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Sense experience and differentiation: Husserl on bodily awareness

Abstract:

This article outlines the basic ingredients of Husserl's theory of *bodily awareness*. It first analyses the concepts of hyletic and kinaesthetic sensibility, and illustrates the *intervowenness* and *equiprimordiality* of Me and not-Me in Husserl's account. Second, it shows how the concept of the lived body emerges from this complex sensible foundation. Thirdly, it argues that, as the *area of intersection between the Me and the not-Me*, bodily awareness is the *initial locus of differentiation* between Me and not-Me: an area where the experiential distinction between the Me and the not-Me is constantly *negotiated*.

Keywords: Sense perception, Me, not-Me, self, internal and external sensations, localization, kinaesthesia, hyle, lived body, subjectivity

Sense experience and differentiation – Husserl on bodily awareness

"The constitution of being (...) has *two fundamental preconditions, two original sources* (...): (1) my primeval ego in its functioning, the primordial ego in its affects and actions (...); (2) my primeval non-ego, the primeval stream of temporalization constituting the field of time (...). Yet, *these primordial grounds are as one, inseparable, and, viewed in isolation, abstract*" (Husserl 2006, 199)¹.

Introduction: the Me and the not-Me

In everyday life, our experiential attention mainly dwells in the world, among the objects that we are experientially related to. When wakeful and alert, already at the level of sense perception, we categorize these objects as *something other than us*. The movements of worldly things differ phenomenologically from our bodily movements, and these differences, allegedly, further the experiential differentiation between Me and not-Me. Yet, while distinguished from one another, the Me and the not-Me are also intimately interrelated or intertwined. For one, when reflecting upon our experiences or our body movements, we are thinking of sensory processes that are intimately connected with the not-Me. Far from comprising an isolated segment of reality, our experiences are *directed at* objects and our body movements occur *in space*, which is to say that, as a perceiving being, the Me is not detached from the world that it perceives. Furthermore, the are of the not-Me manifests itself in the light of our subjective

intentions, interests and aims, and the appearing objects are hence always already saturated by various meanings and connotations that originate from our idiosyncratic experiential situation (see Sartre 1943, 371-373; Merleau-Ponty 1945, 372; Zahavi 1999, 124; Ratcliffe, 2012; Fuchs 2019; Taipale 2021; Taipale *forthcoming*). For instance, when we are physically exhausted or injured, our practical horizon appears limited; and when we are stressed out, nervous or angry, our mood is at once carried over to how other people appear to us. In short, while *differentiated*, the Me and the not-Me are also *inherently bound together*: the two conceptually and experientially imply one another.

This chapter examines, from a Husserlian perspective, the emergence of the relation and distinction between the Me and the not-Me. As I will show, Husserl considers the Me and the not-Me as interdependent poles that initially, at the level of bodily awareness, emerge "as one". Bodily awareness will thus be introduced as a complex and dynamic field where the Me and the not-Me are differentiated in the first place.

The chapter is structured as follows. (1) I will first analyse Husserl's twofold concept of sensibility, distinguishing between "hyletic" and "kinaesthetic" sensibility. This analysis will clarify how bodily awareness equiprimordially involves elements both from the Me and from the not-Me, and serves as the fundamental mediator between these fundamental phenomenological regions. (2) Second, by analysing Husserl's concept of the "lived body" (*Leib*), I will introduce the latter not only as an original area of entanglement of the Me and the not-Me, but also a locus of their initial differentiation. (3) Third, discussing the dynamic mechanisms of this differentiation, and clarify the latter in terms of "negotiation". All in all, I will argue that *the Me/not-Me differentiation is rooted in the complex and ambiguous*

structures of bodily awareness, while also underlining the dynamic, situational and perpetual nature of this process.

Before getting started, a brief note about the material is in order. Husserl wrote much on bodily awareness, embodiment and sensibility, but his theory is not found in any particular work: it is scattered around his publications and manuscripts, that literally include tens of thousands of pages. Therefore, within the confines of this chapter, aiming at a comprehensive overview of Husserl's theory would not seem reasonable. Instead, I will offer a more focused Husserlian interpretation of bodily awareness *as far as the emergence of the Me/not-Me distinction is at issue*, which is to say that my approach involves a more selective focus on Husserl's insights (for more extensive analyses of the Husserlian theory of embodiment, see Zahavi 1994; Welton 1998; 2000; Legrand, Grünbaum & Krueger 2009; Heinämaa 2011; Taipale 2014; Heinämaa 2018).

