Bodily Self-Knowledge as a Special Form of Perception

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In philosophizing one must descend into the primordial chaos, and feel at home there.

Wittgenstein (1948)

I. Introduction

WE NORMALLY ENJOY IMMEDIATE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR BODY —of the presence, position, and movement of our own limbs. This knowledge is extremely familiar but also peculiar, because while the *objects* of this knowledge, our limbs, are like objects of the external senses in being *material bodies*, the *mode* of this knowledge is very different: it is knowledge *from the first-person angle* or *from within*. So there is a peculiar combination of materiality and interiority in this knowledge.

The kind of interiority here defines a kind of *self–knowledge*. This kind of self–knowledge —the *genuine* kind we might say— is demanding, since one must not only know something about oneself but also know it from within. Knowledge from within of one's own limbs, or *bodily self–knowledge*, is obviously important for understanding the peculiar relation between one's mind and body.

This paper develops an understanding of this knowledge by pursuing a particular question: Is this knowledge a form of *perception*? Many think it is, treating it as a sixth sense analogous to the usual five. Some think it is not, on the ground that it is *self*–knowledge.

I shall attempt a synthesis and argue for a 'middle' view: this knowledge is a special form of perception. It is a *special* form of perception precisely because it is at the same time also a form of *self–knowledge*, which is incompatible with its being a sixth sense. Yet it is a special form of *perception* because this knowledge is essentially *sensuous*. In particular, it involves a special kind of *perception of space* that is enabled by a special class of sensations, which I shall call *vital–dynamic sensations*.

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Disputatio. Philosophical Research Bulletin
Vol. 11, No. 20, May 2022, pp. 71-99
ISSN: 2254–0601 | [EN] | **ARTÍCULO**

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Our capacity for this knowledge has received various names, such as *kinesthesia, proprioception*, and *body–sense*. I shall favour 'proprioception'. These names suggest or declare that proprioception is perceptual, but this is prejudicial, because these names themselves need justification. I shall use 'proprioception' only for convenience, without prejudice.

II. The Anscombe–McDowell View and the Sixth–Sense View

G. E. M. Anscombe claims that when we ordinarily know the presence, position, and movement of our limbs, we know it straight off, *without observation*, in particular without that supposed special kind of observation that is called inner–observation or self–observation[1].

This claim is made in the context of her investigation into *practical knowledge*, "the knowledge that a man has of his intentional actions" (*Intention*, §28). Practical knowledge is related to but also distinct from proprioceptive knowledge. I shall not discuss it in this paper. (On occasion it is hard to avoid mentioning practical knowledge, and I shall then touch on it, but only very briefly).

John McDowell follows Anscombe on proprioceptive knowledge: it is non–observational or non–perceptual. But he goes further and gives arguments as to *why* it is non–perceptual.

One argument McDowell gives is very general: proprioception is non–perceptual because it is *self*–knowledge. It goes as follows. Perceptual knowledge is a species of receptive knowledge. But self–knowledge is by nature not receptive, because receptive knowledge derives from the object of knowledge, which is typically distinct from the knowing subject. In cases where the object and the subject of knowledge are not distinct (as, e.g., when one sees one's own hand), the object is known *as other*, not *as oneself*. But it lies in the very nature of self–knowledge that the object of knowledge is oneself and is known *as oneself*. So self–knowledge is non–receptive and, *a fortiori*, non–perceptual[2].

[1] See *Intention*, especially §§8, 28–32, "On Sensations of Position", and "Substance". Anscombe focuses on knowledge of limb *position* and *movement*, but I think she would agree that knowledge of limb *presence* is also not observational. The articulation into limb *presence*, *position*, and *movement* is due to O'Shaughnessy (*The Will*, Vol. 1).

[2] McDowell (2011). His distinction between *as oneself* and *as other* (which he notes goes back to Aristotle) is the same as that between *from within* and *from without* (e.g. by vision). This distinction should not be straightforwardly equated with that between awareness of oneself *as subject* and awareness of oneself *as an object*, because the criteria for "as an object" are not straightforward. Some criteria allow us to insist

In concert with this general argument, McDowell also gives specific arguments for the same conclusion. These arguments turn, *inter alia*, on a particular thesis about spatial perception, which says that perception of spatial properties requires perception of *secondary qualities*.

Together, this package of arguments by McDowell amounts to a powerful strengthening of Anscombe's original view. This view, which I shall call the Anscombe–McDowell view, has two features. Positively, it emphasizes that proprioception is a form of *self*–knowledge. This means, if we accept McDowell's arguments, that it is non–perceptual. Negatively, it downplays the role of *sensation* in proprioception (to be discussed later). This undermines any claim that it is a form of *perception*[3].

Now many people hold an opposite view: proprioception is a form of perception, analogous to the customary five external senses. Actually it has been called the sixth sense. This view is often assumed without discussion. In particular, writers holding this view often show little concern with whether proprioception is a form of self–knowledge and, if it is, whether this is compatible with its being perceptual. Rather, this view seems to be mainly based on the conviction that *sensations* play a crucial role in proprioception[4].

III. A Middle View, Outlined

I think both views contain important insights, but neither gets it quite right.

that one can be aware of oneself simultaneously *as subject* and *as an object*. In contrast, *from within* and *from without* are never compatible.

[3] Gallagher (2005, pp. 137–8) and Bermúdez (2018, Chapter 6) also argue that proprioception is non–perceptual, but on the quite different ground that it is *non–perspectival* (there is no privileged point that can serve as the spatial origin of a reference–frame). I shall not discuss this line of argument but focus on McDowell.

[4] Accounts falling under my label "the sixth–sense view" are actually quite diverse. (Some distinguish proprioception from kinesthesia, the vestibular sense of balance … as still further senses, but I shall not need these finer distinctions.) Many accounts treat proprioception as perceptual but show little concern for the question whether this is compatible with treating it as a form of self–knowledge, e.g., Longuenesse (2017, Chapter 2), de Vignemont (2018), Wong (2018), and most accounts by psychologists.

Writers sensitive to the compatibility question include Cassam and Martin. Cassam treats proprioception as a kind of self–awareness but is non–committal about whether it is perceptual (1993, esp. pp. 116–7), partly because he is non–committal about whether perception must involve keeping track of its object (1995). Martin (1995) treats proprioception as perceptual and argues that it is not self–awareness, chiefly on the ground that it does not absolutely ("purely a priori", p. 283) guarantee self–reference. I shall not adopt this criterion of self–awareness.

What is insightful about the Anscombe–McDowell view is its insistence that proprioception is a form of self–knowledge. The main shortcoming of this view is that, in downplaying the role of sensations, it threatens to make proprioceptive knowledge *anesthetic*. This role is rightly recognized as crucial by the sixth–sense view. The main shortcoming of this latter view is that it often fails to appreciate the deep differences between proprioception and the external senses, which threatens to make the objects of proprioception like objects of the external senses, that is, threatens to make our body or limbs *alien* to ourselves. A proper synthesis must preserve both the sensuous nature of proprioception and its interiority, its being a form of self–knowledge.

