Bodily Awareness, Imagination and the Self

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Common wisdom tells us that we have five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. These senses provide us with a means of gaining information concerning objects in the world around us, including our own bodies. But in addition to these five senses, each of us is aware of our own body in ways in which we are aware of no other thing. These ways include our awareness of the position, orientation, movement, and size of our limbs (proprioception and kinaesthesia), our sense of balance, and our awareness of bodily sensations such as pains, tickles, and sensations of pressure or temperature. We can group these together under the title 'bodily awareness'. The legitimacy of grouping together these ways of gaining information is shown by the fact that they are unified phenomenologically; they provide the subject with an awareness of his or her body 'from the inside'. Bodily awareness is an awareness of our own bodies from within. This perspective on our own bodies does not, cannot, vary. As Merleau-Ponty writes, 'my own body. . .is always presented to me from the same angle' (1962: 90).

It has recently been claimed by a number of philosophers that, in bodily awareness, one is not simply aware of one's body *as* one's body, but one is aware of one's body *as oneself*. That is, when I attend to the object of bodily awareness I am presented not just with my body, but with my 'bodily self'. The contention of the present paper is that such a view is misguided. In the first section I clarify just what is at issue here. In the remainder of the paper I present an argument, based on two claims about the nature of the imagination, against the view that the bodily self is presented in bodily awareness. Section two defends the dependency thesis; a claim about the relation between perception and sensory imagination. Section three defends a certain view about our capacity to imagine being other people. Section four presents the main argument against the bodily self awareness view and section five addresses some objections.

1. Bodily Awareness and Self Awareness

Without looking, I can tell whether or not my legs are crossed. I do this via the awareness that I have of my body from the inside. Throughout, I shall be assuming that this kind of bodily awareness is a form of perception.[1] As with other forms of perception, bodily awareness represents the world as being thus and so. That part of the world that is represented as being thus and so is one's

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own body. Representation brings with it the possibility of misrepresentation, and so the knowledge gained through bodily awareness is fallible. It is possible to suffer the illusion that one's arm is bent, when it is in fact straight.

If bodily awareness is a form of perception, how are we to characterise its content? It is reasonable to begin with the thought that the object of bodily awareness, that which one is aware of through bodily awareness, is one's own body.[2] But, given this starting point, we can go on to ask a further question: in what way is my body presented to me in bodily awareness? Fregeans may want to construe this question as asking under what mode of presentation the body is given through bodily awareness. My aim in this paper is to adjudicate between two answers to that question. The first is that in bodily awareness my body is given to me as a body, not just any body of course, but as *my body* or *this body*, where the demonstrative 'this' is one that exploits the special mode of bodily awareness. The second is that in bodily awareness my body is given to me as a *bodily self*, i.e. bodily awareness is a form of awareness through which I am aware of an object that is presented in a distinctively first-personal way. This view, I shall label the 'bodily self awareness' view.[3]

My primary intention in the paper is to present an explicit argument against the second of these views. But why, if true, would this bodily self awareness view be philosophically interesting? Why have philosophers wanted to defend it? The idea is that bodily awareness constitutes a bodily form of self awareness. The claim is not simply supposed to be that the body and self are identical and so in being aware of one's body one is aware of oneself. If this were what was meant by self awareness then, given that the body and the self are identical, merely looking in the mirror would count as a form of self awareness. But the intention is to exclude this kind of awareness of what just happens to be the self. The claim is that bodily awareness is a special form of *introspective* awareness of ourselves as bodily subjects. As Cassam puts the point, 'introspective self awareness is not just awareness of what is in fact the subject of one's thoughts and perceptions... Rather, introspective self-awareness must be understood as awareness of oneself ''*qua* subject''' (Cassam 1997: 4). Bodily awareness, on this view, is not simply an awareness of one's body, but an awareness of one's body *as an object that presents itself as oneself*. As such, the view holds that not only is it possible to think and speak in a first personal way, using the concept or word 'I', it is also possible to have first personal experience. Not only can I think about myself as myself, I can also experience myself as myself.

At this point some comments on the concept of the self are in order. It is sometimes said that the function of the word 'I' is to refer to the person that utters it.[4] This is a controversial claim concerning linguistic meaning.[5] Whether or not it is ultimately defensible, there is an analogous but independent claim concerning the first person *concept*. This has it that if it is correct to characterise any thought, belief, perceptual state, etc. as first personal, then that state has the self as its object. We might say that first personal states have their subject as their object. Thus, for example, if I am in a perceptual state that has first personal content, then that state has me as its object.

For the purposes of this paper I treat this claim as an assumption.[6] It follows from this assumption that if S is in a perceptual state that is properly characterised as first personal, then the object of that state is S. I take this to be independent of the question whether or not the content of perception is conceptual. Supposing there are such things as non-conceptual first person states, then the object of those states will be the subject whose states they are.[7] The idea is that in bodily awareness the subject is aware of his or her body in the first personal way, as a *bodily self*. According to the present assumption, this involves the claim that the object of those states is the subject him or herself. This will be important later.

This characterisation of the view, as treating bodily awareness as a form of *introspective* self awareness, brings out the sense in which the proponents of the view are in direct opposition to Hume's famous scepticism concerning self awareness. Hume claimed that,

> For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, or heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. (1978: 252)

Hume appears to be denying that there is an introspective awareness of the self as an object. The idea that, through bodily awareness, I am aware of my body as a *bodily self* is in direct conflict with this.[8] My argument against the *bodily self* view of the content of bodily awareness will, then, be a limited defence of the Humean denial. Reflections upon the nature and phenomenology of both bodily awareness and imagination give us reason to think that, in this limited domain, Hume was right — there is no such thing as an introspective awareness of the self as a (bodily) object.

