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Philosophical Issues in Psychiatry V: The Problems of Multiple Levels, Explanatory Pluralism, Reduction and Emergence

Explaining body self-awareness: Multiple levels or dynamical Gestalt?

Shaun Gallagher

Philosophy, University of Memphis (USA)
Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts
University of Wollongong (AU)

Anneliese Maier-Forschungspreis



Alexander von Humboldt
Stiftung/Foundation

The issues surrounding questions of body self-awareness are complex ones. One contentious issue concerns whether there is a minimal, pre-reflective body self-awareness involved in action or more generally in all experience. If there is, what is its nature? If there isn't, then in what circumstances, and how, does one become aware of one's body? Are there different kinds of body self-awareness that are not pre-reflective, but that do not take the body as an object, or that do provide an awareness of the body-as-subject? When and how does this occur? These are issues that concern not only phenomenology and philosophy of mind, but also neuroscience, psychopathology, psychiatric understanding, physio- and psychotherapy, performance studies, as well as feminism and race theory.

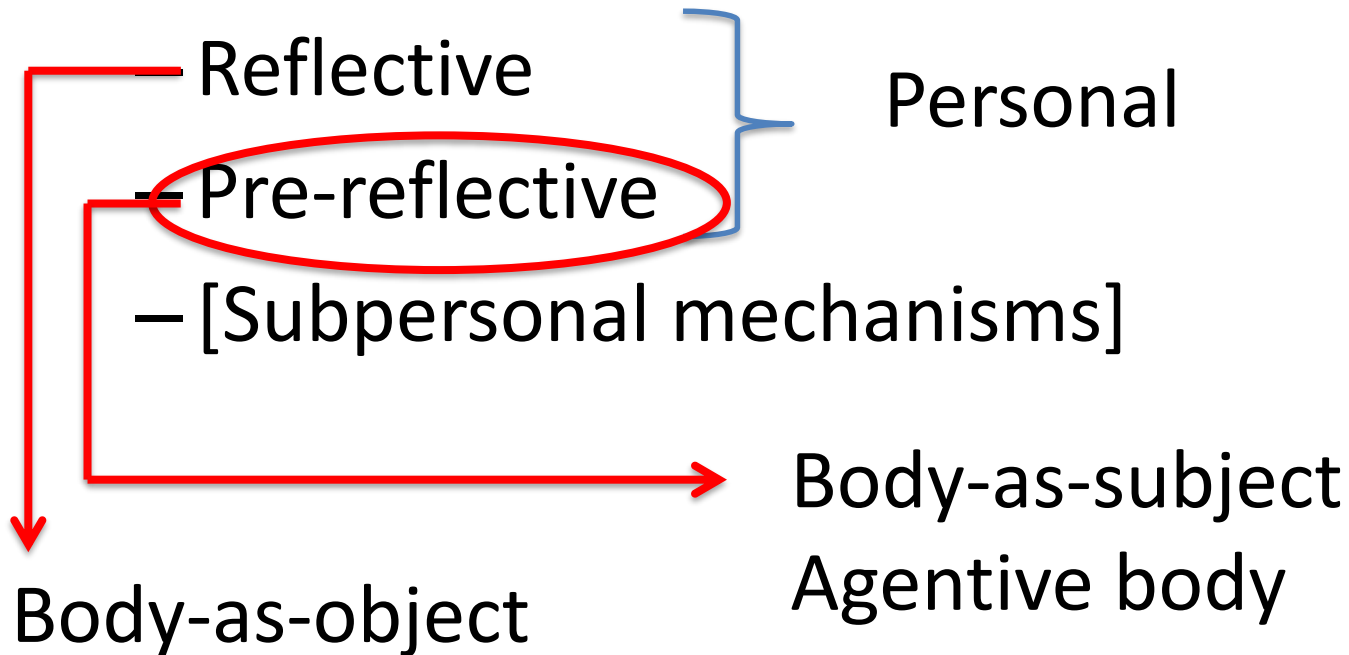
... + 30 pages [with apologies to Jan-Willem]

Outline

- Issues that pertain to
 - phenomenology
 - psychopathology
 - multiple levels, and
 - explanatory pluralism

Phenomenology

- Phenomenology already raises issues about levels:



- Phenomenologists claim:
 - Pre-reflective body experience is one aspect of ipseity (self-experience; minimal [sense of] self)
 - As such it involves a sense of mineness (ownership)
 - And, when the agent is engaged in action, a sense of agency – some aspect of which involves awareness of the agentive body-as-subject.

