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The Sense of Pain
Some Phenomenological Remarks

Abstract: *The Sense of Pain. Some Phenomenological Remarks*

This paper aims to discuss what is the proper phenomenological approach to pain experience, and in particular to examine whether pain can be better investigated from a classical Husserlian perspective or rather a different point of view. The issue concerning the sensible character of pain is examined through a preliminary discussion of Wittgenstein's well-known theses concerning the impossibility of a private knowledge and the question concerning the expression of emotions. In the light of the problems emerging from Wittgenstein's approach, the paper discusses Husserl's contribution against the background of the Brentano-Stumpf debate, and then moves towards an evaluation of Husserl's later developments concerning the phenomenological status of the body. In this connection, a different possible conception of the feeling/felt body is suggested, inspired by Merleau-Ponty's position, which can better account for the peculiar logic of affectivity displayed by the experience of pain. The paper claims that only the notion of a sensible body, and not of consciousness in general, can provide the adequate ontological framework for the proper understanding of pain.

Keywords: Pain, Sensation, Emotion, Intentionality, Leib.

In recent years, the experience of pain has received an ever growing interest. Philpapers, for example, has a sub-section devoted to listing papers discussing pain that, in May 2022, lists 53 titles on “the concept of pain” and 94 on “pain and pain experience”.¹ This list is continuously edited and updated by Jennifer Corns, the co-editor of *The Philosophy of Pain* (Bain, Corns and Brady 2019), and author of *The Complex Reality of Pain* (Corns 2020). The theme of pain and pain experience is discussed from different philosophical points of views, but for the most part the papers devoted to these questions belong to the realm of analytic philosophy. Surprisingly enough, phenomenology has shown a smaller interest in this aspect of experience. But recently the situation has begun to change.

¹ See <https://philpapers.org/browse/pain-and-pain-experience>.

In 2020, Saulius Genusas has published *The Phenomenology of Pain*, an important and ambitious work that collects and systematizes Genusas' preceding investigations on this theme, offering a far-reaching conception based on Husserl's classical understanding of the phenomenological enterprise. Back in 2007, Abraham Olivier had published *Being in Pain*, a work mostly based on M. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, although not a phenomenological discussion in itself, in order to understand pain in terms of bodily or incarnated experiencing subjectivity. Olivier aims at showing that pain can be adequately understood only if the person experiencing pain is not conceived of in terms of either material body or disembodied consciousness, but rather, following Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, as an embodied personality. A few years earlier, Christian Grüny had published a book, *Zerstörte Erfahrung: Eine Phänomenologie des Schmerzes*, arguing in favour of a Heideggerian approach to pain experience. His point is mainly that only by adopting Heidegger's conception of "being-there" (*Dasein*) can one correctly account for pain.

As results from this sketch, the phenomenon of pain lends itself to different phenomenological approaches. In what follows, accordingly, I will try not so much to offer my own version of how to phenomenologically account for pain experience, but rather to examine what pain entails for the phenomenological perspective. Without any claim of completeness, I would like to discuss some aspects of pain experience in light of what these aspects entail for a phenomenologically oriented philosophy.

I will draw from authors mainly but not exclusively belonging to the phenomenological movement: Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, but also Brentano and Stumpf. I will begin with Wittgenstein, however, for in his works one can find an exemplary display of the reasons leading to the adoption of a phenomenological perspective. With Wittgenstein one can see that many questions concerning pain and pain experience require a phenomenological approach, and at the same time beg for a clarification of the meaning of the phenomenological approach that one deems most adequate for the task.

In his *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* (at § 91), Wittgenstein states:

The "content" of experience [*Erfahrung*], of experiencing [*Erlebnis*]: I know what toothaches are like, I am acquainted with them, I know what it's like to see red, green, blue, yellow, I know what it's like to feel sorrow, hope, fear, joy, affection, to wish to do something, to remember having done something, to intend doing something, to see a drawing alternatively, as the head of a rabbit and of a duck, to take a word in one meaning and not in another etc. I know how it is to see the vowel *a* grey and the vowel *ü* dark purple. – I know, too, what it means to parade these experiences before one's mind. When I do that, I don't parade kinds of behaviour or situations before my mind. – So I know, do I, what it means to parade these ex-

periences before one's mind? And what *does* it mean? How can I explain it to anyone else, or to myself? (Wittgenstein 1980, 92).