The view that in bodily awareness I am aware of my body as my bodily self is also of interest for the respect in which it feeds into debates concerning the epistemology of first person reference. It is often wondered what secures first person reference, what accounts for our capacity to refer to ourselves using the first person pronoun. A tempting answer to this question is that we have a form of awareness of ourselves that grounds first person reference in much the same way that our perceptual awareness of objects around us grounds demonstrative reference.[9] The claim that, in bodily awareness, we have an introspective awareness of the self as an object would do much to flesh out this thought. Thus, in arguing against this view, I will be rejecting this attempt to underwrite first person reference.

2. The Dependency Thesis

The idea driving the argument of this paper is that we can derive substantive claims about the content of perceptual experience by focusing on the relation

between perceiving and imagining. Specifically, the argument is based upon two claims about the nature of the imagination: one concerning the relationship between perception and sensory imagination, the other concerning our capacity to imagine being other people.

I begin with a distinction between sensory and suppositional imagination. Paradigm instances of sensory imagination are visualising a tiger, hearing a tune 'in one's head', or imagining the taste of a pint of Broadside. There is 'something it is like' to sensorily imagine something. Sensory imagination contrasts with suppositional imagination which is, as the name suggests, akin to supposing something to be the case. Suppositional imaginings characteristically take propositions as their objects. Examples would be imagining that Birmingham is the capital of England, or that Mexico won the last World Cup. Whilst there may be 'something it is like' to suppositionally imagine something, this need not be the case. Imaginative projects often, maybe usually, involve both sensory and suppositional aspects. Peacocke, from whom I take the distinction, provides the example of imagining a cat behind a suitcase.[10] It seems that when one engages in this imaginative project what one sensorily imagines is just a suitcase, but in addition to this one suppositionally imagines that there is a cat behind it.

The first claim that I want to make about the imagination has been named by Martin 'the dependency thesis', and is a claim about the sensory imagination only. The dependency thesis maintains that, 'to imagine sensorily a φ is to imagine experiencing a φ' (Martin 2002: 404).[11] For example, to imagine a tiger is to imagine seeing a tiger, to imagine a tune is to imagine hearing a tune, to imagine a taste is to imaging experiencing that taste. The dependency thesis asserts a conceptual connection between perception and sensory imagination. It maintains that what one imagines when one imagines sensorily is an experience. What is true, in this respect, of the five senses is true also of bodily awareness. Thus, the dependency thesis implies that to imagine a pain is to imagine feeling a pain, and that to imagine one's arms crossed is to imagine proprioceiving one's arms crossed. That is, to imagine being in some bodily state is to imagine the experience from the inside of being in that bodily state.

It is possible that one might endorse the dependency thesis for some sensory modalities but not others. Thus, one may think that hearing a tune 'in one's head' *is* imagining hearing but deny that visualising is imagining seeing. Given that the present interest is bodily awareness, I will be restricting myself to the claim that the dependency thesis is true for the modality of bodily awareness. I will motivate this first by making some points in favour of the general form of the dependency thesis, and then a specific point concerning the case of bodily awareness.

First, the dependency thesis explains the fact that sensory imagination is perspectival. When I visualise a tiger, the tiger is presented to me from a particular point of view, so that one of its sides obscures the other. This is a feature that sensory imagination has in common with perceptual experience. When an object is presented to me in my visual field, not all of its aspects are simultaneously given, it has an unobserved back side. That perceptual experience

is from a point of view, together with the fact that sensorily imagining a φ is imagining experiencing a φ, explains the fact that sensory imaginings are themselves perspectival. The perspectival character of perceptual experience carries over to the sensory imagination because sensorily imagining is imagining experiencing.

Second, the dependency thesis explains the fact that the possible objects of sensory imagination are the possible objects of perception. Thus, while I can sensorily imagine the Eiffel Tower, I cannot sensorily imagine the number two (although I can imagine an inscription of it). This is for the reason that the Eiffel Tower, but not the number two, is a possible object of perception. If something is not perceptible, then one cannot imagine perceiving it.[12]

Third, the dependency thesis correctly predicts that impairments in sensory modalities affect a subject's capacity to sensorily imagine. It seems plausible to suppose that a subject congenitally lacking a sensory modality would lack the capacity to sensorily imagine in that modality. For example, it seems reasonable to suppose that subjects who are congenitally blind would lack the capacity to imagine seeing.[13] It follows that, if the dependency thesis is true, the congenitally blind will lack one of the ways that is available to the sighted of imagining a tiger. Whilst the congenitally blind might be able to imagining hearing, touching or smelling a tiger, they would not be able to imagining seeing it. Now, it is true that there is evidence that the congenitally blind do have the capacity to sensorily imagine the shapes and sizes of objects. This has sometimes been taken as evidence that the congenitally blind have the same powers of sensory imagination as do the sighted.[14] But this does not take account of all the empirical facts. Recent experiments have shown that the sensory imaginings of the congenitally blind do differ from those of the sighted in systematic and predictable ways. As Ardidi, Holtzman and Kosslyn note, 'congenitally blind people have imagery that is indeed different from that of sighted people... whereas sighted people's images have the property that angular size diminishes with viewing distance, blind people's images do not' (1988: 11). That is, the sensory imaginings of the congenitally blind lack visual perspective, whilst those of the sighted do not. This invites the thought that, in the experiments, whilst the sighted are imagining seeing, the congenitally blind are sensorily imagining in some other modality (or modalities). This, I suggest, is precisely what we would expect given the dependency thesis. Without the dependency thesis we would need an alternative explanation of the similarities and differences that exist between the sensory imaginings of the sighted and the congenitally blind.