Such a middle path is not entirely untrodden. Brian O'Shaughnessy, in his profound work on the notion of a body–image, has provided materials essential for achieving such a synthesis[5].

This notion of a body–image, of a unique kind of mental map that relates one to one's body *from within*, enables us to say somewhat articulately what we have known inarticulately since time immemorial, namely, how proprioceptive sensations are given to us as located on *a primordial inner landscape* —one's own body as one relates to it from within— and, through this givenness, give one knowledge from within of the presence, position, and movement of one's limbs. I shall, following O'Shaughnessy, call this primordial inner landscape one's *body–space*.

IV. The Character of Proprioceptive Sensations: "Inseparable"

Let us now inquire into proprioceptive sensations. This is necessary because, without *some* appeal to sensation, we have no right to claim *any* kind of perception, however special.

Proprioceptive sensations have the peculiar character of being in a sense 'characterless'. To bring this out, consider a remark by Wittgenstein:

> […] we should like to say of the sensation of posture that it has no content[6].

Consider, for example, the posture of having one's right elbow bent. The postural sensation can be described thus: "I feel my right elbow is bent". Now, by "no

[5] O'Shaughnessy (2008). I do not think he has himself achieved such a synthesis, but critical engagement with him is for another occasion.

[6] Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Vol. 1, §948.

content" Wittgenstein cannot mean that "my right elbow is bent" has no content, since it clearly has a content. Rather, he must mean that the sensation lacks a particular sort of content. A plausible interpretation is: there is no sensation of *secondary qualities*. This point, whatever Wittgenstein himself thought, seems right.

The notion of secondary qualities has attracted much controversy. To avoid complications, I shall adopt Anscombe's conception of secondary qualities, which is also accepted by McDowell. Her conception is contained in this passage:

> We can see three ranks of predicate that apply to substances; the substantial ones themselves, like "alive", "horse", "gold"; the predicates that are not substantial but are substance–involving like "malleable", "in powder form", "awake"; and predicates that are neither substantial nor substance–involving. These are the secondary–quality words, together with such qualifications as go with them (Anscombe 1981b, p. 40).

By *substance* here she basically means *material body*.

Now proprioceptive sensations, at least in the normal course of life, are very elusive. We do sometimes say, e.g., "I feel my knees are bent" or "I feel my feet" (limb presence), but such 'feels' seem to be extremely 'thin' or even nonexistent. They also seem too 'smooth' or 'characterless' to allow any qualitative grip.

This is difficult. Doubts can arise about the very existence of proprioceptive sensations. But let us suppress the doubts for now and ask: *If* there are proprioceptive sensations, how should we characterize them, these seemingly 'characterless' sensations?

Anscombe is helpful here. She says that, normally, the sensations are *not separably describable*. That is, normally proprioceptive sensations can be described *only* in terms of what they enable us to know —only in terms of the presence, position, and movement of our limbs. E.g., normally one can only describe the postural sensation one gets when one has one's legs crossed in terms of "the sensation of *crossed legs*"[7].

A good way to illuminate this peculiar "inseparable" character of proprioceptive sensations is to contrast them with sensations involved in the external senses, e.g. in vision. Suppose a tourist on a boat suddenly spots a crocodile in the water. Her visual sensation can be described in terms of "crocodile in water", but it is also describable in independent terms, such as "something brown and elongated against a blue background". But in the case of

[7] See Anscombe, *Intention*, §§8, 28 and "On Sensations of Position", p. 71.

proprioceptive sensations, normally no such independent description is available. Language gives out here, very quickly.

This contrast is starker in cases of mistake or deception. Suppose, after the tourist exclaims "Crocodile!", the tour guide calmly explains that it is not a crocodile but just a piece of dead log. The tourist takes a second look and is relieved. What *did* she see at first? She can no longer say, as she in effect did, that she saw a crocodile. But she can still say, in retreat, that she saw something brown and elongated. And she can offer this as an answer if asked: "Why did you think that there was a crocodile?" By contrast, there is *no room for retreat* in proprioception. Suppose a neurologist is studying how someone is recovering from lower–body anesthesia and quizzes him: "Are your legs bent?" The man, without looking, answers "Yes". He is then brought to see, to his astonishment, that his legs are in fact straight. But if he is now asked "Why did you think your legs were bent?", he has *no* analogous place to retreat to. He can only answer "Well, it felt so" or "I felt that way", where the "so" or "that way" is precisely "my legs were bent", not some independent description.

To sum up, proprioceptive sensations are "inseparable": normally they cannot be described in terms other than the presence, position, and movement of one's own limbs. In particular, they cannot be described in terms of secondary qualities and are in this sense 'contentless'[8].

V. The Content of Proprioceptive Sensations: Body–Spatial

If proprioceptive sensations have 'no content' in that sense, what about the content they do have, the content described in terms of limb presence, position, and movement? E.g., the content of the feeling that "my left arm is straight"?

This content is, above all, *spatial*. It is obvious that the contents of both "left" and "straight" are spatial. And it is only slightly less obvious that the content of "arm" is also spatial, because an arm is a material object that occupies physical space.

More importantly, the kind of spatial content at issue is correlated with a distinctive kind of space (by this I mean a kind of *understanding of space*; there is of course only one space). It is not the space that we speak of in astronomy, in civil engineering, or in much of daily life (e.g. "walking to the park"). In all these kinds of spatial discourse (great differences between them notwithstanding) space is *external* to one's bodily self. By contrast, one's arm is *internal* to one's

[8] To repeat: under normal conditions. Under non–normal conditions, it is quite possible to describe the sensations in independent terms.

bodily self —in a very demanding sense of "internal": my arm and the totality of which it is a part, my whole body, are spatially extended objects *and known to be such from within*. This combination of interiority and spatiality, which is traditionally tightly tied to exteriority (e.g. in Descartes and Kant), is distinctive of body–space.

The contrast between external and internal space receives elaborate and deep treatment by O'Shaughnessy. The fundamental point I want to draw from him is the following. Proprioceptive sensations, like other bodily sensations such as pains, are necessarily set upon the scheme of one's body–image, which in the favorable case is identical to the scheme of one's body–space[9].

In other words, the basic *given* here is not a collection of 'naked' sensations or feelings, but a rich unitary whole: *sensation*–in–a–*limb*–positioned–in–*body–space*. This is a unitary whole because the sensation (the mental aspect) and the limb–positioned–in–body–space (the physical aspect) are "disclosed along with and via" each other[10]. Or to put it in Frege's term, their *modes of givenness* are the same. This sameness is what makes the sensation "inseparable".

VI. The Existence of Proprioceptive Sensations: Anscombe

But *are* proprioceptive sensations actually given?

In answering this question, let us focus on the most important, because most basic, context, namely the functioning of proprioception in the normal course of our daily life[11].

Anscombe sometimes casts doubts on the existence of proprioceptive sensations, or on "the sense in which these 'sensations' are sensations at all" (1981a, p. 73). I shall focus on her argument against a strong reason for thinking that there actually are proprioceptive sensations.