With his well-known procedure of carrying out anthropological thought experiments in order to cast an alienating glance on his own culture, in the following § 93 Wittgenstein then argues:

Speculation: a tribe that we have brought into subjection, which we want to make into a slave-race. The behaviour, the bearing of these people is of interest to us just for that reason. We want to describe it, to describe various *aspects* of this behaviour. We watch and observe, e.g. pain-behaviour, joy-behaviour etc. Their behaviour also includes the use of a language. And generally it includes such behaviours as is learned, no less than such as is not learned, like a child's crying. Nor do they merely have a language, they have one containing psychological forms of expression. – Ask yourself: How do these get taught to the children of this tribe?

Now I assume that these people possess expressions, like the following: "I have black hair", "He has black hair"; "I have money", "He has money"; "I have a wound", "He has a wound". And now they use this grammatical construction in *psychological* ascriptions (Wittgenstein 1980, 96).

Pain, from this point of view, then essentially consists of one way among others of referring linguistically to one's own lived states, not unlike any other. Indeed, in §§ 108 and 109 Wittgenstein continues:

If I now say that the experience of remembering and the experience of pain are different in kind, that is misleading: for "experiences of different kinds" make one think perhaps of a difference like that between a pain, a tickle, and a feeling of familiarity. Whereas the difference of which we are speaking is comparable, rather, to that between the numbers 1 and $\sqrt{-1}$.

Where do we get the concept of the "content" of an experience [*Erlebnis*] from? Well, the content of an experience is the private object, the sense-datum, the "object" that I grasp immediately with the mental eye, etc. The inner picture. – But where does one find one needs this concept? (Wittgenstein 1980, 112).

The problem for Wittgenstein consists in assuming the existence of something, an object, as an entity that is the cause, or at least the origin, of an experience. However, it is not possible to be sure that at the origin, as motivation or cause, of a pain there is this object, because one can never really be sure of what others feel and if what they feel is comparable to what I, each of us like me, feel. (§ 137). As is well known, Wittgenstein wants to criticize the belief that one can directly access one's own states: "I don't know what he feels, *but he does*". Here is the fallacious argument (§ 138). Since the concept of an experience cannot be understood by pointing to the subjective lived experience (*Erlebnis*) of such an experience, it must be concluded that the experience of pain itself cannot teach what pain is (§§ 154-155).

The argument is by no means trivial. Lacan also once observed that slapping a small child's face produces in him a reaction that the child does not know if it is pain, because he does not know how to understand it. So what at first glance would seem to be the most indubitable phenomenon of all, that is, one's own feeling of pain, is already beginning to fade, to slip, that is, to take on enigmatic aspects.

Yet pain is a problem that is assuming worrying proportions for the keeping of public health accounts. The number of people who go to seek treatment for their chronic pain is increasing, in direct proportion with the aging of the population and with the prolongation of life. If only from a socio-economic point of view, therefore, it would seem that skepticism towards the experience of pain is unjustified.

Indeed, Wittgenstein believes that pain is something ineffable and therefore not understandable as such, but also that its linguistic expression can have a therapeutic effect. Here is a suggestive indication to look at more closely. In § 244 of the *Philosophical Investigations*, he writes that "the verbal expression of pain replaces crying, and does not describe it" (Wittgenstein 1986, 89e). This statement must be understood correctly: he does not believe that pain is a sensory state that has not yet received an adequate description, but once it did, the problem would also be solved. The problem rather consists, for Wittgenstein, in the fact that experience cannot be reduced to pure sensoriality, which has no structure. In order to grasp this difference, Wittgenstein writes (*Zettel*, § 488) the following:

Emotions [*Gemütsbewegungen*]. Common to them: genuine duration, a course. (Rage flares up, abates, vanishes, and likewise joy, depression, fear).

Distinction from sensations: they are not localized (nor yet diffuse!).

Common: they have characteristic expression-behaviour.

(Facial expression.) And this itself implies characteristic sensations too. Thus sorrow often goes with weeping, and characteristic sensations with the latter. (The voice heavy with tears). But these sensations are not the emotions. (In the sense in which the numeral 2 is not the number 2).

Among emotions the directed might be distinguished from the undirected. Fear at something, joy *over* something.

This something is the object, not the cause of the emotion. (Wittgenstein 1967, 488).

This is in a certain sense a phenomenological statement, insofar as here Wittgenstein speaks of the direction of a state of mind, that is, of a relationship with an object, which is ultimately Brentano's conception of intentionality, to which Husserl has given a more elaborate and articulated configuration. And yet in Husserl as in Wittgenstein there remains an underlying ambiguity regarding sensoriality, which would seem to have no intentional structure. I will return to this issue shortly. However, it is worthwhile to

dwell on another fundamental text by Wittgenstein, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, in which he again returns at length to the subject.