Fourth, the dependency thesis explains the considerable phenomenological similarities between perceiving and imagining. The well known experiments of Perky show that, under suitable conditions, subjects can systematically mistake their perceiving something for their imagining it.[15] Subjects were asked to visualise a specific object, which was then projected, above the normal threshold of visibility, onto a screen in front of them. None of Perky's subjects realised that they were in fact perceiving what they took themselves to be imagining. This suggests, at the very least, that there are considerable phenomenological

similarities between perception and sensory imagining.[16] Of course, we do not need the results of empirical psychology to tell us that imagining a tiger is a bit like seeing a tiger. We know that already. The dependency thesis would explain these similarities via the conceptual connection between imagining and perceiving. Of course, we also know that there are significant phenomenological differences between perceiving and sensorily imagining.[17] The dependency thesis would not furnish us with an explanation of these differences, but there is no obvious reason to suppose that it should.[18]

These four comments serve to motivate the dependency thesis as a general claim about the sensory imagination, in whatever modality. But none are *absolutely* decisive. There is, however, a convincing argument, due to Martin (2002) in favour of the dependency thesis with regards to bodily sensations. The idea is that in imagining some bodily sensation, such as an itch, one is aware of nothing but the quality of itchiness. Yet, at the same time, one does not instantiate the quality of itchiness; one does not have an itch. We can explain this by claiming that imagining the sensation is representing the sensation. When I represent the sensation of itchiness the sensation is before my mind, but not through my instantiating it. So in imagining an itch, we represent an itch. But, we tend to think that experiencing (feeling) a sensation is a necessary and sufficient condition of having the sensation. Given this, it follows that representing an itch is representing experiencing an itch, and so imagining an itch is imagining experiencing an itch. This, of course, assumes that we are imagining an itch 'from the inside', not just imagining someone displaying behaviour characteristic of itchiness. The conclusion is that, when I imagine a bodily sensation, I imagine an experience of a bodily sensation. To imagine a bodily sensation without imagining an experience of it, would either be to imagine that such and such had a sensation, or to imagine such and such behaving as if they had a sensation. But the first is a case of suppositional imagining and the second is not imagining the sensation from within.

This argument is compelling as a defence of the dependency thesis for the case of bodily sensations, but it does rest on a special feature of sensations: namely that feeling a sensation is necessary and sufficient for having it. This feature is, of course, not shared by all the properties one can be aware of through bodily awareness. For example, feeling one's arm to be bent is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for having a bent arm. Someone impressed by this fact might suggest that we accept the dependency thesis for bodily sensations but reject it for the cases of imagining the orientation or movement of one's body. But it is unclear what the motivation would be for such a move. In light of the four general points in favour of the dependency thesis there appears to be no obvious reason to accept such a mixed view. In any case, as will become clear, all I need for the purposes of my present argument is the claim concerning bodily sensations: imagining, say, a pain is imagining experiencing a pain. If we accept, as I think we should, that awareness of one's bodily sensations is one aspect of the more general phenomenon of bodily awareness, then the fact that the dependency thesis is true for the case of bodily sensations will be enough to get

the argument against the first personal account of bodily awareness off the ground.

3. Imagining Being Other People

The second claim that I want to make about the imagination concerns the capacity we have to imagine, from the inside, being other people. I can imagine, for example, being my Grandfather when he was hit by flak in the Second World War or, to borrow an example from Williams, being Napoleon surveying the desolation at Austerlitz.[19] Indeed, this capacity to imagine being other people is central to many of the aspects of our lives to which we attribute value. For example, when I empathise with another person it is likely that this partly involves my imagining being them—imagining, from the inside, their situation.[20] The same can be said about our tendency to identify with fictional characters—we step into Hamlet's shoes and see the world as he does.[21]

But what exactly do I imagine when I imagine being Napoleon? One suggestion is that I sensorily imagine myself seeing the desolation at Austerlitz, then suppositionally imagine that I am Napoleon. On this view, both Napoleon and myself enter into the content of the imagining; I am imagining something about both Napoleon and myself. Williams rejects this interpretation as deceptive. He writes,

> the formula 'imagining *myself* being Napoleon' is possibly misleading. It draws us near to a formula that may also be used, and which may be even more misleading. . .the formula 'imagining that I am (or was) Napoleon'. For with regard to this formula, we may feel bound to ask what this 'I' is that turns up inside the expression of what I imagine. If it is the ordinary empirical one, as I am, what I imagine seems to be straightforwardly contradictory, which stops me in my tracks. . .The mode of imagining appropriate to these fantasies, when they are not stopped in their tracks, is least misleadingly expressed as 'imagining being Napoleon'. (1973: 44)

The idea here is that when I imagine being Napoleon it is problematic to claim that I myself turn up in the content of what is imagined. We should maintain instead that the project of imagining being Napoleon contains only one person: Napoleon. We can interpret this as the claim that when I imagine being Napoleon there are two things going on. First, I sensorily imagine seeing the desolation at Austerlitz (without imagining *myself* seeing it) and, second, I suppositionally imagine that the subject of these imagined experiences is Napoleon. At no point does an 'I' enter into the content of my imagining. Neither the sensory nor the suppositional imaginings have content that is first personal.[22]