1. The constitutive duet: hyletic and kinaesthetic sensibility

Husserl distinguishes between two types of sensations: *hyletic* and *kinaesthetic* ones. Deriving from the Greek word *ύλη* (stuff, matter), *hyletic sensations* are "presenting sensations" (Husserl 1966b, 107): they introduce us with something that stands over and against us, and hence something that is phenomenologically foreign or alien to us (Husserl 2006, 114; Husserl 1973c, 378; Husserl 1973d, 130). This alterity implies two things. First, hyletic sensations involve a difference between the lived experience of sensing, on the one hand, and what is sensed in this sensing, on the other. Importantly, the former pertains to the *Me* – i.e., into what

is immediately lived-through –, whereas the latter “transcends” the field of immediate livedness and is accordingly categorized as *not-Me*. That is to say, while hyletic sensing is immediately lived through, hyletic data are something *other than me* (Husserl 1966a, 17), something “ego-foreign” (*ichfremde*) (Husserl 2006, 114, 120, 183), the “primeval non-ego” (*urtümliches Nicht-Ich*) (Husserl 2006, 199). Second, the alterity of hyletic sensations refers to the fact that they escape our immediate control: they cannot be conjured up or rid by will. As such, hyletic sensations comprise the factual and passive ground of subjectivity, and amount to something that we can only adjust to.

To illustrate the twofold alterity of hyletic experiences, consider the following example. Stepping outside in the winter, I feel the cold breeze on my face. Clearly, *the cold breeze* is not identical with *my sensation of the cold breeze*. The former is something in the environment, part of the not-Me; it is the *breeze* that is cold, not *me*. My feeling of the cold breeze, by contrast, is not something *in* the environment, but a really inherent part of my lived experiencing: it is organized as part of the Me. Indeed, one can say that “the breeze is cold” or that “I feel cold”, whereas it would make no sense to say that “my experience of the breeze is cold” (see Husserl 2006, 114). Regarding the second aspect of alterity, again, the cold breeze is not within my control. To be sure, it was me who opened the door and stepped outside, but as for the hyletic sensations that befall me in the course of this action, I am presently powerless. I can anticipate how I will feel when opening the door, but I am passive in respect to the emerging sensation: the coldness of the breeze will not ask for my permission before affecting me, and neither can I make it disappear by will. In this sense, it is beyond my immediate control.

In referring beyond themselves, hyletic sensations are “proto-intentional”: they serve as the primordial basis of object-constitution (Husserl 1984, 610; Husserl 1966a, 185; Husserl 1973d, 661; Husserl 2008, 229). However, rather than full-blown object-experiences, hyletic sensations are passive object-*impressions*, meaning that they inform us of the sensory quality of what encounters us, yet without readily presenting us with *objects* with such and such sensory attributes (Husserl 2008, 229; Husserl 2006, 53, 202, 350). As Husserl puts it, hyletic content is “nothing concrete” (Husserl 1973d, 375): it is like a preliminary “index” (Husserl 1973d, 428), primal experiential “material” or “transcendental not-Me” (*transzendentales Nicht-Ich*) (Husserl 2006, 120), whose associative organization *paves way* for the differentiation of the object. That is, hyletic sensations present us with a “proto-object”: something that stands over and against the experiencing Me, but is *not yet* properly differentiated from the latter. As Husserl also puts it, hyletic data present us with a “pre-world” (*vor-Welt*) (Husserl 2008, 350). Therefore, what is hyletically sensed is, strictly speaking, not *the cold breeze*, and hence something external, but the *coldness* (of the breeze). Instead of readily operating with a descriptive scheme differentiated into a Me and a not-Me, hyletic data pertains to an elementary layer of experience where this differentiation is only *coming about*.

Given their informative, proto-objective character, hyletic sensations are not meaningless “sense data” (Husserl 1966a, 138, 149ff; Zahavi 1999, 119). For one, they involve an *affective tone* (Husserl 2006, 318ff.). To illustrate, the coldness (of the breeze) not only feels ‘cold’ – as opposed to ‘warm’ or ‘hot’ – but it at once feels more or less ‘pleasant’ or ‘unpleasant’, ‘inviting’ or ‘distressing’, and so on. The mentioned affective tone adheres not only to clearly outlined sensations, such as coldness, but also to more ethereal and global sensory atmospheres, such as the Jamesian “blooming buzzing confusion” (see James 1981, 462): the

latter not only feels 'chaotic', as opposed to 'orderly', but as 'euphoric' or 'intimidating', 'joyful' or 'distressing', and so on. The affective tone is something fundamental to the unfolding sensation, and hence serves as a primal distinguishing feature with respect to what is hyletically presented to me. Instead of being determined by objective characteristics of what encounters us, the felt affective tone is relative to our subjective experiential circumstances. To illustrate, if I am freezing, the cold breeze may feel hostile and merciless, whereas if I am coming out of a hot sauna, the sensed coldness of the breeze may feel pleasant and inviting. Such examples serve to underline the inseparability of the Me and the not-Me (Husserl 2006, 199, 351-352; Husserl 1973d, 128, 375): the not-Me initially presents itself in the light of the Me (see Husserl 2006, 189).