It may happen (though this is extremely rare) that one is mistaken about whether one's leg is stretched out, and that one would then say "It felt just as if I …" or "I had the sensation of …". This, Anscombe says,

[9] The favorable case is the veridical or normal case. Normally one's body–image is a veridical map of his body–space, thanks to a massive but inconspicuous favor of nature. Of course the case can be unfavorable, such as in phenomena like phantom limb or alien hand.

[10] O'Shaughnessy, 2008, Vol. 1, p. 201. Essentially the same point is also made by Martin (1995).

[11] Characteristically in this context, we do not pay *active* attention to sensations, if any, in our limbs. I will assume this context by default (to avoid excessive complication), but I will also consider non–normal contexts as occasions arise.

> helps one to think that there is a sensation (corresponding to the visual impression of a blue expanse […]) which is the datum in judging one's position, and which on occasion occurs without the position. […] so it is supposed that the sensations of giving a reflex kick, etc., must be in principle describable in other terms […]" (*ibid.*)

I have quoted her characterization of her target of criticism, but omitted the criticism itself. This is because while her criticism is effective, her identification of the target betrays a blind spot.

Her target is the view that (1) the existence of proprioceptive sensations is thrown into relief when mistakes occur and (2) these sensations are like sensations of the external senses in that they have their own intrinsic qualities, which are to be described "in other terms", namely in terms of secondary qualities that are analogous to ("corresponding to") secondary qualities in the external senses, e.g., blue in vision.

But this misses the possibility that proprioceptive sensations may not involve any secondary qualities at all, but are rather to be described in terms of *primary* qualities.

VII. The Existence and Role of Proprioceptive Sensations: McDowell

This possibility is in effect ruled out by McDowell. After making various arguments, he concludes that our natural idiom of "having sensation" in a limb is best understood not as saying that one is actually feeling sensations in it but as acknowledging that one is "susceptible" to sensations (2011, p. 145). That is, he denies the actuality of proprioceptive sensations and retreats to a potentiality. This denial makes proprioception *anesthetic*.

On this matter McDowell is at odds with O'Shaughnessy, who holds that there are actually proprioceptive sensations, though they are *extremely recessive*[12].

It is important to note that this is *not* a dispute in subtle phenomenology, regarding whether proprioceptive sensations are (1) existent but extremely recessive or (2) nonexistent. Rather, much deeper issues are involved.

It is time to examine McDowell's reasons for thinking that proprioception is not perceptual. I shall examine two, one general and one specific.

[12] Specifically, *attentively* recessive (2008, Vol. 1, pp. 178, 184, 186). O'Shaughnessy modified his account of proprioceptive sensations over time, but not on their actuality.

We have seen his general reason: that proprioception is a species of *self*–knowledge rules out the possibility that it is perceptual. Because in perceptual knowledge or more broadly in receptive knowledge, the subject must be *affected* by the object of knowledge, which usually requires that the object is *distinct* from the subject. If these are not distinct, receptive knowledge requires that one is known to oneself *as other*.

But this last requirement, which effectively rules out the idea of receptive self–knowledge as incoherent, calls for justification. McDowell gives none, apparently taking it to be inherent in the very idea of receptive knowledge.

But is the idea of receptive self–knowledge really incoherent?

Here it is relevant to consider another point made by McDowell, about knowledge of one's sensations. His aim in making this point is to help break resistance to the idea that proprioceptive knowledge is neither practical nor receptive. This third possibility should not be shocking, for it is already realized in knowledge of one's own sensations. This knowledge is obviously not practical. But it is not receptive, either. One might think it is, on the ground that sensations are involuntary and we only passively suffer them. But while suffering sensations is indeed a mode of receptivity, *knowing* that one has sensations is not. This is because:

> Feeling a sensation is not a reality separate from knowing that one feels it, a reality that makes itself known by affecting the subject. There is affection of the senses in feeling the sensation, but there is not an extra affection in being aware that one feels it (McDowell 2011, p. 143).

This is subtle and important. McDowell makes the same point in different terms elsewhere: one's sensation is the "internal accusative" of one's awareness —it has no existence independently of the awareness (McDowell, *Mind and World*, pp. 21–2). In this respect, sensations differ sharply from objects that one can also be said, but in a very different sense, to feel, e.g., coins in a pocket. We can mark the difference by saying that objects of the first kind of feeling are *internal objects* and those of the second kind of feeling are *external objects*, objects whose existence is independent of the feeling.

Now McDowell's point about knowledge of one's sensations does show that there is a third kind of knowledge, neither practical nor receptive. But it does not show —and is not taken by him to show— that proprioceptive knowledge belongs to this third category. *This* claim rests rather on his conceptions of self–knowledge and receptive knowledge, which together rule out the notion of

receptive self–knowledge as incoherent. He gives no further reason for this ruling.

But this ruling can be contested —indeed in terms derived from McDowell himself, namely the contrast between internal and external objects. The key point is: the objects of proprioceptive knowledge are, unlike sensations, *not* internal objects. Because whether my arm is there or not, its position, its movement —all these matters are *independent* of my awareness of them. Otherwise put, my limbs, unlike my sensations, are *at a distance* from my mind. (This *distance* is of course not literally spatial.)

But if our limbs are, therefore, *external* objects of proprioception, we must hasten to add that they are not *so* external to our mind, or *so* distant from it, as objects of the external senses are. For that would make one's limbs or one's body *alien* to oneself and destroy proprioception as a kind of *self*–knowledge. Rather, one's body is somewhere *in between*, neither so far as to be alien to oneself nor so close as to be simply part of the one's mind. This kind of 'midway' distance is very special, and recognizing it is crucial to understanding the special relation between one's mind and body.

In particular, recognizing it makes room for the notion of *receptive self–knowledge*. Because my limbs, being material bodies, are *sufficiently distant or independent* from my mind to be able to affect a special mode of its receptivity (whose neurological basis includes what scientists call the "proprioceptive receptors"), but *not so distant or independent* as to lie beyond the scope of my self–knowledge. This special kind of *self–affection from a 'midway' distance*, when it happens against a proper cognitive background (that is, a properly functioning body–image in cooperation with a properly functioning intellect), gives us knowledge from within of our limbs.

Admittedly this idea needs development and substantiation. But, *pace* McDowell, it does not seem incoherent. To maintain it, we need to hold, with O'Shaughnessy, that there are *actual* (but extremely recessive) proprioceptive sensations in our limbs in our daily life. And we *can* hold this; McDowell's general considerations do not compel us to deny their actuality.

We can increase confidence in this idea with a concrete example, namely the phenomenon of *tics*. A common tic is the involuntary, sporadic, and slight twitching of an eyelid. The attendant sensations are prominent and not at all recessive, but they still count as proprioceptive, since they enable us to know from within the movement of a limb and are inseparable in Anscombe's sense. (An eyelid is a limb in a generalized sense.)

This twitching is independent of one's knowledge, because it might fail to

affect one (in the right way), owing to e.g. neurological disturbances, so that it does not get (properly) registered by one's receptivity. But when it affects one properly and one thereby comes to know it, as normally happens, one knows it *both receptively and from within*. This gives the idea of receptive self–knowledge a foothold.