So Williams tells us that we should prefer the phrase 'imagining being Napoleon' to the phrase 'imagining that I am Napoleon'. But why should we accept Williams' reformulation? There are, at least, two considerations in its

favour.[23] To begin with a simple point about the phenomenology of imagining being Napoleon, it simply does not seem that I am imagining anything about myself. I am a philosopher born in the late 20th century, but I certainly do not intend to imagine anything about such a person when I imagine being Napoleon. Phenomenologically speaking, the only person that my imagining is about is a French General. In Williams' phrase, my imagining doesn't seem to contain anything about my 'ordinary empirical' self.[24] If we wish to take this phenomenology seriously, we should attempt to give an account of the imaginative project that does not entail that I am imagining anything about myself. If phenomenology is to be our guide here, the only person about whom I am imagining anything is Napoleon.

A second reason for doubting that when imagining being Napoleon I am imagining anything about myself is provided by Wollheim.[25] As Wollheim points out, identity is a symmetrical relation: if a is identical to b, then b is identical to a. Thus, if imagining being Napoleon involves imagining that I am identical to Napoleon it follows that it similarly involves imagining that Napoleon is identical to me. Thus, imagining being Napoleon would be the same as imagining Napoleon being me. But this seems wrong. When I imagine being Napoleon, I do *not* imagine Napoleon being me. That, as Wollheim puts it, is a 'different imaginative project' (1984: 75). Imagining being Napoleon involves stepping into Napoleon's shoes, imagining Napoleon being me does not. If it is true that these really are different imaginative projects, then no part of what I am imagining is that I am Napoleon.[26]

Walton rejects this piece of reasoning. He argues that, at most, the fact that identity is symmetrical shows us that there is *more* to imagining being Napoleon than imagining that I am identical to Napoleon.[27] The idea here is that the imaginative projects of imagining being Napoleon and imagining Napoleon being me both involve, but are not exhausted by, imagining that I am identical to Napoleon (or, imagining that Napoleon is identical to me). In addition to this imagined identity, there will be associated different sensory imaginings. Associated with imagining being Napoleon will be sensory imaginings of the desolation at Austerlitz. Associated with imagining Napoleon being me will be associated sensory imaginings of riding the Number 43 to Liverpool Street, etc. These are two different imaginative projects that share a common suppositional component. But surely Walton is mistaken in this. On this view, there is literally no difference between imagining being Napoleon riding the Number 43, and imagining Napoleon being me riding the Number 43. But surely these imaginative projects differ precisely in *which person* is imagined to be riding the Number 43.

The conclusion to draw from all of this is, I believe, that when we engage in imagining being someone else, we do not imagine anything about ourselves.[28] We ourselves do not enter into the content of our imaginings when we imagine, say, being Napoleon. When I imagine being Napoleon, I imagine various experiences from the inside, and then suppositionally imagine that the subject of these experiences is Napoleon. This is the simplest account of what it is to

imagine being others, and it does not involve our imagining anything first personal. But, as we shall see, this view has important consequences for the account that we give of perceptual experience, and bodily awareness in particular. Specifically, this claim when held in conjunction with the dependency thesis, allows us to mount an argument against the view that in bodily awareness I am presented with my body as a *bodily self*.

4. The Argument

The argument against the view that bodily awareness constitutes a form of self awareness begins with the observation that I can imagine being Napoleon feeling a bodily sensation such as a pain in the left foot. According to the dependency thesis, when I imagine a pain I imagine experiencing a pain. It follows from this that the content of perceptual awareness will be 'mirrored' by the content of sensory imagination. That is, whatever account we give of the content of perceptual experience will affect the account we can give of the content of sensory imagination. Consequently, we can argue from the content of experience to the content of sensory imagination, and vice versa. Now, if what I have said about imagining being other people is correct, then imagining being Napoleon having a pain in the left foot will not contain me as an object. The only person in the content of this imagining is Napoleon, who is placed there by the supposition that he is the subject of the imagined experiences. The sensory imagining contains just the relevant experience and is not a first personal state. Thus, when I simply imagine a pain, but without specifying whose pain, the imagined experience is not first personal. But, by the dependency thesis, we arrive at the conclusion that experiencing a pain in the left foot is not an experience that has me as an object, it is not first personal. This is for the reason that the content of sensory imagination mirrors the content of experience. With this, we have rejected the view that in bodily awareness I am aware of an object that is presented as my bodily self, we have rejected the view that bodily awareness is a form of self awareness.

Let me approach this argument from another direction. When I imagine being Napoleon having a pain, the very same piece of sensory imagination would serve equally well to imagine being Goldilocks having a pain. The difference between the two is a difference in what is suppositionally imagined, i.e. whose experience it is. This means that the occurrence of the experience in the imagination leaves open, fails to determine, the identity of the imagined experiencer. But this means that the imagined experience does not have first person content, for the first person concept serves precisely to determine the identity of the experiencer. First personal states have as their object the subject whose states they are. Once again, the conclusion is that neither imagined, nor actual, bodily awareness has first person content. My body is not presented to me as myself.