What complicates matters is the fact that hyletic sensations further divide into *external* and *internal* ones. Of these, the domain of *external sensations* is the familiar field of the five senses (e.g., Husserl 2006, 83, 298). We *feel* the coldness (of the breeze); we *see* the bright shape (of the rising moon); we *hear* the scrunching sound (of the snow); we *smell* the scent (of the smoke arising from the chimney); and we *taste* the sweetness and spiciness (of the mulled wine). That is to say, external sensations present us with contents that not only transcend our sensing and escape our control, but are also extraneous to our sensing body. The latter, by contrast, is originally outlined by *internal² sensations*. These sensations are distinguished from external ones by the phenomenon of localization. To avoid misunderstandings, it is not that there is *first* an internal sensation which is *then* localized; rather, internal sensations are localized sensations: they are hyletic sensations *of our own body*. For example, we feel our frostbitten hands painfully tingling under a warm water or pleasantly warming up; we feel hungry or thirsty; we feel a lump in the throat; we feel our stomach turn; we feel physically exhausted or

exhilarated; we feel a tickle; we feel a tension in our back; we feel pressure in our bladder, and so on (see Gallagher 1986b; Depraz 2000; Whitehead 2015). Whereas external sensations inform us of our sensory surroundings, internal sensations provide us with a sense of bodily presence while at once outlining our bodily surfaces (as I will show later on, this distinction is blurred in bodily self-objectification).

Being sensitive to the distinction between external and internal sensations amounts to recognizing the boundary between one's sensed body and the sensed environment. In this regard, the sense of touch has a special status among the external senses, given its placement at the *intersection* of what pertains to the body and what is external to it. Unlike a seen and heard musical performance "over there". The coldness of the breeze or the warmth of the water is not sensed *at a distance*, as touching always takes place 'here'. *Tactile sensations open into two directions, as it were: inward and outward*. To illustrate, the felt coldness not only refers to the *breeze*, but also to my *bodily surfaces*. The "two" are felt simultaneously. Moreover, whether the sensed coldness amounts to the coldness (of the breeze) or the coldness (of the skin) initially remains *undecided*: before such differentiation, there is a sensation of cold without further specifications. To be sure, a conceptual distinction can be made. To illustrate, when going indoors, for a short while I feel the coldness (of my skin), yet while no longer feeling the coldness (of the breeze). Here it would be misleading to describe my experience by saying that I *still* feel the coldness *of the breeze*, because, literally speaking, my feeling is not a mere *retention of something felt a few minutes ago*, but *something sensed at the moment*. While intimately related, the two kinds of sensations should be distinguished from one another: feeling the coldness (of the breeze) is an *external* experience, whereas

feeling the coldness (on my skin) is an *internal* experience. Yet, this conceptual distinction might not be clear from the outset.

Importantly, while internal sensations outline the depths and boundaries of my felt body (rather than presenting me with something external to my body), what is internally felt is nonetheless something 'other' to me in the two senses discussed above. Namely, for one, we cannot make our hands feel warmer, or make our headache disappear, by will, and in this sense internal hyletic sensations, too, are beyond our immediate control. To be sure, in various ways, we can try to *prevent* ourselves from feeling cold (e.g., by putting on enough clothes), but we remain passive in respect to what, in each moment, is hyletically sensed. Like external sensations, internal sensations thus equally overwhelm us without asking for our permission. Second, internal hyletic sensations also involve the difference between *sensing* and *what is sensed*. The proto-intentional content of internal sensations transcends my experience of it, which is to say that internal hyletic sensations convey my body as a *proto-object*. Differently put, my internally felt body is something *I have*, yet not something that *I am* (e.g., *I have* a skin, but *I am* not a skin; *I have* a headache, but *I am* not a headache; *I have* a lump in the throat, but *I am* not a lump in the throat; and *I have* a cold hand but *I am* not a cold hand). While internal *sensings* are part of who *I am* – really inherent or lived-through moments of my experiential life and hence part of *Me* –, what is presented *by* them is something that *I have*, something *I am* (proto)intentionally "directed at", and hence part of the not-Me.

The *constancy* of internal (and external) sensing is worth underlining. Our bodily sense of presence – the sense of being here and now – is fundamentally and continuously sensuous (Husserl 2006, 295; Husserl 1966b, 68, 100, 126, 336; Husserl 1948, 76; Husserl 1966a, 128;

Husserl 1973d, 66), even if it is not *thematic* all the time. Besides sensations that exceed the threshold of our conscious attention (e.g., feeling cold), experiential life is persistently abundant of sensations that do not exceed this threshold. Like the felt 'room temperature', which in its neutrality does not experientially stand out and yet is constantly felt while sitting and breathing at the office, our internally felt body (its warmth and intimacy) is sensed all the time, even if it might not capture our objectifying attention. As long as internal sensations remain within a situationally and idiosyncratically outlined homeostatic range, the internally felt body remains unthematic. Again, whenever internal sensations are satisfactory or dissatisfactory enough, our internally felt body (or part of it) invites objectification. Interestingly, it seems that in this respect we are constantly balancing on a homeostatic thread, as it were: owing to our incessant internal sensing, our hyletically felt (proto-objective) body is constantly *on the verge of becoming an object for us*.

Whether marginal or thematic, internal sensations thus locate our body in the field of the not-Me: they introduce us with an "internal alterity" (*innerlich Ichfremdes*) (Husserl 1973c, 51-52; cf. Husserl 2006, 109). As such, the internally sensed body is not coextensive with the Me: it is something I have, not something I am. Therefore, *the distinction between internal and external sensations does not coincide with the distinction between the Me and the not-Me*. Instead, bodily awareness is a field where both the Me and the not-Me initially emerge – an issue I will come back to after introducing the concept of kinesthetic sensibility.