Wittgenstein wonders: What does it mean to say that someone is in pain? On what basis does such an expression have meaning? What is the relationship between the use of the word “pain” (its meaning, insofar as the meaning is use) and the behavior typical of pain? Given that the word “pain” is used correctly in the presence of pain behavior, should we conclude that without pain behavior, there is no pain? (see § 281).

The problem is difficult, for Wittgenstein, because on the one hand he intends to resort to public and observable facts in order to explain the meaning of “pain”, like that of the other terms indicating psychological states; but on the other hand he does not intend to be flatly reductionist, that is, to reduce pain in a disposition to behavior. Furthermore (§ 288) the case of “pain” could be a counterexample to the argument against private language, since the doubt of non-recognizability – on which the argument against private language rests – does not seem, intuitively, to apply.

The way out that Wittgenstein attempts includes some suggestive moves even if perhaps not such as to be composed in a sufficiently coherent and persuasive framework. Behavior has to do with the use of the word “pain” not because pain is reduced to behavior, but because we use that word to identify, and we pity and console, those who we recognize as a living human being (or something similar): who behaves like us. Just as we are able to recognize the expression on the face of our fellow men, or to imitate it without looking in the mirror, we do not attribute pain to a body (any), but to a similar subject, a person.

With the word “pain” intersubjective linguistic games are played: only if we suspend the functioning of these linguistic games does it seem necessary to seek an identity criterion for the “sensation” that the word “pain” would designate (§ 288), while in the context of ordinary usage, uses of the word without an explicitly articulable justification can equally prove legitimate (§ 289). But conceiving the use of a word relative to a sensation in terms of the designation of an object also leads, on closer inspection, to the exclusion of the object as irrelevant (§ 293).

Finally, § 304 is quite explicit in tracing the problem of pain to the idea, which Wittgenstein believes to be erroneous, that all language functions in order to convey thoughts “about” something and is therefore based on denotation. Admitting that this is not the nature of the linguistic game with the word “pain”, would allow, according to Wittgenstein, to see that the meaning (i.e. the use) of this word is no more “private” matter than that of any other word and at the same time it is not reducible to denoting something whose presence is public or inferable on a “public” basis, such as a certain behavior or disposition to it.

With Wittgenstein we gained awareness of the uselessness, as well as the impossibility, of explaining pain with a causal approach. And yet something is still missing. In § 286 Wittgenstein writes:

But isn't it absurd to say of a body that it has pain? – And why does one feel an absurdity in that? In what sense is it true that my hand does not feel pain, but I in my hand?

What sort of issue is: Is it the body that feels pain? – How is it to be decided? What makes it plausible to say that it is not the body? – Well, something like this: if someone has a pain in his hand, then the hand does not say so (unless it writes it) and one does not comfort the hand, but the sufferer: one looks into his face (Wittgenstein 1986, 98e).

In this passage, the problems and directions to look at in order to deepen the question of the experience of pain are shown together. Wittgenstein excludes being able to do what Husserl has programmatically outlined as the sense of phenomenological investigation: a search for the general structures of first-person experience. Wittgenstein is explicit when he writes in § 293:

If I say of myself that it is only from my own case that I know what the word “pain” means—must I not say the same of other people too? And how can I generalize the one case so irresponsibly? [...] That is to say: if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of “object and designation” the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant (Wittgenstein 1986, 100e).

Ultimately, for Wittgenstein from the denial of the denotative conception of language, which cannot adequately account for the grammar of the expression of sensations, one must conclude that it is impossible to speak of the personal experience of pain as personal. In order to argue in favor of the latter consideration, Wittgenstein resorts to the thesis that one cannot feel the pain of others. What you can do is witness the expression of the pain of others, its externalization. It is not necessarily a linguistic externalization: even a face can express suffering, and even the posture of a body. But it is in any case an expressive mediation. From this follows the fundamental conclusion that the experience of one's pain is in any case always expressively mediated by an intersubjective communication structure and is not based on anything else (see §§ 302-304). What would seem most evident thus becomes the most enigmatic.

The enigmatic nature of the conceptual understanding of pain was not unknown to Husserl. Since the time of his *Logical Investigations*, he has been discussing how to understand the experience of pain, starting with the debate between his two teachers, Franz Brentano and Carl Stumpf. If the context in which that debate presents the contours of a still very nineteenth-century and positivistic approach, however, precisely in order to resolve a controversy with enigmatic contours, Husserl finds himself envisioning a

path that would then lead him to relevant discoveries. In the *Logical Investigations* he examines the whole question in the light of his own reinterpretation of the notion, of Brentanian origin, of intentionality, however not without considering with great attention and respect also the analyses of C. Stumpf. The position outlined by Husserl in that work presents a two-faced aspect: on one side oriented towards the past, and in particular in the direction of a substantial underestimation of emotionality; on the other hand, however, already somehow open to the future and to the role that emotional intentionality will play in later writings, progressively complicating and enriching the picture of the phenomenological conception of intentionality.