- In a broadly general way, phenomenology and science seem to be on the same page.
- A recent quote:

“sense of body ownership represent two **dissociable** and self-consciousness (Tsao 2010; Kalckert and Ehrsson 2012) to share a close **interaction**. Indeed, both **afferent**

Phenomenologically and neurologically distinguishable/dissociable

But in some way integrated or interrelated

movements cy has been

Mechanisms

to building the sense of (Rabellino et al., 2006).”

et al. 2018)

- W vs H levels (Geurts and Rubio-Fernandez 2015)
 - `W' stands for *what* we are trying to explain
 - *Explanandum* – in this case personal level/phenomenology
 - `H' for *how* the system is doing or generating it
 - *Explanans* – subpersonal mechanisms

W

- **Sense of agency:** The [pre-reflective] sense that I am the one who is causing or generating an action. But SA & SO in some way interrelated
- **Sense of ownership:** The [pre-reflective] sense that I am the one who is undergoing an experience. For example, the sense that my body is moving regardless of whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary. (Gallagher 2000)
- Distinguish from **reflective** attribution or judgment of agency or ownership (Graham & Stephens 2000; Vosgerau & Newen 2007)

Phenomenological debates

Debate #1: What is SO/mineness?

- **For-me-ness** – the awareness of the *experience* as I live through it
- **Me-ness** – the awareness that / am the one living through the experience – an awareness of oneself
- **Mineness** – the sense that this is *my* experience (ownership), i.e., an awareness of the experience as my own.

(Marie Guillot 2017)

It is something about the experience, something intrinsic to it, that supports judgments [about the experience]. This I take to be at least a prima facie reason to think that we typically have experiential access to the experience, to ourselves, and to the fact that the experience is ours; or, in my terminology, that the phenomenal character of a normal experience includes for-me-ness, me-ness, and mineness. (Guillot 2017, 47)



- Zahavi (2018) agrees with Guillot: ‘for-me-ness’ is basic and pre-reflective, and it does not entail either of the other two phenomena:

‘Being aware of one’s experiences when they occur is neither tantamount to being aware of oneself as an object, nor equivalent to being thematically aware of the experiences *as one’s own*’.

- But he disagrees with Guillot that typically all three aspects characterize our everyday experience.

- Zahavi takes me-ness and mineness to involve forms of reflective awareness which are only occasional, or as he says, 'rare'.

- **For-me-ness** – the awareness of the *experience* as I live through it

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Reflective
concepts

- I also accept Guillot's distinctions as conceptual distinctions, without thinking that we actually experience the differences signified by the distinctions *as such*.

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Reflective
concepts

- Mineness (ownership) = a relational experience (*me* having the experience) = mineness with a soft or bracketed 'as' (Gallagher 2017)
- Mineness = an awareness of the experience [as] my own.
 - For some philosophers the 'as' ('awareness of the experience *as* my own') or the phrase 'the sense *that*' ('the sense *that* I am the one living through the experience) signifies a conceptual or reflective perspective (Hutto and Ilundain, in press)
 - Sense of body ownership = a non-observational/non-reflective awareness in the form 'My body is [or I am] moving [remaining still, cold, in pain...]' – where the experiencing body is not an object

Debate #2: As so defined, there is no such thing as the sense of ownership (mineness)

- José Bermúdez: SO = inflationary
- He denies that there is a positive first-order phenomenology of ownership and offers a deflationary account.

‘On a deflationary conception of ownership the sense of ownership consists, first, in certain facts about the phenomenology of bodily sensations and, second, in certain fairly obvious judgments about the body (which we can term judgments of ownership)’ (2011, 162).



- Bermúdez contends that an experience of ownership only comes up when we explicitly turn our reflective attention to our bodily experience and attribute that experience to ourselves – the fridge light problem.
 - It is only this reflective, second-order experience that can count as an experience of ownership
- “[w]hen we [reflectively] experience our bodies we experience them as our own ... there is a phenomenology of ownership” (Bermúdez 2015).

“There are facts about the phenomenology of bodily awareness (about position sense, movement sense, and interoception) and there are judgments of ownership, but there is no additional feeling of ownership” (2011)

- Barry Dainton (2008) makes a similar point.
- When I experience some sensation, e.g., a pain, I experience it against a phenomenal background:

‘against the backdrop of various other forms of consciousness: a range of bodily experience, tactile sensations, visual and auditory experience, intentional or willed bodily movements, conscious thinking ... [etc.]’ (2008).