While everyday attention is mainly dominated by hyletic sensations (both external and internal ones), the second group of sensations mostly remains implicit, even if it constantly participates in the organization of the hyletic field. To illustrate, consider walking outside and fixing your gaze on a flying bird that passes you by. While following the bird with your gaze and turning your head to the left, you do not experience *the sensory field behind the bird sliding to the right*, but *the bird moving* to the left. Likewise, if you stumble and suddenly fall forward, you will not have the impression of *the sensory field* suddenly sliding upward. This constantly taken-for-granted organization of the hyletic field is owing to what Husserl calls *kinesthetic awareness*.

'Kinesthesia' literally refers to a *sense of movement* (Gr. *kinêîn*, to move). The ambiguity of the term is worth underlining: while "sense of movement" lexically covers both the *passive feeling of moving* (e.g., on a car or on a train) and the sense of *active self-movement*, it is exclusively the latter that we are here interested in. In Husserl's conceptualization, moreover, kinesthetic sensations are non-representational and hence do not, by themselves, introduce us with anything substantial – such as *an active muscle* or a *moving organ* (see Husserl 1973c, 369). In other words, your impression that it is the bird that moves, and not (the rest of) the landscape, does not necessitate even a marginal representation of your moving body or body part, to say nothing of a more concise "body image" (on this concept, see Gallagher 1986a; Gallagher 1995). Husserl underlines that rather than *producing* sensory data, kinaesthetic awareness *organizes* the latter. Hyletic experience tacitly consults kinesthetic awareness: the latter keeps track of the *circumstances* of our external and internal sensations, and thus experientially organizes the appearing hyletic field (Husserl 1973a, 181).

Importantly, in contrast to hyletic sensations, kinaesthetic sensations do *not* introduce us with anything "foreign". Again, this means two things.

First, these sensations involve no difference between *the sensing* and *what is sensed*. They are not proto-intentional sensations that would materially represent something other than the kinesthetic sensation itself. Regardless of possible associations, Husserl emphasizes that the term "kinaesthetic sensation" is "not meant to suggest that we sense the movement of a thing or even that the movement of a thing is presented in these sensations" (Husserl 1973a, 161): kinesthetic sensations "make possible a presentation without being presentational themselves" (Husserl 1973a, 161), they are "not bearers of intention that penetrate them" (Husserl 1973a, 181). To illustrate, when turning my head, *what is kinaesthetically sensed* is nothing other than *the kinaesthetic sensing* itself – there is no gap between. In contrast to hyletic sensibility which qualifies as the manifestation of the not-Me, kinaesthetic sensing marks a non-objectifying presence of *the Me*, or "immediate self-manifestation" (Husserl 1973b, 263). As such, it is a form of "pre-reflective self-awareness" in contrast to "object-awareness" (Zahavi 1999). To be sure, I may feel my neck tightening as I turn my head while looking at the bird, but this sense of muscular tension is owing to internal hyletic sensations, not to kinaesthetic ones. Also, I can spatially represent, visualize, or imagine my head movement and altering posture, but such experiences are not provided by kinaesthetic awareness alone. Given its non-representational nature, the Husserlian concept of "kinaesthesia" must accordingly be distinguished from "proprioception" that refers to a representational and (proto)intentional awareness *of one's body*, and hence to a complex sensory configuration that is largely built on internal hyletic sensations.

Second, kinaesthetic sensations are *immediately self-effected*. As noted above, I am fundamentally powerless with respect to the sense of the cold breeze, and neither can I rid the sensed coldness of my hands by will. Yet, provided that I am not injured or paralyzed, I can immediately *move myself*. And so, while rubbing my hands together, the ensuing kinaesthetic sensations are not something that *passively befall* me, but something actively instantiated. For sure, I do not *master* all my movements, and many – perhaps even a majority – of them unfold in an *automatic* or *instinctual* fashion, but kinaesthetic self-movements are nonetheless phenomenologically distinguished from externally caused body movements: whether consciously or not, they are effectuated by the Me.³

Lacking the “foreign” element in these two senses, kinaesthetic sensibility pertains to *the Me*. In its immediate constitutive function, it is an organizing factor in the constantly streaming “constitution” of the hyletic not-Me. While hyletic sensations are primal *motives for action* (e.g., the unpleasant and threatening sense of coldness makes me seek for warmth), as immediately self-effected, kinesthetic sensibility in turn underlies our sense of *agency* – a concept that is significantly complicated by the unconscious and involuntary dimensions of the Me.