In the two volumes of *Ideas* we can see the opening towards a different and broader idea of phenomenality. At the same time, Husserl considers the possibility of conceiving emotional objectivities as an objectivity of a new kind. Furthermore, in the second volume, he develops further considerations related to the constitution of the living/lived body, the *Leib*, and, in dealing with this issue, also the problems concerning pathic intentionality are articulated in very original and fruitful directions.

In § 15 of the fifth *Logical Investigation*, Husserl exposes his own conception of pain, having as implicit references the writings of both his direct teacher, Franz Brentano, and the other thinker who was very influential in the formation of the young Husserl, namely Carl Stumpf. And precisely on the theme of the experience of pain, the two show a very significant dissent. Therefore, understanding the theses advanced by Husserl is not really possible if one does not take into account the background on which they are located and from which they move. The debate was largely ignored until recently, when Saulius Geniusas' valuable historical-critical reconstruction work brought it back to the surface.

The fundamental question can be expressed in this way: what must consciousness be in order to experience pain? Evidently, the question is affected by Brentano's approach and his descriptive psychology, which, as is well known, actually stems from ultimately ontological problems. Stumpf also agrees on many of the assumptions that support the Brentanian approach, and yet it is precisely on this particular question that he feels the need to introduce a very important distinction.

First of all, it is worth remembering that descriptive psychology is conceived by Brentano essentially in opposition to genetic psychology, which in turn is understood, especially in positivistic environments, as psychophysics. This implies that, even before being able to clarify what consciousness is, and in particular the consciousness of pain, in terms of causes (be they psychic, physiological or possibly even social), it is necessary to conceptually clarify what consciousness is and what pain is. A descriptive approach must therefore perform this preliminary and foundational task.

So what is pain? In fact, the question is much less simple to deal with than one might think, because it requires clarifying what is meant by intentionality, and therefore what is the meaning of the characterization of consciousness in terms of intentional structure. Pain is, for the person experiencing it, something undeniable. At the same time, as regards physical pain, the experience of pain seems to be characterized by non-referentiality. That is, there is no intentional object in the proper sense. In this sense, then, it appears as a sensible experience and not connected to any intentional objectivity. But since it does not appear constituted as non-referential, the consciousness of pain seems to escape its intentional connotation.

The two divergent interpretations of Brentano and Stumpf, as well as Husserl's attempt at mediation, arise from this dilemma. Brentano argues that pain is an emotion, and therefore that it is an intentional structure directed at the act of feeling, which in turn is intentionally directed at the felt content (Brentano 1907). Stumpf, on the other hand, believes that pain is an unintentional experience, which he describes with a term difficult to translate into English: *Gefühlsempfindung*, demonstrating the complexity of this problem (Stumpf 1907). We can propose to translate this term with the expression "feeling sensation", noting the semantic ambiguity to which it will be necessary to return. Another translation would be in fact "affective sensation".

Brentano opposes Stumpf's thesis as he believes that equating pain with a sensation is equivalent to considering it similar to sensible qualities such as colors, sounds, smells, etc. However, for Brentano this means that in this way the specificity of the experience of pain is lost: while the experience ascribes a color or a smell to objects, the pain is attributed to the experiencing subject. This in turn means that while colors and smells are given through external perception, pain belongs to internal experience. While the former is always questionable, this is not the case with the latter: in other words, if you can doubt that the color I see of the sea is really blue, there is no point in doubting the pain I feel when I have a migraine.

Although Brentano's thesis appears plausible, in particular as regards the reference of pain to the subject who experiences it, Stumpf also offers non-trivial arguments. In particular, he argues that the experience of pain consists in ascribing this sensation to an object: one's body. This is why he coined the term mentioned above: in this case the sensation is connected to the sensibility of the body. This way of describing pain implies that it is intrinsically marked by affectivity. But at the same time we must always admit the sensory nature of pain. The affective dimension cannot be separated from the sensory one, otherwise we would rather have an emotional experience. Emotions can be painful, but they are not physically localizable. It could also be said that the distinction between physical pain and psychic pain passes precisely through localizability or non-localizability. On the

other hand, one can have a non-painful bodily sensory experience, and this shows how to talk about pain one must always keep in mind the affective dimension, without this implying emotion in the proper sense, that is, mental. But then what is meant by corporeality in this case?