At this point one might object that proprioceptive sensations are at most *causally* relevant to proprioceptive knowledge, but not *epistemologically* relevant. McDowell actually makes this point (McDowell 2011, Sections II–V). And indeed, *if* they are not epistemologically relevant, we are not entitled to treat proprioceptive knowledge as perceptual.

But proprioceptive sensations *do* play an epistemological role, a justificatory role. This point has already been made, silently, in my earlier discussion of proprioceptive mistake. For when the mistaken man is asked "Why did you (wrongly) think your legs were bent?", he can answer "Well (because) I *felt* that way". This is a legitimate answer to a why–question that demands justification. In such deceptive cases justification takes the form of excuse, but it figures more positively in non–deceptive cases. Thus, e.g., if a man who knows his legs are/were bent is asked "Why do/did you think so?", he can answer "Because I feel/felt so". It is true that such exchanges are rare, but this does not affect their status as exercises in the practice of demanding and supplying justifications.

It is also true that the answer "Because I feel/felt so" appeals to something whose content is exactly the same as that of what is to be justified, which might make us doubt whether the appeal can provide real justification. But this point can be met by extending an idea of McDowell's own to the present context. He has, in well–known work and in a different context, rightly argued that sensory experiences ('deliverances of receptivity') *can* provide justification for judgments affirming precisely the same contents, e.g., that there looks to be a green tree in front of me can be a reason for me to think exactly that[13]. It is true that sensory experiences in McDowell's original discussion involve sensations of secondary qualities, but because he has not really shown that proprioception is anesthetic and because the use of 'feel' or 'felt' in proprioceptive contexts seems to be *sensuous* in nature, we can extend his original idea to the proprioceptive case: the identity of content between a proprioceptive experience and a matching judgment does not preclude the former from playing a justificatory role for the latter. In sum, *feeling so* is a reason for *thinking so* in proprioception, too.

[13] See *Mind and World* (and his other relevant works). Bermúdez (2018, Ch. 7) misreads McDowell (2011) as requiring that the justifying content and the justified content must *always* be different.

VIII. A Digression: Observation *versus* Perception

Before developing a substantive account of proprioceptive 'feels' or sensations, I shall digress a bit and note a difference between *observation* and *perception*, which I have so far treated as equivalent.

The idea of observation connotes a certain *distancing*: the object of observation is held by the observer "at arm's length". This distancing is not literally spatial, but rather a matter of adopting a certain attitude. This attitude may be called the *contemplative* or *objectifying* attitude, because what it does is objectify the object, treating it *as something other*. This attitude is a fundamental posture of the mind, the characteristic attitude of theoretical reason.

Now the notion of perception also connotes the presence of this attitude, at least in many of its uses. But —and this is the difference— in some uses it does not. One such use concerns *immersed perceptual experiences*, as we might call them. E.g., a man attending a concert might be so immersed in the music that he feels *nothing exists except the music* and he might say —though only afterwards— that he *lost himself* in the music. Such a man is perceiving, but not observing.

Certainly it is somewhat artificial to draw this contrast. But drawing it requires only a slight conceptual regimentation and compensates us well: it makes available a *non–observational* notion of perception, which does not objectify or alienate its objects. It is of course this notion of perception that I shall develop and claim for proprioception.

Note that the kind of *distancing* involved in assuming the contemplative attitude should not be confused with the special 'midway' *distance* between one's mind and body that was discussed in §VII. For the former is purely mental, whereas the latter concerns both mind and body. But both these notions help sustain the idea that proprioception, despite being a form of self–knowledge, is perceptual in a special sense, by making intelligible a notion of perception that does not objectify or alienate its objects.

IX. The Ayers–McDowell Thesis

McDowell's general considerations discussed earlier are used by him to reinforce a specific point, which I shall call the Ayers–McDowell thesis. (It is drawn from Michael Ayers but put to different use by McDowell.) This thesis says (McDowell 2011, p. 140):

There is no perception of spatial properties without perception of secondary qualities.

With this, we can neatly sum up an argument for the Anscombe–McDowell view. To begin with, perception of spatial properties requires perception of secondary qualities (Ayers–McDowell thesis). But in proprioception there is no perception of secondary qualities (the 'no content' thesis considered by Wittgenstein). Yet in proprioception we do know various spatial properties of one's own body. So this knowledge is non–perceptual.

The argument is valid, but its first premise, the Ayers–McDowell thesis, is disputable.

The basic idea behind this thesis is this: perception of spatial properties must be *qualitatively mediated* by perception of secondary qualities. This is surely true of vision. Without perceiving the secondary qualities proper to this sense, i.e., colors, one cannot perceive spatial properties. Thus, e.g., one cannot see *a round plate* without seeing some colors. The idea is also true of hearing. E.g., one cannot hear *music coming from the right* without hearing some sounds. (I shall not consider smell or taste, because there is only a tenuous sense in which we can perceive spatial properties by their means. So their interest is slight. Touch will be discussed shortly.)

But why must the perception of spatial properties be mediated by that of *secondary* qualities? Why, in particular, can it not be mediated by the perception of *primary* qualities? This possibility, which I shall argue is exactly what we need to substantiate the idea of proprioception as a special form of perception, is never considered by McDowell. This is not surprising, as he thinks that the Ayers–McDowell thesis, which rules out this possibility, is underwritten by general considerations concerning self–knowledge and receptive knowledge. But as we saw, those general considerations are not compelling.

This exposes the Ayers–McDowell thesis to direct scrutiny. As we shall see, this thesis holds only for some forms of perception, but not for all. In particular, it fails to hold for proprioception as a special form of perception *and for touch*. This latter failure is fatal, because touch is undeniably a form of perception.

A simple example will show that we *can* tactually perceive spatial properties without mediation through secondary qualities. Thus I can, with a little tactile exploration by hand (while being blindfolded), find that there is an obstacle in front of me with a flat surface. Now in this process, I may also find, by certain sensations in my hand, that the surface is cold or warm, wet or dry, and the like. But such qualities, secondary qualities proper to touch, are inessential for perceiving the spatial properties in question. These are: (1) the obstacle is *in*

front of me (*at a distance of about half my arm's length*) and (2) its surface is *flat*. Perception of *these* spatial properties requires no perception of secondary qualities proper to touch, as becomes clear when we imagine the exploring hand to be screened from those secondary qualities, e.g., by a glove made of insulating materials.

If this is right, how *do* I perceive these spatial properties? If sensations of secondary qualities are not essential, what sensations are? The answer is that I perceive these properties by sensations of *pressure*, *tension*, and the like. For, regarding (1), it is by pressing against the object and finding it unyielding that I find it to be an *obstacle in front of me*, and this discovery clearly depends on various sensations of pressure and tension. Discovering (2) also depends on such sensations, though in this case they are likely to be less intense and less widely distributed in my body–space.