- This experienced background = ‘the feeling of what it is typically like to be *me* (or *you*)’ (240)
- But like Bermúdez, Dainton does not think that this a separable experience; he argues, it does not consist of a pre-reflective self-awareness or sense of mineness or ownership.

I can see no reason to take this [stable phenomenal background] as indicative of a single special type of experience, something over and above the changing stream of thought, perception, volition, emotion, memory, bodily sensation, and so on. (240)

- **Neither Dainton nor Bermúdez deny that we can have a proprioceptive and kinaesthetic awareness of bodily (and limb) posture and movement, or a complex set of background sensory experiences of the body.**
- **Dainton argues that if we subtract all of these various experiences, there would be nothing of experience left; therefore, there is nothing over and above just these experiences – no extra or additional experience that we would identify as the experience of mineness.**

- A misunderstanding?
- Phenomenologists: SO is an *intrinsic* aspect of proprioceptive and kinaesthetic experiences – not an additional or independent feeling,
- Deflationary, not inflationary -- there is no *additional* feeling of ownership, or ‘perfectly determinate “quale” associated with the feeling of myness’ (Bermúdez 2011), independent of proprioceptive and kinaesthetic sensations.
- The claim is rather that such proprioceptive experience is an integrated pattern of body awareness that includes an intrinsic experience of the bodily experience being mine -- the *proprio* in proprioception.

- A misunderstanding?
- Dainton cites Zahavi:

‘Whether a certain experience is experienced as mine or not, however, depends not on something apart from the experience, but precisely on the givenness of the experience’ (2005, 124).

- But then Dainton (2008) goes on to ask:

‘do we need *mineness* to explain whether an experience is experienced as mine? ... [W]e can account for the phenomenology of *mineness* without positing any primitive ‘ownership’ quality’.

The mineness in question is not a quality like being scarlet, sour or soft. It doesn't refer to a specific experiential content, to a specific what; nor does it refer to the diachronic or synchronic sum of such content, or to some other relation that might obtain between the contents in question. Rather, it refers to the distinct givenness or the how it feels of experience.... That pre-reflective self-awareness is implicit, then, means that I am not confronted with a thematic or explicit awareness of the experience as belonging to myself. Rather we are dealing with a non-observational self-acquaintance. (Gallagher and Zahavi 2014).

Psychopathology

- The kind of objections raised by Bermúdez and Dainton hover in the background of debates about SO and SA in explanations of schizophrenic symptoms of thought insertion and delusions of control.
- Bortolotti and Broome (2009) think of SO and SA as reflective attitudes rather than as intrinsic aspects of experience.
- They object to to ‘the now standard’ idea that thought insertion and delusions control involve problems with the experience of agency (e.g., Frith 1992; Campbell 1999; Gallagher 2000)



- Bortolotti and Broome (2009)
 - Thought insertion and delusions of control involve problems with SO rather than SA.
 - They reject the phenomenological definition of SO
 - spatial metaphor: mind as container; thoughts as mind if they are “in” my mind
 - spatial description derives from the patient’s descriptions
 - Ultimately the question is whether SO is pre-reflective
 - They embrace a ‘more demanding’ definition suggested by John Campbell

John Campbell (2002) discusses a more demanding notion of ownership, according to which a subject needs to acknowledge the thought as her own and ascribe it to herself in order to be its owner.... [This is] the notion of ownership as including the self ascription condition ... the subject can ascribe the thought to herself on the basis of introspection, psychological information about herself or consideration of the reasons in favour of the content of that thought.

- Mineness as 'endorsement' or 'entitlement'. Cf. Graham and Stephens: reflective attribution of ownership

‘It is “mineness” as entitlement to the [action] which is the crucial and distinguishing feature of this account of ownership; and it is this ‘mineness’ which is conspicuously missing from the subject’s phenomenology’ (Bortolotti and Broome 2009).

- Reframed in terms of delusions of control, the more demanding notion of ownership would mean that the subject does not experience ownership for the movement or action that they claim is caused by someone else.