The main problem consists in the aspect of the localizability of pain, which prevents this kind of experience from being reintroduced without residue among the more properly psychic ones. Both Stumpf, more clearly although in a less theoretically structured way, and also Brentano, believe that corporeality and localizability are substantially synonymous determinations, thus referring the notion of corporeality to that of somaticity, one to attach it to the phenomenon of pain, the other to exclude it. In this sense it is true that the Cartesian inheritance makes itself felt: Descartes qualifies pain as clear but not distinct, because while the feeling of pain cannot be doubted, its localization can, as one can actually be wrong about the origin of it. In the age of neuro-imaging this approach is even more complex, because it opens up to the question of the cerebral cause of pain, and requires us to ask ourselves whether the place of pain is the painful part or the brain structure which, properly speaking, is responsible for allowing it to be painful.

The phenomenologically subtlest point, however, is constituted by the concept of feeling sensation outlined by Stumpf. For him, the sensation is not in this case to be understood as directed *to* the sensibility, or as a sensation *of* the sensibility, but as a sensation in the strict sense, although of a different quality than the more commonly accepted ones. Stumpf thereby insists on the simplicity of the event in question, even if its understanding appears to be complex.

For Brentano, on the other hand, the structure of the experience of pain is itself complex, because it has three fundamental aspects. That is, it is necessary to distinguish between the felt content, the sentient act directed at this content, and the emotional relationship of hate or love, directed towards the sentient act itself. In particular, therefore, the emotional evaluation is not directed to the content but to the act, in a perspective that recalls, albeit probably involuntarily, the position of Kant. In the case of pain, this allows one to more finely discriminate the elements involved, for if it is true that pain is indubitable, it is also true that its unpleasant quality can vary consistently, and one can even practice not to feel its effects. even in the presence of the stimulus. This would not seem possible if the connection between psychophysical event and affectivity were indiscernible, as Stumpf wants.

Hence the eminently psychic aspect of the experience of pain for Brentano, as the emotional aspect can be modified, attenuated and even eliminated without thereby modifying the sensory event. In other words, within Brentano's perspective, pain can be the object of emotional apprehensions,

including positive ones, which allows us to understand some aspects known in psychopathology, such as intentionally trying to get physical pain. It is true that Stumpf would reply that this kind of experience supervenes pain in the proper sense, but this interpretation does not seem to adequately capture the originality of the connection between pain and its experience.

In order to understand Husserl's position in the *Logical Investigations*, it is necessary to keep this background in mind, as he recovers many of Stumpf's theses while trying to remain anchored to Brentano's intentional framework. As Geniusas (2014b, 10) notes, Husserl in particular takes up from Stumpf the attempt to place himself halfway between a perspective of Jamesian ancestry, which tends to reduce every emotion to sensation, and the Brentanian approach which, on the contrary, brings every sensation back to emotion, as seen in the case of pain. Therefore, on the one hand, Husserl argues that there are properly intentional experiences connected with pleasure and pain. On the other hand, he distinguishes between feelings and sensations, and the example of pain is adduced to clarify this distinction. Sensations of this type are classified among the cases of non-intentional structures.

The distinction here is made on the basis of the notion of ascription: in perceiving an object as beautiful, such as a landscape or an atmosphere, the qualities are ascribed to the object itself even if it is clear that its evaluation is subjective. On the other hand, in the case of pain, the ascription takes place towards the subject who experiences it, and therefore qualifies the sensation itself as unpleasant.

To this we must add that this distinction is also structural, as it has to do with the distinction between founded and founding experiences. Evaluation, even emotional and not only aesthetic or moral, is for Husserl a case of a founded act. On the other hand, pain does not rest on anything else, and in particular on more basic sensory strata. Therefore, in this sense the painful sensation is directly connected to a content and its immediate givenness, which however has no intentional character.

Clearly Husserl's position is ambiguous and suffers from a still insufficient phenomenological elaboration. In fact, it can also be said that it is precisely the experience of pain that presents ambiguous aspects: on the one hand it is connected with sensory aspects, on the other with intentional aspects. What remains to be understood is whether sensoriality is a non-intentional field. It can be said that the problem consists in understanding sensoriality. Here Husserl seems to keep on an altogether traditional position: pain as a pure sensible datum is not intentional, but its localization in a part of the body, and the connection of the painful experience with the causes that may have provoked it, actually require intentionality.