The important point now is this: the quality of the object that I perceive through sensations of pressure and tension is a *primary* quality, namely *solidity*, and it is perception of this quality that mediates my perception of those two spatial properties. For it is precisely by perceiving *a particular spatial distribution of solidity* about me that I perceive an obstacle in front of me: I encounter solidity straight ahead at a distance of about half my arm's length, I also encounter solidity slightly to the sides as I explore the surface with my hand, but I encounter no solidity between that surface and myself. And it is by perceiving a different but related spatial distribution of solidity that I perceive the surface to be flat.

Being solid (which, *contra* Locke, comes in degrees) is related to such other primary qualities as being malleable or brittle. The concepts of such primary qualities cannot be understood except together with the concepts of pressure, tension, impact, torque, and the like, i.e., concepts of *force*. And this is what we should expect, because force is a fundamental, primary feature of reality.

So the Ayers–McDowell thesis proves false for touch and does not hold generally. However, this does not mean that perception of spatial properties does not require *any* qualitative mediation at all. I believe it does, but the mediating qualities should not be restricted to secondary qualities. Rather, the right thesis hereabouts should be this: space, to be perceived at all, must be perceived as *qualitatively 'filled'*. In vision space must be perceived as '*filled*' by colors, in hearing by sounds, in touch by degrees of solidity. (Perception of the qualitative filling very often requires synthesis over time.)

I shall argue that this revised thesis holds for proprioception as a special form of perception. This requires answering a key question: By *what* qualities is space, one's body–space, perceived as qualitatively filled in proprioception? I shall

develop my answer through further engagement with McDowell.

X. How Analogous is Proprioception to the External Senses?

McDowell considers, for rejection, an attempt to show proprioception is perceptual. This attempt insists that there indeed *are* secondary qualities involved in proprioception and then tries to argue, in line with the Ayers–McDowell thesis, that they mediate proprioceptive perception of one's own limbs. McDowell formulates this attempt as follows:

> Suppose someone said there *are* such secondary qualities: they are qualities given by sensations of the sort Anscombe exemplifies by "a pressure here, a tension there, a tingle in this other place". [And suppose someone conceived these sensations] as playing a role analogous to the role of sensations of color in color perception: as sensations that give one secondary qualities —tingliness, say— belonging to the relevant parts of one's body. […] Would this be a way to hold on to the idea that the knowledge we are concerned with [proprioceptive knowledge] is perceptual (2011, p. 144)?

The question here is: Does the analogy described really exist? McDowell thinks not, on the ground of three disanalogies.

But before examining his disanalogies I need to fix something problematic in his discussion, namely that he takes sensations of pressure and tension to be sensations of *secondary* qualities. This is wrong, because pressure and tension (unlike tingle, the third item on the list McDowell inherits from Anscombe) are *primary* qualities that our limbs can possess. This is, in turn, because they are direct manifestations of that primordial feature of reality, *force*, in one's body–space.

But the analogy mooted here need not be burdened by this mistake, since it is needed only if one wants to press the analogy in conformity with the Ayers–McDowell thesis, which is anyway false. So we can, rejecting this thesis, free the analogy from restriction to secondary qualities and broaden it to allow primary qualities. Henceforth I shall take the analogy in this broad sense and ignore the word "secondary" in McDowell's disanalogies.

I shall skip McDowell's first disanalogy. (It is, as he acknowledges, not decisive.) His second disanalogy is this:

> But there is a deeper disanalogy between tingles and the like and, for instance, visual sensations. These bodily sensations are themselves located (they are, as Anscombe says, "here . . . there . . . in this other place"), as opposed to locating items —instances of

> secondary qualities— that might be conceived as given by them. In contrast, perceptual sensations are not located (except unspecifically, where their subject is), and they locate the instances of secondary qualities that they give (*ibid.*).

This alleged disanalogy is reckoned on two scores: (1) *being located* and (2) *locating*. Let us first consider *being located* (here "located" means "located specifically, or relative to one's body–space"). On this score the bodily sensations in question and visual sensations are indeed disanalogous: the former are located but the latter are not. But there is perfect analogy with *tactual* sensations, since these are also located. When I reach into my pocket and feel a coin, are my tactual sensations not located in my hand? It is clear that when McDowell says "perceptual sensations" are not located, he is forgetting touch. The analogy holds better than he thinks on this score.

What about the score of *locating*? (This is far the more important score, since locating things in space is a fundamental form of intentionality, of being orientated toward the world.) This leads to McDowell's third and strongest disanalogy:

> This opens into the most crucial disanalogy. Even if, against what I have just been urging, someone insisted on separating these bodily sensations from things they are of, instances of secondary qualities, which they are taken to locate, this spatial locating of the supposed objects ("here . . . there . . . in this other place") —which, on a proper understanding, is the spatial locatedness of the sensations themselves— is not on a par with the location of the objects of visual sensations. It is not that one knows where a felt tingle, say, is, independently of knowing how one's body is disposed in space, so that an aggregation of such knowledge of the location of objects of sensations —or, better, of the sensations themselves— might enable one to know how one's body is disposed in space. That gets things backwards. One locates these sensations in space only by locating them in one's body. Spatially organized awareness of one's bodily self is a presupposition for the capacity to locate bodily sensations, not something enabled by that capacity (*ibid.*, p. 145).

Before examining this passage, I need to fix something misleading in it. This is McDowell's point that we should not take the bodily sensations at issue to be separate from things they are of, which are really only their supposed objects. Or in terms I introduced earlier, the objects of these bodily sensations are only *internal* objects, not independently existing objects. But while this is true of sensations of tingles, it is *not* true of sensations of pressure and tension. It is true that, if one *feels* no tingle, there *is* no tingle. But one's arm, e.g., may *be* under pressure or in tension without one's feeling so, as sometimes happens after one

has rested one's head on an arm for a long time[14]. It is misleading to focus on sensations of tingles alone, as McDowell does, for this gives the impression that sensations of pressure and tension resemble sensations of tingles in not having independently existing objects and it is merely for the sake of argument that we suppose there to be such objects for them to locate. This is wrong, and sensations of tingles should not be assimilated to sensations of pressures and tensions, but to sensations of pains and itches[15].

So we should remove tingles from the list McDowell inherits from Anscombe and focus on what remains, i.e., sensations of pressure and tension, and *their* like. But what sensations are their real kin? A partial answer is: sensations of weight and resistance. All these sensations (of pressure, tension, weight, and resistance) are sensations of *force*. I shall call them *dynamic* sensations[16].

These sensations —with the help of a proper cognitive background— *do* locate independent objects, i.e., instances of dynamic qualities like pressure, tension, weight, and resistance. It is true that these qualities are more usually located in extra–bodily objects by touch, but they can also be located in one's limbs by proprioception. This point may be obscure in contexts where touch and proprioception work in concert, but it comes out clearly when we consider examples that involve no touch. Thus, one may feel *pressure* in the chest when taking a deep breath, or in the nose when suffering from a stuffy nose. Again, one may feel *tension* in the neck when turning one's head, and also *resistance* when turning it beyond a certain angle. And when one ascends a flight of stairs, one may feel *weight* or *resistance* in the leg being lifted.