Moreover, Husserl argues that kinaesthetic and hyletic sensations are equiprimordial; they constantly operate together and stand in a reciprocal functional dependency (Husserl 1973a, 170, 177). This means, on the one hand, that kinaesthetic sensations do not *precede* hyletic sensings, or *vice versa*. As Husserl puts it, the two fill “the same span of time” (Husserl 1973a, 177; cf. Husserl 1973a, 187-188; Husserl 1966a, 14). When turning my head to the left, it is not that there is *first* an impression of the environment sliding to the right and *then* a readjustment

of this impression in the light of kinaesthetic awareness. My hyletic experience of the environment is informed by my kinaesthetic awareness from the start, and this interplay is something I also know to expect (e.g., *if I would turn my head, then the visual appearance would change thus-and-so*). Accordingly, there is but one unitary sense experience with two equally necessary moments (Husserl 1973a, 183). On the other hand, the functional interdependence between hyletic and kinaesthetic sensations refers to the fact that the association between the two is *indefinite and general* (Husserl 1973a, 161). For instance, I can track the moving bird either by turning my head, by turning my eyes, or by turning both, without significantly altering the hyletic appearance (see Husserl 1973a, 171). Kinaestheses are "bound together" with hyletic sensations, or "interwoven with them", but given their "totally different constitutive functions" (Husserl 1952, 57), the two "cannot blend together in the sense of exchanging functions" with one another (Husserl 1973a, 161). That is to say, "in every perceptual process we see a constitutive duet being played" (Husserl 1966a, 15; cf. Husserl 1966, 91; Husserl 2006 199).

2. Bodily awareness: the place of entanglement of Me and not-Me

Given the constancy, equiprimordiality, and functional intertwinement of kinaesthetic, internal and external sensations, bodily awareness originally unfolds as an "area of entanglement" (*Umschlagspunkt, Umschlagstelle*) of the Me and the not-Me (see Husserl 1952, 160, 286; cf. Merleau-Ponty 1964). Schematically put, what is presented by external sensations is something *other-than-Me and part of the external environment*; what is internally sensed is something *other-than-Me yet not part of the external environment*; and what is kinaesthetically

felt is *neither foreign nor external*, but something immediately lived-through and self-affected. Furthermore, like kinestheses, the *stream of hyletic sensings*, too, immediately pertains to the Me, even if *what is* (proto-intentionally) *represented in and through* them pertains to the not-Me. In Husserl's words, what is hyletically presented is non-egoic or part of the not-Me (*nicht-ichlich, ichfremd*), but "having something as an object" is nonetheless egoic and pertains to the Me (*Das Gegenständlich-Haben ist selbst ichlich*) (Husserl 2006, 114). For example, to feel pain in one's ankle is not just to *be aware of pain*, but to *be in pain*. There is no distance between me and the unpleasant sense of pain – for the time being, the latter is a constituent of my experiential life. Even if the felt pain is localized, and even if I can objectify the painful locus of my body which accordingly presents it as something standing over and against me as a proto-object, *going through* the pain is not itself an object, but a segment of the "dative" of this sensory manifestation that I am (see Husserl 2006, 114, 351). That is to say, I *immediately* sense my body from within. Whereas the body that I *have* is a primal object, sensing my body is a constituent of my subjective life. To say that I *have* a body is another way of saying that I *am* the one who immediately lives through the internal sensations of this body. In short: *I am* the embodied being who internally senses the body that I *have*.

The distinction between the Me and the not-Me, however, is only a *nascent* one. Again, it is important to bear in mind that, rather than an area with two distinct elements wrapped around each another, we are dealing with an area where the differentiation between "the two" comes about in the first place. It would accordingly be misleading to discuss the issue in the light of a ready-made distinction. As we saw Husserl formulating it, the "two original sources" fundamentally emerge "as one". What we are dealing with is *a conceptual distinction that is only experientially coming about* – a *potential* distinction that is being experientially *actualized*,

if you will. Rather than fundamentally twofold or split, bodily awareness accordingly is fundamentally ambiguous.

In line with his elaboration on the different types of sensations and their multifarious interrelations, Husserl argues that *the body* is a complex entity. For one, Husserl argues that, "given its hyletic substratum, a human being's total consciousness is bound to the lived body, even if intentional experiences are no longer directly and concretely localized in the body" (Husserl 1952, 153). In explicating his ideas, Husserl famously sets out with the distinction between the "lived body" (*Leib*) and the body as a material thing (*Körper*) (e.g., Husserl 1952, 143ff.). In terms introduced above, the body as a material thing amounts to the body as viewed exclusively in the register of external sensations. Actively neglecting my internal and kinesthetic sensations, I can observe my own body like any other material entity: it has physical parameters and features (incl. shape, size, weight and color) and it is subject to the forces of causality (e.g., if pushed, it moves). This self-objectifying attitude rests on an abstraction, whereby the subjective dimension – and that which makes this body *mine*, something *I have* – is disregarded. The lived body, by contrast, amounts to one's own body without and before such abstractions. As such, it is phenomenologically distinguished from all other things (1) as *something immediate movable*, (2) as the *center of spatio-temporal orientation*, and (3) as a *field of localization* (e.g., Husserl 1952, 157-161). Let me briefly elaborate on these one by one and show how the Me/not-Me distinction figures in each of them.