Correlatively, the evidence of the experience of pain is adequate if connected to the non-intentional sensory event, which cannot be questioned (as Descartes argues), but is inadequate if connected to its place and cause, precisely because there one can be wrong either way. Ultimately, however, Husserl's position outlined here is aimed at allowing him to adhere to both Stumpf's and Brentano's positions, since pain appears both as connected and also as not connected to intentionality, depending on the focused aspect. It can also be said that pain as a sensory event is to be understood not, as for Stumpf, as wholly non-intentional, but as pre-intentional, insofar as it allows for intentional objectifications. The issue consists once again in understanding what a sensation is.

As a direct experience, from the point of view of Brentano's descriptive psychology as well as from that of Husserl's initial intentional approach, sensation is a direct and simple event, and *therefore* of a psychic nature. The difference lies in the fact that Brentano poses a narrow equation between what is psychic and what is emotional, while as we have seen Husserl does not want to adhere to this all-encompassing position and recovers Stumpf's perspective to find an intermediate solution, which passes through the overcoming of the distinction, capital in Brentano, between internal perception and external perception, in favor of that between adequate and inadequate evidence, immanence and transcendence.

Nonetheless, even this approach shows that it has problematic aspects. Husserl believes that painful sensations are non-intentional aspects (hyletic, in later terminology) that can nevertheless provide presentative content for intentional acts and thus constitute pain as an intentional object of experience. Pain in this sense is both simple, if understood in its hyletic component, and complex, when viewed in the light of intentional stratification. The distinction is affected by the partition between founded and founding acts, and therefore also between presentation and re-presentation. But all these notions in turn can be reexamined precisely in the light of the role of pain as a type of experience that puts them into play, not in order to decree its uselessness, but on the contrary to produce a fruitful tension.

Pain is something that, in its possessing an evaluative aspect, requires to be considered first of all from the side of founded acts such as emotions, but on the other hand it is also a type of experience that possesses indubitable presentative characteristics, in the Husserlian sense of the term, that is, connected to the temporality of consciousness itself in its self-manifestation. This is one of the problems that led Husserl, in the continuation of his research, to deeply revise the model based on the scheme of the correlation between intentional apprehension and apprehension content. In this sense, it is precisely the temporal structure of pain that plays a decisive role, since assigning this structure to pain itself, in its "sensoriality", and not to

its conceptual determinations, forces Husserl to understand differently the very notion of hyle, and to attribute an intentional character to it, albeit recognizing a peculiarity of hyletic intentionality that cannot be homologated to that of noetic acts. In this context, it becomes crucial to address the issue of the *Leib* and its specific methods of constitution.

The distinction between the material body and the living body, that is, between *Körper* and *Leib*, was introduced as everyone knows by Husserl in the second book of the *Ideas* (Husserl 1989, §§ 35-42), although there are also earlier indications. In relation to what has been seen up to this point, this distinction assumes the utmost importance precisely because it allows a revision of a presupposition common to all the authors investigated, i.e. both Brentano and Stumpf and also Husserl, since in all cases the possibility of understanding pain as a sensation is either openly rejected, or when it is accepted it implies its exclusion from the category of intentional structures. However, if the question is reconsidered in the light of an understanding of the intentional status of corporeality itself, things change decisively. In other words, it becomes easier to understand how pain can be experienced in the double sense of the genitive: that is, how pain as a bodily event is also connected to its own modality of manifestation. The difference consists in passing from considering a classic separation between body and mind (or consciousness), to a separation, or at least a distinction, between sentient body and felt body. In turn, this acquisition requires considering what it really means to say that “the body” is both sentient and felt or sensible.

It is therefore appropriate first of all to recall briefly the essential characteristics with which Husserl describes the living and sentient body. The first aspect he affirmed is that for which the body constitutes the zero point of spatial orientation, that is, the absolute here with respect to which every here and every there make sense from an experiential point of view (Husserl 1989, § 41). Obviously Husserl is well aware of the fact that he is not talking about objective determinations referable to a physical space of a homogeneous and isotropic type, but of an oriented and qualitative space.

From the point of view that interests us here, the body as a zero point implies that the bodily experience of pain shows itself in its duplicity and equivocity: it is the body-here that hurts, but in this way it also brings itself to the fore, where usually it remains silent and absent, as it only serves as a place for the manifestation of objects that are experienced through the body itself. The bodily localization of pain therefore shows how the living body can be subject to ambiguous determinations as to its own localization, not in the usual sense with which this aspect can be understood, that is the one highlighted above for which, following Descartes, the localization of pain is not distinct, but rather due to the fact that this localization emerges

precisely when the body stands out as such and stands between its anonymous functioning and the experience of the object to which it tends.