The first personal view holds that in bodily awareness my body is given to me as myself. If one accepts the dependency thesis, when I imagine a pain I am

imagining an experience of a pain. As such, the first personal content of the standard case of bodily awareness should be carried over to the content of the sensory imagining. Thus, imagining having a pain has the self as its object. But we can imagine being Napoleon having a pain. The view would now have to hold either that I imagine myself having a pain, and then suppose that I am identical to Napoleon, or that the occurrence of the first person in the imagined experience has, not me, but Napoleon as its object. The first of these options I have already rejected. The second is committed to the view that I can entertain first personal states that have someone else as their object. This involves a rejection of the assumption made earlier, that if I am in a state that has first personal content, then that state has me as its object.

So it seems that, given the following three claims, the first personal view must be abandoned: first personal states have their subject as their object, sensorily imagining a φ is imagining experiencing a φ, and when imagining being someone else I do not imagine anything about myself. I have treated the first of these as an assumption, and offered a brief defence of the second and third.[29]

5. Objections Rebutted

Is there really no coherent way for the proponent of the bodily self awareness view to describe the case of imagining being Napoleon having a pain? Consider the following suggestion. It might be possible to imagine being Napoleon feeling a pain in the following way: first we simply imagine having a pain, then we *abstract* away from the first person element of this imagining, then fill in the gap by suppositionally imagining that it is Napoleon enjoying the imagined experience. In this way, it might be argued, we can consistently endorse the first personal view of experience, the dependency thesis, and the view that imagining other people does not involve imagining anything about myself.

How are we to understand the idea that we *abstract* the first personal element from the imagining? One interpretation would be that abstraction involves concentrating on, or paying attention to, a particular aspect of experience. But this is not the relevant notion. For, on this account, the imagined experience would still be first personal, and so the problem would remain. In order for the suggestion to have the desired consequences it must not simply be that I imagine a first personal experience but pay no attention the first personal aspect. Rather, the process of abstraction must actually alter the content of that which is imagined. A better suggestion is this. Whilst the content of experience is first personal, it is possible to imagine a *part* of that content, i.e. everything but the explicit occurrence of the first person. As an analogy, consider imagining, from the inside, lying in bed. Now, abstract away from the experience of one's legs. The idea is that it is possible to imagine just the experience of the top half of one's body.

This analogy is useful so far as it goes. But, in the legs case, what we have abstracted away from is a detachable part. In the case of the first person, this is

less obviously so. It is far from clear that we can abstract away from the first personal element of experience. This is partly because it is plausible to think that if bodily awareness is first personal, then that fact is something that permeates the phenomenology of bodily awareness. Indeed, proponents of the first personal view of bodily awareness may further want to hold that being first personal is no contingent feature of bodily awareness but forms part of its essence. If this is so, then a better analogy would be this: imagine a square, now abstract away one of its corners. It is not clear that this represents a real possibility.

However, even supposing that this kind of abstraction makes sense, then the suggestion faces the following dilemma: either that which is imagined is an experience or it is not. If that which is imagined is not an experience then the suggested view involves a rejection of the dependency thesis. On the other hand, if that which is imagined is an experience, then what is being imagined is a bodily awareness type experience that is not first personal. However, this imagined case of bodily awareness without first person content would be, phenomenologically speaking, just like our own first personal bodily awareness. For when I imagine being Napoleon feeling a pain, what I imagine is being him suffering something *just like I suffer when I have a pain*.[30] But now the proponent of the first person view has all but given in to his opponent, it having been admitted that the first personal aspect of bodily awareness might be dropped with no loss of phenomenology. Given this, we would want to know what the motivation is for such a view. That nothing in the phenomenology of bodily awareness compels us to think of it as first personal certainly conflicts with the accounts offered by supporters of the view.[31]

A second objection is as follows. At the beginning I distinguished between two different accounts of the content of bodily awareness. On the first, in bodily awareness my body is given to me as *my body* or *this body*, where the demonstrative 'this' is one that exploits the special mode of bodily awareness. On the second my body is given to me as a bodily self. I have been arguing against the second of these, claiming that it cannot account for our capacity to imagine being other people. But, supposing that argument cogent, does it not tell similarly against the view that my body is presented to me as *my body*? To say that my body is given to me as *my body* or *this body* is to paper over an important distinction. For the first of these is first personal while the second is not. If bodily awareness has the content 'My body is *F*', does that not qualify it as first personal in some sense? For doesn't 'my body' mean something like 'the body that I am aware of in *this* way' (where the 'this' exploits the modality of bodily awareness)? After all, one might plausibly render 'My car' as 'The car that I own'. And what is it, it might be thought, to own a body if not to be aware of if in the relevant way?[32] Since this reformulation is explicitly first personal, then it too will be caught in the same difficulty as was the bodily self awareness view.

It seems to me that, if 'my body' is understood in this way, the point is well made. It would indeed follow that in bodily awareness the body cannot be given as *my body*. Since it is true that I can imagine being Napoleon enjoying bodily awareness, and since first personal states have their subject as their

object, the content of bodily awareness cannot be first personal in this or any other way.

