^{xxiv} Cf. Rödl 2007: 8.
- ^{xxv} Russell in 1913 was neutral about the numerical identity of the subject introspecting an experience and the subject of the introspected experience. It is, he suggested, an empirical question whether they are in fact identical in any given case (1992: 38-9)
- ^{xxvi} One can come up with similarly eccentric theories about other paradigms of self-awareness, such as action-awareness: suppose that awareness of one's actions is underpinned by the sub-personal matching of afferent feedback from movement with efferent copies of motor commands. One might take seriously the hyper-dualist theory that while you are the thing with the comparator mechanism and thereby undergoing the sense of acting, the real agent—the causal source of both the afferent feedback from their movement and the matching efferent copies of their motor commands—is a distinct entity remotely wired up to your comparator. Again, the point is not that this is a plausible theory. The point is that no capacity for awareness makes such theoretical speculations impossible.
- ^{xxvii} Martin 1995, 1998.
- ^{xxviii} Martin 1998: 128-29.
- ^{xxix} For a good overview of the literature on this issue, see de Vignemont 2020: §2.
- ^{xxx} This seems to be the extent of one of McDowell's arguments that knowledge of limb position cannot be perceptual because it is 'self-knowledge' (2011: 142)
- ^{xxxi} Something like this line of thought seems to form another part of McDowell's case that bodily awareness is not perceptual (2011: 145-46). He overlooks the 'Episodic Independence' which I am about to explain.
- ^{xxxii} This is in the spirit of G.E. Moore's (1903) characterization of the independence of objects from particular 'acts' of sensory consciousness.