To these considerations are connected those connected to the second of the determinations identified by Husserl to characterize the *Leib*: that of the body as an organ of the will and place of movement (Husserl 1989, § 38). Here Husserl supports a thesis that is ultimately quite close to what Aristotle says about the sensible soul: that is to say that the body “moves” and is not “moved” from the outside. The will we are talking about here is therefore a bodily will and has to do with one’s being able to self-determine kinetically and kinesthetically. From the point of view of the problem of the experience of pain, this again becomes clear only when pain is considered as an obstacle, temporary or permanent, to this determination: then the body becomes an unusable, that is, a usable no longer functioning, to put it like Heidegger.

Here it is possible to make some considerations regarding what happens in this case, that is, to which conception of manifestation the phenomenon is referred. In particular, it seems plausible to say that precisely the reticence of the painful body, its passivity, its active resistance to function normally, are all traits of a negative manifestation that does not deny but rather confirms the idea that the body is intrinsically connected to the experience and is not simply an appendix to it. However, this in turn requires a revision of a certain type of understanding of manifestativity understood in a phenomenological sense, to make way for something that elsewhere I have called natural negativity. I will return to this point shortly (cf. Vanzago 2009).

The third salient feature of Husserl’s conception of the *Leib* concerns its being definable as an expression of the spirit (Husserl 1989, § 21). Here, in my opinion, we touch the crucial point. The body is described here as being animated by the spirit. As is well known, the interpreters differ on how to understand this determination: on the one hand there are those who believe that Husserl has an Aristotelian conception of corporeality, for which ultimately the spirit configures the overall sense of corporeality: that is, there is no body that then would have spiritual determinations, but on the contrary it is the presence of the spirit, immanent and in a certain way potential, that nevertheless directs the entire structure of corporeality as such and distinguishes it, in this sense, from the living corporeality of animals.

Another interpretation, however, rather underlines the idea that the spirit itself is embodied and therefore is not the foundation but a modality of the living body. Here we see the sense in which the genetic approach can make the difference: a canonical Husserlian-type genetic perspective would actually tend to give preference to the idea that the expressive capacity of the body is such as the body is from the very beginning, body-of-spirit. An approach, on the other hand, more marked by naturalizing needs, even if not naturalistic, could mean the emergence of the spirit from the body, in

terms of what we now mean by strong emergentism. A position of this kind is in fact the one that is supported by Merleau-Ponty both in his *The Structure of Behavior* and in the Collège de France lectures on nature, in particular the third course, and also in *The Visible and the Invisible*, albeit in a more implicit and cryptic manner.

In both cases, however, the thesis can be maintained that the body thus understood cannot be a purely material body in the materialistic sense of the term. Only a body that “feels” can also be an expression of the spirit. Therefore the corporeality we are talking about at this level differs drastically from materiality, both in the sense of Husserl himself, and even more so with respect to contemporary eliminativistic materialism, which sees the real seat of experience in the brain. Nonetheless, the underlying ambiguity with which it is claimed that the living body feels itself still remains. In a certain sense, Husserl tries to respond to this ambiguity with the fourth determination of the *Leib*, understood as the support of localized sensations or the field of sensory localization.

Here we obtain an important opening: if we talk about a field, in fact, we cannot simply mean that localization intervenes at the atomic data level, since in order for similar data to be given it is necessary that something like a localization be available in advance. In other words, it is not the same to speak of localization in a geometric and in an experiential sense. But if this determination is assigned to the corporeity of the *Leib*, it becomes inevitable to characterize it with determinations usually reserved for consciousness. Merleau-Ponty’s reading of corporeality starts from here.

In fact, already with Husserl an important indication is gained: the body that feels and therefore localizes the sensations on itself is a double body, sentient-sensible. This statement, as is widely known, is made by Husserl for the case of touch, in which we witness the famous reversibility of the tactile experience in the case of the two hands. The essential phenomenological datum for Husserl consists in having to admit that the body is neither only the object of the world nor only its consciousness, but in a certain sense both, and that only in this way can we properly understand what the corporeity proper to the *Leib* is. As a subject of tactile sensations, that is, capable of feeling in this way, the body is a sensible field.

Here Husserl introduces a challenging term to adequately qualify the sensitivity in question, which is not physiological sensoriality, but something that has to do with one’s own feeling. In fact, he speaks of *Empfindnis* and not of *Empfindung* (Husserl 1989, § 36). In this regard, he insists on the layer he called aesthesiological, which, not being merely physical, however, does not possess non-sensible characteristics. However, Husserl emphasizes above all the fact that while the body gives itself in this way, that is subjectively, at the same time it also shows itself as a material object, that is,

as the basis of sensory presentations of a tactile type. This leads him to speak of the question of congruence (*Deckung*) between the two determinations: only if there is congruence is there *Leib* (Husserl 1989, § 42).