But the fact that the phrase 'my body' can be rendered as 'the body that I am aware of in *this* way' does not mean that since we can speak of my body being presented as *my body* then we can similarly say that it is presented as *the body that I am aware of in this way*. If this second articulation of the content of bodily awareness were correct, it would mean that when I am aware of my body through bodily awareness I am aware of it *as* being presented through bodily awareness. This is for the reason that the occurrence of the phrase 'in *this way*' can only be understood as making reference to the faculty of bodily awareness. That I am aware of my body *through bodily awareness* would itself be a part of the content of bodily awareness. That is, states of bodily awareness would represent themselves as states of bodily awareness. They would, as it were, wear their modality on their sleeves. But it seems highly implausible that the content of bodily awareness be so complex as to exhibit self referential content of this kind. Consider an analogous claim made for the case of vision. This would hold that 'I am *seeing* P' is part of the content of my state of seeing P. On such a view, visual states would be self representing, they would represent themselves as visual states. They would be about the world and also about themselves. My concern is that this is to over intellectualise perceptual faculties that we, after all, share with other animals.

A better way of understanding the view that in bodily awareness my body is presented to me as *my body* is to concentrate on the phenomenology of bodily awareness. What is it to perceive one's own body as *one's own* body? One suggestion might be that an object is presented to me as *my body* if it is presented as a possible location of sensations. If something is felt to be a region in which sensations could be felt, then it is felt to be a region of one's body.[33] There are two things worth noting about this. The first is that it eliminates all first person elements from the content of bodily awareness. Whilst we can say that my body is presented to me as *my body*, when we enquire further it turns out that this is cashed out in terms of the body being perceived as a possible location of sensation. Since this contains no first personal element, it is not a first personal view and finds no difficulty in accounting for our capacity to imagine being other people. When I imagine a pain, I imagine a sensation to be located in a region which is given as a possible location of sensations. When I imagine being Napoleon feeling a pain, I imagine the same thing but, in addition, suppositionally imagine that the subject of the imagined pain is Napoleon.

The second thing to note is that this account blurs the distinction between the view that my body is presented as *my body* and the view that it is presented as *this body*. What appeared to distinguish the two, the first personal character of the first, has been eliminated. What we are left with is just a distinctive way in which the body is presented (as the potential location for sensations), alongside an ability to exploit this mode of awareness in order to achieve demonstrative reference. We can say that my body is given to me as *my body* or as *this body*. There is no obvious way to distinguish the two views. The important thing is that, on

both, my body is presented as a body and nothing more. It is not presented as a bodily self.

A third objection might be offered. I have been arguing that, since when imagining being Napoleon I do not imagine anything about myself, it follows that imagined bodily awareness (and thus bodily awareness) cannot have first person content. But, it will be pointed out, not only can I imagine being Napoleon feeling a pain, I can also imagine being Napoleon thinking something or uttering a sentence. As an example, I can imagine being Napoleon thinking, or saying, 'I am *F*'. All must agree that such thoughts and sentences are first personal. After all, their articulation involves essential use of the first person pronoun. But now we can go on to ask who these first personal thoughts or sentences have as their object? Given the account that I have been defending, we had better not say that they refer to me, the imaginer, since I have argued that I do not enter into the content of the imagining. Let us suppose then, that they refer to Napoleon. But if this is the case we are forced to allow that, within the context of the imagination, I can entertain first personal states that have someone other than myself as their object. That is, I can imagine thinking a first personal thought that has Napoleon as its object. Given that everyone must account for these phenomena, all must allow that this can occur. It is, therefore, no objection to the first personal view of bodily awareness that it has the consequence that a subject can entertain first personal content about someone else.

This is a powerful objection but is not, in the end, compelling. The reason is that there is an important difference between imagining thought or speech and imagining experience.[34] This difference allows us to explain the phenomena of imagined thought and speech, whilst continuing to insist that all first personal content has its subject as its object. We can begin by noting that when I imagine experiencing an *F*, I do not thereby have an experience of an *F*.[35] For example, when I imagine an itch I do not thereby have an itch, and when I imagine seeing a tiger I do not thereby see a tiger (even a faint image of a tiger).

But things are, I submit, different with the case of imagining thinking something. When I imagine thinking that Bernard is a bear, that thought content actually runs through my mind. That is, I cannot imagine thinking something without thinking that thought.[36] I do not mean to say that one must believe or otherwise endorse this content. Just that, when I imagine from the inside thinking something with a given content, it must be the case that I currently entertain a thought with that very content. It follows from this point that when I imagine thinking 'I am *F*', I do actually think 'I am *F*'. I do actually entertain the content 'I am *F*'. This thought that I actually think is a standard first personal thought, and as such it has me as its object.

I further maintain that there is no imagined thought in addition to this thought. When I imagine thinking 'I am *F*', the only thought with which we need concern ourselves is the actual thought that I think. In a sense, imagining thinking a thought just is thinking a thought. But now let us suppose that I imagine being Napoleon thinking 'I am *F*'. How are we to characterise this imaginative project? Quite plausibly, we should say the following: that when

I engage in this imaginative project I think the thought 'I am *F*' and suppositionally imagine that Napoleon is its thinker (or maybe that Napoleon is thinking a thought with *that* content). As is the case with simply imagining thinking something, there is no additional imaginary thought over and above this actual thought. It follows that, beyond this actual thought that refers to me, the thinker, there is no additional thought about which we can ask who its object is. But the objection with which we are concerned relied precisely on the availability of such a question.

The case of imagined speech is, I suggest, to be treated analogously, but with certain added complexity. When I imagine being Napoleon *saying* 'I am *F*', I think the thought 'I am *F*', suppositionally imagine that a sentence with this content is being uttered by Napoleon, and at the same time sensorily imagine the relevant movement of lips, the sound of the words, and so on. Once more, the only first personal state is my own thought, and this thought refers to me, the thinker. There is no further question to be asked as to who the referent is of the imagined first person state, for there is none. Again, this undermines the objection, which relied on pressing the question of who it is that is the object of the imagined first personal state.