(1) The lived body is an *immediately movable entity*. In order to move the coffee cup in front of me, I have to move my body, but in order to move my body, I do not have to move another thing first. My body movements, as said, are *immediately self-effected*. One of the most

important implications of this immediacy is that my externally perceivable body movements at once count as *expressions of Me*. That is to say, whether conscious or unconscious, deliberate or habitual, my externally perceivable movements comprise an outlook of my motivated kinaesthetic effort that unfold in certain circumstances and for some reason. And so, rather than sheer physical movements, my body movements are present as *meaningful intentions and actions*: for instance, while reaching toward the coffee cup, my visible movement at once conveys my *intention* of grasping the cup, my *desire* to have a sip of coffee, and so on. In this manner, my externally perceivable movements *expose me*.

This also holds for "micro movements". While largely unfolding in an unconscious and involuntary fashion, my facial expressions and countenances, postures and gestures, signs and groans, and my intonation and tone of voice are all external manifestations of kinaesthetically instantiated self-movements. An *audible sigh*, for instance, is an outward manifestation of particular *kinaesthetic self-movements* motivated in response to particular *internal and external sensations accompanied by an affective tone*. Differently put, the audible sigh is the *ex-pressive* (i.e., external, public) side of my kinaesthetic effort – i.e., an exteriority of an interiority (*Äusserlichkeit die Innerlichkeit*) (Husserl 1973c, 491) – whereas the latter, in turn, is the *im-pressional*, subjective side of the audible sigh. Importantly, while other people can immediately experience only the expressive guise of my kinaesthetic effort, and not the latter as it is lived through by me, in my own case both aspects are simultaneously experienced. That is to say, when moving myself, what is immediately given to me is both my kinaesthetic effort and my hyletic sensations issuing from my moving body. In this manner, my kinaesthetic self-movement is "indirectly localized" and "mundanized" (Husserl 1952, 148): it is drawn into the world by the localized sensations and associatively grasped as self-effected movement of the

body that I *have* (see Husserl 1952, 148, 15-151). This fundamental interwovenness of the Me and the not-Me, and the indirect mundanization of the Me, add to the ambiguity of bodily awareness.

(2) The lived-body is *the center of spatiotemporal orientation*. My lived body cannot appear 'on the left', 'on the right', 'over there', 'near', 'far', etc. – it is always experientially 'here'. Discussing this issue, Husserl compares the lived body with a "zeropoint" or "origo" (*Nullpunkt*) of a coordinate system. In this analogy, two things are worth underlining: whereas all other coordinates are defined in reference to the zeropoint, the zeropoint itself is not equivocally included in the coordinate system, but serves as their *condition of possibility*. For sure, the lived body does not precede the constitution of the external environment, nor the other way around – just as there is neither *first* an origo and *then* the emergence of the other points, nor *first* a chaos of points and *then*, along with the introduction of a zeropoint, an organization. Rather, like the origo and the further points of a coordinate system, the self-present lived body and the external environment are equiprimordial.

Moreover, to say that the lived body is not included in space (to which it serves as the point of reference) does not mean that it is displaced from it. While my oriented external perceptions implicate my bodily self as the center of orientation, they also remind me of my *involvement* in the realm that I externally perceive (Husserl 2006, 157-158). To illustrate, when seeing someone throwing a snowball at me, the fact that I perceive the snowball 'approaching' (and not just moving from one place to another without further specifications) rather vividly implicates the Me as the space-organizing center; my habitual or instinctual evasive movements would hardly be motivated if I did not readily anticipate that the snowball is about

to hit me. Thus, instead of experiencing the world from afar, and orchestrating my movements from an immaterial Cartesian cockpit as it were, the snowball and the zeropoint of orientation are experientially located in the same spatio-temporal reality. Yet, our body cannot be included "in" space in the sense of an oriented object – such experiences would already presuppose the lived body as the point of reference (Husserl 1973d, 326-327). Unlike with other things, we cannot take distance to our body in order to see it in its entirety, and neither can we go nearer in order to see our face better. In this sense, Husserl argues, the lived body is a "remarkably imperfectly constituted thing" (Husserl 1952, 145).

Rather than being experientially either *included in* or *excluded from* the hyletically presented not-Me, bodily awareness marks an area where the Me/not-Me distinction emerges in the first place. We find ourselves balancing on the boundary, as it were. That is to say, while bodily awareness can be elaborated *in the light* of a Me/not-Me distinction, it more fundamentally figures as the *condition of possibility* for this distinction. Rather than being located either 'in here' or 'out there', our own body is the field in which this distinction initially emerges.

(3) The lived body is *a field of localization*. My body stands out from all other things by the fact that, whether externally perceived or not, it is internally sensed. Differently put, my body is the only thing that I also sense from within. To know that I am exhausted or in pain, for instance, I do not have to perceive my facial expressions or listen to my verbal reports about this. The possibility of external self-perception further complicates the issue, however. Husserl refers to this issue while discussing so-called "double sensations" (e.g., Husserl 1952, 145). To modify the paradigmatic phenomenological example, if with my right hand I explore the shape of the fingers of my left hand, what is then *externally sensed* is my left hand. To cut a few corners, the

externally sensing right hand is then the *subject* (Me) while the *externally sensed* left hand is the *object* (not-Me) of this sensory experience. However, importantly, there is a dynamic and situational structure to what, in each moment, is organized as part of the not-Me and what, in turn, is included in the Me (see Husserl 2006, 382). To continue the example, while exploring my left hand, I also feel the touch on my left hand, and if I begin exploring the shape of my right hand fingers, I come to "reverse" the experiential situation: what was first the subject of touch now turns into an object of touch, and vice versa. Now exploring my right hand fingers with my left hand, the right hand is focally presented as something externally sensed – a proto-object – whereas my left hand now occupies the position of the subject of sensing.