In other words, there must be a connection between two heterogeneous determinations: pain as a part of the painful body and pain as a sensation are not the same thing and yet they are not separate. The overall experience as such is obviously not double, but unitary in its complexity. However, it can be doubled if a rectification occurs, albeit experiential, so that the part that initially appeared as painful is then understood as being only accidentally affected by a pain that actually originates elsewhere. Again, these phenomena show their meaning when something stops working as usual or changes.

Husserl's understanding of the tactile duplicity of the *Leib* then implies that the body thus understood is ambiguous in the sense that it gives itself to itself both "from within", so to speak, that is, in the manner of an act, even if sensible, and "from without", that is, as the object of an act, configured in a transcendent way: in this case as a material object. In addition, the body then presents itself as a thing, but of a particular kind: not a mere thing, but a thing that feels. This determination is the decisive one: if in fact it is deepened, it can then be argued, with Merleau-Ponty, that the body "manifests itself" to itself as a body, and not simply as a support or base (*Träger*) of feeling itself, which in this sense would remain somewhat separate.

This does not mean that then the two traits should be confused: if anything, it is precisely by virtue of this duplicity that the living body is what it is: that is, not a simple thing but not pure spirit either. In both cases, in fact, there would be no duplicity but identity, but precisely for this reason one could not speak of anesthesiology, that is, properly speaking, of feeling. Duplicity is therefore not a defective determination but, as Merleau-Ponty wants, an irrecusable and constitutive peculiarity of bodily subjectivity.

This accusation has often been made against Merleau-Ponty, that is, of determining the sensible-sentient body only negatively, that is, as that which is neither mere thing nor pure spirit. The debate, indeed decisive and completely exceeding the limits of this intervention, instituted by Michel Henry (2000) regarding the Merleau-Pontyan concept of body and flesh, is centered precisely on this problematic, which in Henry's terms takes the form of the contestation of transcendence, in the Heideggerian sense, as a paradigm of intentionality, in favor of a more original "pathicity". But it is precisely the experience of pain that seems to me to pose a problem to the model developed by Henry: precisely in placing pathicity as the essence of manifestation, it becomes necessary to reintroduce that distinction and difference "of" the self with itself which, at least in the case of pain, seems indisputable to me, as I have argued elsewhere (Vanzago 2016). The living body manifests itself as originary, precisely in its feeling itself as something else.

Geniusas also admits this aspect, thus making pain a founding event of the constitution of bodily subjectivity, and perhaps the most original event. However, he then believes that the Husserlian model is preferable as it allows us to admit that sensibility is the element that distinguishes consciousness from the body, precisely at the moment in which pain estranges the subject from itself and forces him to live his own *Leib* like a *Körper*. I believe that the analyses of Geniusas are precious and illuminating, but on the other hand I also think that the consciousness he speaks of is none other than the same living body as double, which only in this way can distance itself from itself, in pain, to the point of living one's own corporeality as foreign and alien. In fact, Geniusas wonders:

How exactly do we experience pain? Is it something that touches us at the very core of our being, or is it something that unfolds at a distance from the ego? If one chooses the first alternative, one is invited to side with Merleau-Ponty and see the body as the original locus of all possible experience. By contrast, if one finds the second answer more compelling, one is invited to accept the Husserlian perspective (Geniusas 2014a, 399).

In fact, it seems to me that precisely because of what we have seen, it is possible to accept Merleau-Ponty's position, as the body is exactly what manifests the I to itself to the same extent that it distances it from the body as a painful strangeness. The splitting, or rather a non-dualistic duplicity, lies in the *Leib* itself and therefore precedes the distinction between matter and spirit. In my opinion, the reason why Husserl was unable to complete and publish the second volume of the *Ideas* lies precisely here: in recognizing a peculiar statute to *Leib* he somehow found himself forced to review the personalistic and ultimately spiritualistic system of his work, and correlatively to include a whole series of other problems that meanwhile were unraveling in his reflection, first of all that concerning temporality as an anonymous structure acting as pre-egoic, and in this sense hyletic.

Pain reveals the body to itself, thus operating a suture that occurs precisely as an original spacing or partition, such that the living body appears to itself as other than itself. The conceptual challenge posed by this experience consists in demanding a logic no longer based on the principle of identity and non-contradiction, since the contradictory nature of this original phenomenon seems to constitute its peculiar figure.

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