It should be clear that none of these claims are remotely plausible when it comes to imagining experiences. This is, of course, for the reason that imagining an experience does not involve having that experience. As such, if one accepts the first personal view of bodily awareness, there is a real question to be answered as to the object of these imagined experiences. To make this clear, contrast once more the case of imagining thinking 'I am *F*' and, supposedly, imagining a state of bodily awareness with the content 'I am *F*. In the first case, I think an actual (self referring) thought with the relevant content, and then suppositionally imagine that *that* thought is being thought by Napoleon. In the second case, I imagine an experience with the relevant content, and then suppositionally imagine either than I am identical to Napoleon or that Napoleon is the subject of the imagined experience (is the referent of the occurrence of the first person in the imagined content). I have been arguing that neither of these views are acceptable.

If all this is correct, then the objection fails. For, it has been shown how we can, in a way that is not ad hoc, give different accounts of our imagining thought or speech and our imagining experiences. Although I can imagine being Napoleon thinking something first personal, I cannot imagine being Napoleon experiencing something first personal.

I want now to consider a final objection to the argument as it has been presented. According to this objection, I have wrongly characterised the view that I am rejecting, the view that in bodily awareness I am aware of my body as my bodily self. I have been construing the view as, in effect, treating bodily awareness as first personal. The content of bodily awareness is to be thought of as grounding first personal reference. As such, given the concept of the first person, states of bodily awareness are states that have their subject as their object. This entails that the object of bodily awareness is the self.

But some will object that this metaphysical claim is not a necessary part of the view in question. For example, Cassam writes, 'The issue is not whether the subject is a physical thing but whether it is experienced as a physical thing. The claim that the bodily self is the presented subject of experience would be compatible with maintaining that the subject is in fact non physical' (1997: 57). On this understanding it is wrong to construe the view as holding that states of bodily awareness have their subject as their object. Since my argument makes essential use of this claim, the argument does not affect the view properly understood.

But could it really be that the body be presented as the bodily self even if the body and the self are distinct? Is it coherent, as Cassam suggests, to claim that in bodily awareness I am aware of the body as the self even though the body is not the self? Suppose that Cartesian dualism were true. It would then be the case that the object of bodily awareness, a physical object, is not the self. It would follow that a judgement about, and based on an awareness of, the object of bodily awareness would not be about the self. I have been claiming that first personal judgements are about oneself. If this is correct, it would follow that bodily awareness could not ground first person judgements. But now what is the force of saying that the body is presented as the self? It seems plausible to hold that if there is such a thing as self awareness then it should be such as to ground first person judgements.

Cassam's suggestion is based on the thought that it is possible to divorce the phenomenology of the self from the metaphysics of the self. I disagree. If we allow that it is the nature of first personal states to have their subject as their object, and that to be aware of something as the self is to be in a first personal state, then the metaphysics *cannot* be divorced from the phenomenology. One can only be aware of something as the self *if it is the self*. This follows from a consideration of the relation between the notion of the self and our conception of a first person state. So, either the view in question does have the implication that states of bodily awareness have their subject as their object, or it fails to connect with the concept of the self. If the former, the argument applies. If the latter, the philosophical interest of the view is unclear.

6. Concluding Remarks

The dependency thesis provides us with a tool that allows us to argue from perception to the sensory imagination, and vice versa. When the dependency thesis is combined with an adequate account of our capacity to imagine being other people, we have good reason to reject the view that in bodily awareness we are aware of a bodily self. As long as we understand first personal content as content such that its subject is its object, then bodily experience cannot have first personal content. Bodily awareness is not an awareness of the bodily self. As a result, the kind of bodily self awareness that some philosophers have been disposed to defend cannot be what underlies our capacity to refer to ourselves

using in first person. Bodily self awareness cannot ground self reference since there is simply no such thing.[37]

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NOTES

[1] In defence of this claim see Armstrong 1962 and O'Shaughnessy 1980: Vol. 1, Ch.5.

[2] Although see Martin 1995 for some reasons to be careful on this point.

[3] This view is present in Ayers 1991, Brewer 1995, Cassam 1995 and 1997, Bermúdez 1998, and de Gaynesford 2002.

[4] See, most obviously, Kaplan 1977.

[5] See, for example, Corazza, Fish and Gorvett 2002.

[6] It is, of course, somewhat controversial. The proponent of the view must find a way of evading, for the cases of thought and perception, Anscombe's 1975 case against the referential character of 'I'. On this, see O'Brien 1994 and Harcourt 2000.

[7] For a defence of non-conceptual first person states, see Bermúdez 1998.

[8] Compare Sutton Morris' claim that 'Hume, looking into himself, is unable to discover any continuing datum. He overlooks the most obvious candidate, one's continuing sense of being an embodied experiencer' (1982: 217).

[9] See Evans 1982: Ch.7. Also see O'Brien 1995a and 1995b.

[10] Peacocke 1985.

[11] Peacocke 1985 endorses something very much like the dependency thesis.

[12] It has been suggested to me that one can sensorily imagine an isosceles triangle, an object that is not perceptible. But I am doubtful. Whilst I understand what it would be to suppositionally imagine that there is an isosceles triangle, or to sensorily imagine a representation of an isosceles triangle, I am simply at a loss as to what it would be to sensorily imagine the triangle itself. In what way is it supposed to differ from imagining the representation?