The weight or heaviness meant here must be sharply distinguished from a colloquial sense of weight or heaviness, in which one's limbs are heavy if and only if they *feel* heavy: the weight or heaviness is an internal object of the feeling. By contrast, the kind of weight that is meant here is independent of the feeling. It is rather an intrinsic quality of our limbs, which are material bodies with *mass*. Such bodies have this intrinsic weight because they intrinsically resist acceleration and de–acceleration, and they have this intrinsic resistance, that is, *inertia*, because

[14] The point is obvious under non–normal conditions like local anesthesia. But a fundamental condition of normality is worth noting here: there is a natural tension in our body that we normally do not feel but is always present (even in peaceful sleep). This is what physiologists call "residual muscle tension", which is crucial for the body to maintain its posture and responsiveness to pulls and twists.

[15] An opposite mistake —assimilating sensations of pain to sensations of pressure— is made by Martin (1995), though this is more because he implicitly denies the distinction between internal and external objects.

[16] I use "dynamic" to register the connection with *force*, not necessarily with *change*.

they are necessarily situated in the all–pervading gravitational field of the universe. (They do not lose this weight even in so–called "weightless" conditions.)

Now if we look away from sensations of tingles and focus rather on the dynamic sensations, McDowell's third disanalogy becomes as follows. While dynamic sensations do locate instances of dynamic qualities in one's limbs, this locating is still "not on a par" with locating objects of visual sensations, because this locating of dynamic qualities presupposes, but does not enable, "spatially organized awareness of one's bodily self". This awareness is just what we have called proprioceptive knowledge.

This disanalogy is also reckoned on two scores: *presupposing* and *enabling*. But McDowell does not spell out the visual side of the disanalogy, because he does not specify a *counterpart*, on the side of vision, to the "spatially organized awareness of one's bodily self" figuring on the proprioceptive side. If this counterpart is left unspecified, it is unclear *what*, when one visually locates the proper quality–instances (color–instances), one's visual sensations are supposed to *enable but not presuppose*.

Specifying a counterpart is actually not trivial. Let us make an attempt, since this will show how McDowell's disanalogy fails.

First, I shall generalize from vision to include more external senses, by using '*m*' to variably indicate three modes of perception, i.e., vision, hearing, and touch. The task is then to specify the counterpart on the side of *m*–perception to "spatially organized awareness of one's bodily self" on the side of proprioception.

Complications abound here. For simplicity and naturalness, I shall specify it thus: "spatially organized *m*–awareness of one's physical surroundings". This is a natural specification, because it is natural to regard McDowell's "spatially organized awareness of one's bodily self" as indicating spatially organized awareness of *one's inner landscape*, and the natural counterpart to this is spatially organized *m*–awareness of *one's outer landscape*, that is, *m*–awareness of one's physical surroundings. In either case, inner or outer, the landscape functions as the background against which we locate quality–instances in the foreground.

Another complication. Spatially organized *m*–awareness of one's physical surroundings can vary greatly in scope. For example, one might see much more just by turning one's head. We can incorporate this sort of variability by inserting "(part of)" into the specification, yielding "spatially organized *m*–awareness of (part of) one's physical surroundings".

We can now spell out the disanalogy as follows.

In locating quality–instances proper to them, *m*–sensations, unlike the

dynamic sensations in proprioception, do not presuppose, but rather enable, spatially organized *m*–awareness of (part of) one's physical surroundings.

Thusly revised and made explicit, this disanalogy holds reasonably well for vision. (It is not watertight, but I shall not press the point.) The real trouble with this disanalogy is that it collapses for a mode of *m*–perception that McDowell completely neglects, namely *touch*.

Touch is the most basic external sense, as Aristotle noted long ago. It is, as O'Shaughnessy argues in more contemporary terms, the only external sense that is conceptually tied to animality as such (O'Shaughnessy 1989). This obliges McDowell to give a disanalogy between touch and proprioception. But he makes no such attempt. Further, it is difficult to see how a disanalogy could be constructed at all.

To bring out this difficulty, it will suffice to consider the first score on which the disanalogy is reckoned, *presupposing*.

If there is a disanalogy here, tactually locating quality–instances should not presuppose, i.e., should be independent of one's *spatially organized tactual awareness of (part of) one's physical surroundings*.

But such an independence can hardly exist. The difficulty stems from a fact brought out by O'Shaughnessy: touch and proprioception are deeply interdependent —they are mirror–images of each other. This means that proprioceptive awareness, *spatially organized awareness of one's bodily self*, and its tactual counterpart, *spatially organized tactual awareness of (part of) one's physical surroundings*, can hardly be specified independently of each other[17].

This interdependence makes it hard to sustain the disanalogy. For touch deeply depends on proprioception (this is half of the interdependence), i.e., on *spatially organized awareness of one's bodily self*. But since this awareness cannot be specified independently of *spatially organized tactual awareness of (part of) one's physical surroundings* —this is the other half of the interdependence— touch must also depend on this latter awareness, i.e., on the tactual counterpart. Thus the disanalogy collapses[18].

Dependence on, or presupposition of, a spatially organized awareness as the background against which one locates quality–instances in the foreground cannot make a mode of knowledge non–perceptual; otherwise touch would be

[17] See O'Shaughnessy (1989) for elaboration.

[18] The argument here is abstract and might not carry conviction. A more intuitive appreciation of the essential point might be had by imagining trying —or better by actually trying— to find out by touch the shapes, sizes, and layout of various pieces of furniture in an unfamiliar room while being blindfolded.

non–perceptual.

In sum, McDowell's third and most crucial disanalogy fails on the score of presupposition.

XI. Feeling, Life, and the Feeling of Life

What about the other score, *enabling*?

Now it is clear that, for each of the external senses, spatially organized *m*–awareness of (part of) one's physical surroundings *is* enabled by one's locating of the corresponding quality–instances through one's *m*–sensations. So the crucial question here is whether spatially organized awareness of one's bodily self is enabled by one's locating of inner, dynamic qualities through corresponding dynamic sensations. This question is crucial because, *if* these sensations do play this enabling role, then we can conclude that this awareness, namely proprioceptive knowledge, is indeed *perceptual*. (Remember that this enabling is not merely causal but epistemological: see §VII.)

McDowell's answer to this crucial question is negative. And it appears to be right, because it appears that spatially organized awareness of one's limbs, i.e., proprioceptive knowledge, is *not* enabled by locating instances of dynamic qualities in them. Thus, for instance, I know where my nose is without feeling any pressure in it. I know how my limbs are arranged when lying down in relaxation, without feeling any pressure or tension in them. When I climb a flight of stairs, I may know the position and movement of my leg (the one being lifted) without feeling any weight in it, especially if I am young and fresh. Examples like these suggest that proprioceptive knowledge is independent from locating dynamic qualities through dynamic sensations. Such sensations may make this knowledge more vivid, but they are not essential.

But other examples suggest a positive answer. If I bend my thumb, I ordinarily know, from within, that it is bent. But this knowledge does seem to depend on locating tensions in the thumb via sensations of tension. Similarly for knowledge that I am stretching my fingers to make a wide–open hand, that I am shrugging my shoulders, and the like.