Given the reversibility of the immediately lived-through and hyletic dimensions of the body, Husserl argues, the lived body is a "subject-object" (Husserl 1952, 195; cf. Husserl 1973d, 287), a complex Me/not-Me configuration (Husserl 1973b, 263). In being both – something I have and something I am – the lived body resists a sharp Me/not-Me dichotomy. In phenomenological scholarship, too little attention has perhaps been paid to the fact that while our hands touch one another only occasionally, there are various areas in our body where "self-palpation" occurs rather constantly – even if this might remain unthematic or otherwise escape our conscious attention. Just consider how we almost continually sense the mucosa of our mouth and our gums with our tongue, and vice versa, whereby is it not easy to distinguish that which is touching (Me) and that which is touched (not-Me). This note is meant to underline that the ambiguity of bodily awareness is not just an occasional matter, but something that constantly characterizes our experiential life.

The three mentioned peculiarities discussed above illustrate the ambiguity of bodily awareness. To recapitulate, first, my external bodily appearance is the hither side, or expression, *of* my subjectivity. Yet, before a clear-cut distinction between the Me and the not-Me, these aspects emerge as non-independent and inseparable moments within the expressive whole of bodily experience. Second, while bodily awareness can be (and often is) elaborated in the light of the Me/not-Me distinction, it is more originally a field where this opposition comes about and a condition of possibility for the latter. Third, inherently involving both subjective and objective components, and allowing for the reversibility of this experiential dichotomy, bodily awareness unfolds as a dynamic Me/not-Me matrix. Bodily awareness is a field where the Me and the not-Me originally emerge *as one*.

3. The negotiable nature of the Me/not-Me distinction

Rather than being fixed once and for all, Me/not-Me differentiation is a dynamic and situational matter. We are dealing with a nascent moment of experience, in which we are affected by something before categorizing it as endogenous or as extraneous. Recall the example of the cold breeze: before grasping the felt coldness as coldness *of the breeze* or as coldness *of your hand*, the localized sense of coldness is ignorant of such qualifications. Alternatively, consider the following example: lying down in bed, you are just about to fall asleep, when you become increasingly aware of a barely audible sound. For a short while, you remain undecided as to whether this dim sound comes from the outside (say, from your refrigerator, from the neighbor, or from the waterpipes), whether you are suffering from tinnitus, or whether you are only dreaming. Yet, importantly, the auditory content emerges already before you locate

the source in your mind, in your eardrums, or in the external world. Such transitional moments refer to what I call moments of “negotiation”.

The motives and mechanisms of this negotiation deserve a closer look: what are the factors that determine whether a sensory content introduces itself as part of Me or part of not-Me?

One obvious response points toward *reality testing*. In wanting to *know* where the barely audible sound originates, you might close your ears to test if the sound is still there: if it disappears by interrupting your external perception in this manner, you can securely infer that it originates from the outside. Alternatively, you might ask your partner whether she or he hears the sound too. In such cases, you engage with a sort of reality testing. In a wakeful, reality-attuned, and cognitively oriented attitude, the distinction between Me and not-Me may be a univocal issue. You want to *know* if the audible phenomenon pertains to the Me or the not-Me, and you find out. However, in everyday life, *cognitive motives* are hardly the predominant ones; more often, the Me/not-Me differentiation is guided by *practical motives*. To illustrate, consider the way in which we practically “incorporate” (Merleau-Pont 1945, 168-178; Husserl 1973c, 283-284; Taipale 2014, 59-63; Colombetti 2016) tools and equipment and act as if they were part of us – despite our *knowledge* that of their factual external nature. For instance, even though I am well aware of the fact that the bike that I am driving is something other than Me, when riding my body and the bike are “united as one” (*einigt*) (Husserl 1973d, 274), in the sense that I actually feel the imbalances of body-bike system, not only the imbalances of my body *on* the bike. Likewise with clothes: when trying on a shirt for the first time, I might be interested in evaluating how the fabric feels *on me*, and thus experientially locate my bodily boundaries *on my skin*, but once I have gotten used to the shirt, the Me-

boundary is relocated *on the outer surface of the shirt*. Importantly, what is thus "expanded" (*erweitern*) is our *Leib*, and not just our *Körper* (Husserl 1973d, 663): "what is in the zero-orientation [...] is no longer my sheer lived body, but my lived body together with the 'conjoined' object" (Husserl 1973d, 274, cf. 663). And so, when taking off my shirt or stepping off the bike after a longer ride, for a while I tend to feel that *part of Me* is missing. The example of incorporation serves to illustrate how the incessant experiential demarcation between Me and not-Me is guided not only by *reason, cognition and reality-testing*, but also by our *shifting and churning interests and practical intentions*, that might also outshine the former.