[13] That is, they cannot visualise. There may be some ways of understanding the phrase according to which the congenitally blind can, in fact, imagine seeing.

[14] See, for example, Kerr 1983 and McIver Lopez 2003.

[15] Perky 1910.

[16] After a partial replication Perky's results, Segal 1972 suggests an interpretation of the data that involves the subject recruiting sensory input to 'flesh out' sensory imaginings. It may be argued that these experiments involve putting subjects in contexts where they are highly suggestible about the nature of their mental states. But if this is the case, then we would want an explanation of the fact that subjects are suggestible in this particular way. My suggestion would be that it is, in part, the phenomenological

similarities between perceiving and imagining that makes subjects so easily suggestible about which of the two states they are in.

[17] For an interesting account of some of these, see Casey 1976: Pt. 3.

[18] Currie and Ravenscroft 2002: 28, suggest that the dependency thesis could better explain the phenomenological differences rather than similarities since, according to it, whilst perception has the content *F*, imagination has the content *seeing an F*. This difference in content, they suggest, would make it difficult to explain the similarities in phenomenology. But we should bear in mind that perceptual experience is 'transparent' to its objects (See Martin 2002). We imagine a tiger *by* imagining seeing it. It does not follow that because we are imagining an experience we fail to imagine the object of the experience. Given this, there is every reason to think that seeing an *F* and imagining seeing an *F* will be phenomenologically similar. Both Currie and Ravenscroft 2002, and Noordhoff 2002 reject the dependency thesis in favour of the 'similar content hypothesis', according to which perceptual experiences and sensory imaginings have similar contents. It is worth noting that the validity of the argument that I present in section 4 is preserved even if this switch is made.

[19] Williams 1973.

[20] For an interesting recent discussion of empathy from a psychoanalytic and Nietzschean viewpoint, see Richmond 2004.

[21] If simulationism captures at least some of the truth of our capacity to understand other minds, then imagining being other people might well have an even more fundamental role to play. A simulationist account that takes on the view of imagining being others defended here, is offered by Gordon 1995.

[22] A good discussion of imagining being others that takes Williams' line, and to which I am broadly sympathetic, can be found in Reynolds 1989. An interesting alternative account can be found in Velleman 1996.

[23] A third would be that the alternative view proposes that we can imagine an impossible state of affairs. This supposes that (i) I am not Napoleon, and (ii) Identity statements are necessary. It is only problematic if we think that (iii) Imaginability entails possibility. But even those who hold that there is a strong connection between imaginability and possibility only suppose that it is an evidential relation that is defeasible. See Yablo 1993.

[24] The fact that my 'empirical self' does not enter into the content of my imagining will be taken, by some philosophers, as evidence for the view that the object of my imagination is not the empirical self but the transcendental self. For example, it might be suggested that I am imagining that the transcendental 'I' is Napoleon. This, it may be held, tells us something interesting both about the imagination and about the nature of (transcendental) self-consciousness. Such a position is defended in Vendler 1984. I do not have the space to consider this view, but should say that I take it to be something of a last resort.

[25] Wollheim 1984: 75.

[26] At least so long as we interpret this as the 'am' of identity. It has been suggested to me that we interpret this as the 'am' of predication, i.e. I imagine that I have the property of Napoleonhood. Supposing this to be coherent, whilst it evades the present objection, it nevertheless falls prey to the first, phenomenological, concern.

[27] Walton 1990: 33.

[28] It might seem that I disagree with Peacocke on this point. He writes, 'It seems that, for each person, his imaginings always in a sense involve imagining something about himself' (1985: 21). But I think that this appearance is misleading. Peacocke fleshes out his point as follows, 'imagining always involves imagining from the inside a certain (type of)

viewpoint, and someone with that viewpoint could, in the imagined world, knowledgeably judge '*I'm* thus-and-so', where the thus and so gives details of the viewpoint.' (1985:21). This is consistent with my view (see my remarks in section 5 about imagining thinking or speaking).

[29] In my view, analogues of this argument can be run for other sensory modalities. For example, I believe that such an argument will tell against the view, put forward in Peacocke 1999: Ch.6 and Bermúdez 2002, that vision has first personal content. We should instead think of the content of visual perception in the way outlined by Campbell 1994: 119.

[30] I do not mean to say that imaging a pain is just like a pain, but that what is imagined when I imagine a pain is just like a pain (it is a pain!).

[31] See, for example, the argument put forward in Brewer 1995.

[32] I do not mean to endorse this view. It is what Cassam 1995 calls idealism about body ownership.

[33] I take this suggestion from Martin 1995, who gives a far more detailed account.

[34] Everything that I say in what follows is intended to apply equally to the case of imagining having first personal beliefs, desires etc. In each of these cases, one must think the relevant first personal thought. Further, in what follows I am assuming that imagining thinking 'I am *F*' occurs within the wider context of a sensory imagining. Otherwise, it is not clear that the imagined thought would even engage the *sensory* imagination and unclear how the objection would be relevant to the present argument.

[35] Indeed, imagining being in some conscious state may even preclude being in it, as Sartre 2003 seems to have thought.

[36] Of course I can name the thought that Bernard is a bear 'P', then imagine that I am thinking P, without actually thinking P. But this is not to imagine thinking, it is to imagine *that* I am thinking. This is a case of suppositional imagining.

[37] Thanks to Ann Whittle, Lucy O'Brien, Mark Kalderon, audiences at Warwick and Manchester, and to an anonymous referee for *EJP*.

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