McDowell would reply that these examples involve action or activity and should be treated as examples of practical knowledge in Anscombe's sense, whereas "having one's limbs arranged in a certain way is not in general a case of activity" (*ibid.*, p. 143).

It is indeed true that the examples above involve intentional actions and that a full account would require discussing them under the notion of practical

knowledge. I shall avoid this, for the sake of a sharper focus on my quarry here.

To achieve this focus, let me first introduce a distinction that is suggested by (but not made in) McDowell's discussion here, namely the distinction between the body *in action* or *in activity* and the body *in repose*. I shall then focus on the second case, the body *in repose*, where there is no action (and not even non–actional activity)[19].

The body *in repose* is a state of bodily being crucial to the idea of proprioception as a special form of perception.

This state is characterized by a kind of stillness: the body in repose is *quiet*, without any stir, like a body of perfectly still water. When the body is in this state, it harbors no *dynamic* sensations (which are 'noisy'), yet one still knows how his limbs are arranged in space. So McDowell's negative answer above holds particularly well in this case.

But might the body in quiet repose harbor *other* sensations? I have in effect said, siding with O'Shaughnessy and against McDowell, that it *does*, though the sensations are extremely recessive. But it is perfectly fair to ask: *what* sensations? That is, if proprioception is a form of perception, by sensation of *what* quality is space, namely one's body–space, perceived as qualitatively '*filled*' when the body is in quiet repose?

The answer is: by the very feeling of *life*.

Here I am embarrassed by language, for what I have just called the feeling of life is actually better characterized as something *nameless*. Because when we ordinarily speak of the feeling of life, what is involved is life in some form of excitation or stir, whether active or passive, whereas what is involved here is life in quietude. And when life is quiet, we rarely, if ever, speak of the feeling of life. So it has no name, has not "broken into language". But this is not because this feeling itself is rare but precisely because it is extremely common and primitive. It is not recognized because it is always before our eyes, as Wittgenstein might say. This feeling is, in a sense, our oldest and most familiar home, a silent background to all the stirrings of life.

We must tread very carefully here, since any treading threatens to destroy that stillness. Let me begin with some remarks inspired by Anscombe when she

[19] The parenthetical addition registers a complication unaddressed by McDowell. He treats 'action' and 'activity' as equivalent in this context. But there is also a sense of 'activity' in which the body can be in activity but not in action, as, e.g., when one undergoes facial tics. In such cases it is plausible to say that one's proprioceptive knowledge of the non–actional bodily activity depends on locating tensions in one's body by means of sensations of tension.

distinguishes between primary and secondary qualities (in a passage already quoted in §IV): a primary quality is either (1) substantial or (2) not substantial but still substance–involving, while a secondary quality is (3) neither[20].

First of all, life, or *being alive*, is a *primary* quality of some material bodies, the bodies of living things. (Anscombe gives "alive" as an example of a substantial predicate, along with "horse" and "gold".)

Our concern is not with life in general, but only with *animal* life. A basic, defining feature of an animal is the capacity for sensation or feeling. Of course an animal might not have any feeling at a particular time, as it may be asleep, but there must be times when it is in more aroused states involving feeling, on pain of its ceasing to be a genuine animal. Animal life must sometimes stir —in its psychological no less than in its physical aspect. But between life astir and life asleep there is an intermediate state, namely life *awake*, a state of being simply awake, without any stir. This state is higher than being asleep, in the sense of 'more aroused' (it is sometimes called "state of general arousal" by physiologists). But it sits deeper than all the stirrings of life and serves as a primordial background to them. It is so to speak the rock–bottom state of conscious life[21].

Being awake is also a *primary* quality of some material bodies, namely the bodies of animals. (Anscombe gives "awake" as an example of predicates that are non–substantial but still substance–involving, along with "malleable" and "in powder form".)

All this also holds for the kind of animal life that has attained self–consciousness, that is, our own human life. What is distinctive about us is that each of us, when we are awake, knows it *from the first–person angle*[22]. And this piece of self–knowledge is internally related to its object: there is no possibility of being awake without knowing it. (In this respect being awake is like being in pain or being tingly, but it is also fundamentally different from such states, in that it is the ground state of conscious life and functions as a background to all the rest.)

This kind of wakefulness must be distinguished from another, purely intellectual kind. This latter kind of wakefulness is exemplified by the Cartesian

[20] Anscombe never explicitly classifies (1) and (2) as primary qualities, but it seems fair to ascribe this to her.

[21] I made some simplifications here, putting aside, on the one hand, unconscious stirrings of life, say, tosses and turns in dreamless sleep, and, on the other hand, dreams, which might perhaps be regarded as a peculiar kind of conscious vitality. These phenomena can be left aside because they are not essential to the notion of "conscious life".

[22] This is distinctive because "person" is here used in a demanding sense, i.e., "rational animal". It is true that there may be an important sense in which non–rational animals know things *from within* but not *from the first–person angle*, because they are not persons. But this is a separate issue.

cogito, and the corresponding bit of self–knowledge, the Cartesian *sum*, is also internally related to its object.

But our concern here is with a different, infinitely more homely kind of wakefulness, that is, *bodily* wakefulness. This kind of wakefulness requires awareness from within of one's own body, or more exactly of *the sheer presence* of one's own body.

What constitutes this bodily wakefulness?

It is the sheer *feeling* that one's own body is *alive*.

This state of being simply body–awake is reflexive in nature, because it is *life feeling itself*. It is a Janus–faced state that is simultaneously mental and bodily, because the life that is feeling is, *qua* feeling, life in a *sensuous* and hence mental aspect, while the life that is felt is life in a bodily aspect, because it is felt, from within, to be *spatially extended*, with a more or less determinate shape[23].

And these two aspects are internally related: the life that is felt does not exist independently from the life that is feeling —there is no possibility of *being* body–awake without *feeling* it. These are not separate realities. Note that what is felt is exactly *life*, or more specifically *a region of living space*, not, e.g., metabolic processes essential to life.

This state of being simply body–awake is a ground–level state in which one's mind and body most intimately 'meet', or better put, in which that nameless and innermost sea of life in us shows itself to itself in a simultaneous duality of aspects.

And for one's body to be simply awake is for it to be in quiet repose. It is to feel from within that one's body–space is 'filled' —quietly and without stir— with life itself.

It is hard to characterize the quality of this feeling in positive terms other than *life*, since this feeling is too primitive, too fundamental to admit of qualitative differentiation. Admittedly it is so extremely recessive as to appear simply nonexistent, but it does exist and discloses a fundamental positive reality: *the living presence from within of one's own body*.

The extreme recessiveness of this feeling may tempt us to try to capture it by concentrating attention on it inwardly. But this temptation should be resisted, since inward attention is liable to disturb that quiet sea of life in oneself and generate something new. Rather, it seems that the best way to capture it must be negative.

[23] Or as O'Shaughnessy so vividly puts it, one "seems to himself to extend into certain nooks and crannies of physical space, and the sensation is experienced as sited therein" (2008, Vol. 1, p. 255).