- Bortolotti and Broome may be correct that the person's retrospective report reflects an absence of ownership, as they define it.
- But if we ask why the subject reflectively disowns the movement despite the fact that he experiences it proprioceptively: two possible answers.
 1. *Semantic coherency problem.* The action doesn't fit with his self-narrative (Graham and Stephens), or the subject, unable to provide reasons for acting, does not endorse it.
 2. *Process problem.* The action is experienced as alien – a first-order experience motivates the second-order reflection that led to (1). This pre-reflective feeling of alienation may modulate or disrupt SA.

- Bortolotti and Broome resist (2) and provide three reasons to reject the loss-of-pre-reflective-agency account.
- a) Loss-of-agency accounts cannot distinguish between 'alien' movements and involuntary (reflex) movements – in both cases SA is missing.
 - Missing SA cannot be the full explanation. Rather, 'something added' (Billon and Kriegel 2014) – namely, a sense of alienation – may account for this difference.
 - Alien movement = intentional action – SA ≠ reflex movement.
 - Here a question of mechanisms.

b) Similarly, loss-of-agency cannot explain differences between delusions of control and other phenomena e.g., Anarchic Hand Syndrome (AHS).

- In both cases, no SA (control); but in AHS, subject does not attribute the action to someone else. Lack of SA cannot explain this difference.
- Lack of SA is not a complete explanation – one cannot rule out that this may be motivated by either the absence of SA plus the feeling of alienation, or by discordance with their self-narrative (or by both).

- Note: In both delusions of control and AHS, a pre-reflective SO is intact
 - Versus somatoparaphrenia where subject disowns the body/body part
 - Somatoparaphrenia: This is not my hand.
 - AHS: *My* right hand is doing things it shouldn't do
 - DoC: Someone or something is moving *my* right hand
 - Alien feeling ≠ lack of sense of body ownership, even if patients reflectively or retrospectively disown the action.

- c) Finally, loss-of-agency accounts seemingly ignore significant differences between motor control issues (in delusions of control) and thought processes (in inserted thoughts).
- This is a point that should be made more precise.
- Rather than a problem with an explanation in terms of the loss of SA, it may be that the comparator model explanation of SA does not easily transfer to the issue of thought insertion (Gallagher 2004).
- Again, an issue about mechanism.

- More to say about phenomenology and psychopathology
- But these considerations point in two directions:
 - **Mechanisms** – suppressed at almost every turn in previous considerations – but this in turn points to questions about **multiple levels**
 - Sub-personal
 - Pre-reflective
 - Reflective
 - Super-personal (i.e., social, cultural)
 - **Broader contexts** – the need for explanatory pluralism (loss of SA or SO on its own will not provide full explanation – indeed SA and SO may not be explained without reference to super-personal phenomena)

Multiple levels and explanatory pluralism

- Debates about subpersonal mechanisms re. SA/SO – comparator models versus predictive processing or other models (Braun 2018; Friston 2011; Grünbaum 2015; Synofzik, Vosgerau & Newen 2008)
- Debates about expertise and performative body awareness – not just reflective or pre-reflective.
- Add affect (in MDD, body dysmorphic disorder) (Fuchs)
- Add intersubjective, social and cultural aspects (impacts of gender, race) (Fanon, Weiss)
- Add individual differences (e.g., anorexia presents differently in a disciplined person than in an impulsive individual (Zachar 2008))

- Once we allow for the effects of all of these different factors on body awareness ...
- And once we acknowledge that body awareness, even in terms of sense of ownership/sense of agency, is just one part of human experience that changes across various circumstances and pathologies ...
- Then it seems clear that a focus on just ipseity, just pre-reflective phenomenology, or just reflective/cognitive processes, can provide only part of the story.

- The phenomenological focus on minimal experiential aspects of self – ipseity and ipseity disturbance (Parnas and Sass 2011) easily moves us back to the debates about SA and SO in phenomenology/psychopathology.
- Beyond that we need to integrate the wider qualifications we just mentioned – especially those concerning intersubjective, social, and cultural factors.
- Pattern theory of self: self constituted as a pattern of a sufficient number of characteristic factors, including embodied, minimal experiential, affective, behavioral, intersubjective, psychological/cognitive, reflective, narrative, extended and normative factors.

Three (underdeveloped) ideas.

- First, schizophrenia is a disorder of the entire self-pattern, and not just of ipseity – a claim I try to justify by appealing to a gestalt principle.
- Second, an even larger claim: different psychiatric disorders are different disorders of the self-pattern.
- Third, affordance theory suggests a way to explain anomalous world experience as the flip-side of anomalies in self-pattern.



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