Moreover, there is an interesting dynamism between the two, which brings us *affective and conative motives* in Me/not-Me differentiation. In the previous examples, we implicitly took for granted that the incorporated thing feels *comfortable and suitable enough*, and hence does not experientially stand out *per se*. If the shirt feels itchy or too small, it will not be properly incorporated, and the experiential boundary between myself and the external world runs on my skin. To cut a few corners, whenever we feel uncomfortable with certain areas of our body, or our bodily outlook, these may feel alien or other to us, even if we *know* that they are part of us. Such examples are meant to illustrate how the affective distinction between pleasurable and unpleasurable also figures in Me/not-Me differentiation – regardless of the boundaries that we *know* of. The conative-affective factors could be further illustrated in reference to various psychological mechanisms, such as *projection* and *repression*, whereby moments of the Me (e.g., an inappropriate feeling or shameful intention) is unconsciously reorganized as someone else's property or silenced altogether. Such insights echo the theoretizations of Freud, who famously argued that *before* the Me/not-Me division is organized by the "reality principle", the opposition has *already* been determined by the so-called "pleasure principle"

(e.g., Freud 1958). Without going into this matter in more detail in the present context, let me note that I find the idea convincing that, despite our best knowledge, we may be reluctant to accept unwanted bodily experiences as part of the Me.

By suggesting that, besides *cognitive factors*, the Me/not-Me demarcation is also motivated by *practical* and *conative-affective factors*, I hope to have shown that the distinction between Me and not-Me should not be conceived of in terms of a predetermining matrix where all experiential contents automatically end up becoming compartmentalized into their pre-set phenomenological pigeonholes, as it were. The process of differentiation can also be modified, challenged, refuted or ignored, which is to say that the distinction between Me and not-Me is *dynamic* and *negotiable*. If so, employing a ready-made categorical distinction between Me and not-Me when describing a dimension of experience where this complex and multifaceted distinction is *coming about* seems one-sided and controversial.⁴ As I hope to have shown, the dynamic and situational nature of the Me/not-Me distinction allows for the possibility that the hyletically sensed objects might not be automatically taken as something external to me; and likewise that all that in fact pertains to the Me might not automatically end up being categorized as such. Differently put, at the level of bodily awareness, the Me/not-Me distinction is being constantly *negotiated*.

Conclusion

The considerations presented above hopefully speak for the rich and polyphonic nature of Husserl's account of bodily awareness. To recapitulate, the latter comprises both *hyletic*

sensations that present us with something other than our sensing, and non-representational *kinaesthetic sensations* that experientially organize the hyletic field. The two are fundamentally intertwined into a "constitutive duet", which is echoed in the complexity of the Me/not-Me distinction. Schematically put, what is externally and internally presented *of* the body phenomenologically pertains to the not-Me, while the immediately lived-through stream of kinesthetic and hyletic sensing phenomenologically figures as a really inherent part of the Me. Nonetheless, rather than being split into two clearly demarcated regions, bodily awareness fundamentally unfolds as *an ambiguous area where the relation and distinction between the Me and the not-Me is being constantly negotiated*. Moreover, while the opposition between Me and not-Me may seem clear-cut in reflective mode of life, it is more or less compromised as soon as practical and affective-conative motives gain weight – and indeed, Husserl adds that this distinction may be undone when *sleeping* (Husserl 1952, 253). The motives that enable, during moments of critical self-reflection, a univocal Me/not-Me differentiation, are *dormant* and *ineffective* when we are sleeping. Be that as it may, the numerous intermediate positions are perhaps even more interesting. If the cognitive motives of self-demarcation become less emphatic and prominent as soon as we are *tired* or *stressed*, for instance, and if in such modes of experiencing the other factors of Me/not-Me differentiation play a more central part, under what circumstances can a clear-cut Me/not-Me distinction be taken for granted? Differently put: just how often are we *fully awake* and *exclusively attuned to objective reality*?⁵

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Endnotes:

¹ All translations from Husserl are my own.

² Instead of "internal sensations", one could use terms such as "interoception", "somaesthesia" or "somatic sense". The problem with these, however, is that they are given specific meanings in different fields of research. To avoid such problematic associations, I have decided to use the general term "internal sensations", which is supposed to cover sensations from within our body (e.g., muscular tension, pain, physical exhaustion, heartbeat, the feeling of breathing, etc.) as well as sensations from our bodily surfaces (the sense of coldness as felt on our skin).

³ To be sure, Husserl notes that compulsory (*zwangsmässig*) movements – e.g., straightening one's knee in response to the physician's reflex hammer and involuntary movements resulting from a neurological disorder – are phenomenologically problematic, as they might *feel* as if instantiated from the outside (see Husserl 1973c, 445). In this context, certain psychotic experiences might be discussed as well. However, I will not be examining this complex issue in the present context.

⁴ The imbalance between these various factors could also be developed in reference to "double bookkeeping" (Henriksen & Parnas 2014), but this will be a matter of further studies.

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