This points us to cases where one suffers massive loss of proprioception, since in such cases the quiet feeling of life that moors one to one's body is acutely *missed*: one becomes aware of it just when it is no longer there. A case in point is Christina, "the Disembodied Lady" vividly described by Oliver Sacks. After a massive loss of proprioception, Christina felt that "her body is dead, not–real, not–hers". These three negative descriptions succinctly show that it is precisely the feeling of *life* that enables knowledge from within of the living *reality* of one's *own* body[24].

Now, of course, the sea of life in us can also stir.

Many of these stirrings are manifestations of active force, a force which is *at once physical and living*. Such manifestations are ubiquitous in ordinary life and particularly salient in physical labor and sport. They are reminders of a deep–seated connection between *life* and *force*. Of course these categories are not the same, but they do overlap —force sometimes is *living force*. (Awareness from within of one's active–physical–living force is fundamental to one's sense of *agency*, of the power to leave one's mark on the world.)

This gives us a right to say that *life* and *force* belong to the same family, which I shall call *life–force* (in an utterly ordinary, unmysterious sense). Correspondingly, the quiet feeling of life and the noisy sensations of force also belong to the same family, which I shall collectively call *vital–dynamic sensations*.

We can now at last fully answer the question that is key to the idea that proprioception is a special form of perception: By *what* qualities is space, one's body–space, perceived as qualitatively '*filled*' in proprioception? And the answer is: By *life–force*, instances of which are given as located in one's body–space through *vital–dynamic sensations*, either through the quiet feeling of life when one's body is simply awake, or through various dynamic sensations when it is astir. These two cases are seamlessly connected, because they imperceptibly transition into each other, just as agitation and stillness (or noise and silence) imperceptibly transition into each other[25].

This role of vital–dynamic sensations, which is not merely causal but epistemological (§VII), allows us to conclude that proprioception is a special form of *perception*. It is special because it does not objectify or alienate its objects —it remains a form of genuine *self*–knowledge.

[24] Sacks (1985), especially p. 51. Those three negatives ("dead, not–real, not–hers") are in Sacks' voice, but must have come from Christina herself. My focus here is on the quiet feeling of life, though a great deal more also went missing in her (e.g., the 'noisier' dynamic sensations).

[25] So the two cases may sometimes be hard to distinguish in practice.

XII. Coda: Two Knowledges of the Same Action

One implication of this conclusion above is that there are really *two* knowledges of the same thing in cases where one's limb movements or limb positions are actions, for instance, raising one's arm or holding it up. One knowledge is practical knowledge in Anscombe's sense, the other is proprioceptive knowledge in the special sense of perception I spelt out above. And these are knowledges of the same thing in a strong sense, namely: what is known, in both knowledges, is known *under the same description*, e.g., "I am raising my right arm".

Is this implication vulnerable to Anscombe's attack (*Intention*, §32) on the idea that in action one has two knowledges of one's action? No.

To begin with, her attack "concerns the relation between practical knowledge of an action and observational knowledge *on the agent's part* of the happening that the action is", as McDowell helpfully points out (2010, p. 424). This attack is effective because such observational knowledge would require, as Anscombe puts it, "a very queer and special sort of seeing eye in the middle of the acting" (*Intention*, §32). Essentially the same point is also made (more elaborately and vividly) by O'Shaughnessy when he argues that trying to observe one's own action would result in a *split* of oneself into two, into an acting self and an observing self. This split would destroy the unity of consciousness and hence *one*self.[26]

But proprioceptive knowledge, as a special form of perception in the sense I have spelt out, is not observational. It does not require any queer seeing eye or a split of oneself into two. This is because it does not involve the contemplative attitude and hence does not alienate its object. It is *self*–knowledge, just like practical knowledge of the same action. *These* two knowledges harmonize. It is a harmony between spontaneity (knowing by doing) and a special form of receptivity, namely a form of *self*–receptivity (knowing by *self*–feeling).

Acknowledgements.

Evolving versions of this paper (or parts thereof) were presented at various places over quite a few years, including Beijing Normal University, Hong Kong Lingnan University, Huaqiao University, Nanjing University, Nankai University, National Taiwan University, Peking University, Renmin University, Shandong University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Sun Yat–Sen University, and Tsinghua University. I thank the audiences for their responses. For written comments I am grateful to

[26] See his "Observation and the Will" (2008, Vol. 2, Chapter 9).

Wenjing Cai, Refeng Tang, Charles Travis, and Shengyang Zhong. The most stimulating and helpful comments came from Caleb Liang. Parts of this paper have previously been published in Chinese. The overall project was supported by the Chinese National Social Sciences Fund (Grant Number: 16BZX078).

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Bodily Self–Knowledge as a Special Form of Perception

We enjoy immediate knowledge of our own limbs and bodies. I argue that this knowledge, which is also called proprioception, is a special form of perception, special in that it is, unlike perception by the external senses, at the same time also a form of genuine *self*–knowledge. The argument has two parts. Negatively, I argue against the view, held by G. E. M. Anscombe and strengthened by John McDowell, that this knowledge, bodily self–knowledge, is non–perceptual. This involves, *inter alia*, rescuing from McDowell's attack the very idea of receptive self–knowledge (of which perceptual self–knowledge is a species). On the positive side, I develop, by drawing on the work of Brian O'Shaughnessy, a detailed account of bodily self–knowledge as a special form of perception. This account spells out how this special form of perception is epistemologically mediated by sensations of a special class of primary qualities —*vital–dynamic* sensations as I call them— in one's limbs

Keywords: Bodily Self–Knowledge · McDowell · Space · Feeling · Life-Force

El autoconocimiento corporal como forma especial de percepción

Nosotros gozamos del conocimiento directo de nuestros propios miembros y cuerpos. Arguyo que este conocimiento, llamado también propiocepción, es una forma especial de percepción. Especial en el sentido de que es, al mismo tiempo, también una forma genuina de *auto*-conocimiento, a diferencia de la percepción a través de los sentidos externos. El argumento tiene dos partes. En un sentido negativo, arguyo contra el punto de vista mantenido por G.E.M. Anscombe y reforzado por John McDowell, que este conocimiento, el autoconocimiento corporal, es no-perceptivo. Esto incluye, *inter alia*, rescatar del ataque de McDowell la idea misma del autoconocimiento receptivo (del cual el autoconocimiento perceptivo es una especie). En sentido positivo, desarrollo una elucidación detallada del autoconocimiento corporal como forma especial de percepción, apoyándome en la obra de Brian O'Shaughnessy. Esta descripción detalla cómo esta forma especial de percepción es mediada epistemológicamente por sensaciones de una clase particular de cualidades primarias —las llamo sensaciones *dinamicas-vitales*— en los miembros de uno.

Palabras claves: Autoconocimiento corporal · McDowell · Espacio · Sensación · Fuerza vital

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HISTORIA DEL ARTÍCULO | ARTICLE HISTORY
Received: *11–May–2022*; Accepted: *18–May–2021*; Published Online: *31–May–2022*

COMO CITAR ESTE ARTÍCULO | HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE
Tang, Hao. (2022). «Bodily Self–Knowledge as a Special Form of Perception». *Disputatio. Philosophical Research Bulletin* 11, no. 20: pp. 71–99.

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