Reply to Wyller

JOHN HYMAN

In 'Pains and Places', I argue that sensations, such as aches and pains, are generally in the places where we say they are.[1] So, for example, if I say that I have an ache in my hip or a pain in my lower back, then by and large that is exactly where the ache or the pain is. Truls Wyller accepts this; but he maintains that 'Wittgensteinian expressivists are also right that it is where I, the whole person, am' (385).[2] According to Wyller, I have missed the fact, or missed the significance of the fact, that 'the whole person feels the pain in some particular limb' (386). For this implies that 'I am wholly present in the hurting part of my body' (386). So the 'Wittgensteinian expressivists' are right.

Wyller and I agree that the pain I feel in my back really does have a spatial location, contrary to Descartes's view; we agree that this is not an intentional location, as Wittgenstein seems to have believed, and as Armstrong claimed in *A Materialist Theory of the Mind*; and we agree that it is not in some part of my brain, as many philosophers now maintain, but in my back. There are two important points on which we appear to disagree. First, Wyller says that the pain is both in my back and also 'where I, the whole person, am'; whereas I say that 'I, the whole person' cannot be in my back. Second, I say that sensations are 'states or modes of the sensitive parts of the bodies of sentient animals';[3] whereas Wyller maintains instead that they are 'modes of persons located in their limbs' (393).

In fact there is no real disagreement between us on the first point, because Wyller acknowledges that the word 'where' in the phrase 'where I, the whole person, am' and the phrase 'wholly present in' in the sentence 'I am wholly present in the hurting part of my body' are not about my spatial location at all. He writes: 'Spatially, of course, the whole organism cannot be put into one of its parts. But as an autopoetic unit, functionally it is wholly present

[1] John Hyman, 'Pains and Places', *Philosophy* **78** (2003), 5–24.

[2] Truls Wyller, 'The Place of Pain in Life', *Philosophy* **80** (2005), 385–393. Parenthetical page references are to this article.

[3] Op. cit., 15.

doi:10.1017/S0031819106317068
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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819106317068 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in each one of them' (389). My claim, that the pain I feel in my back really is in my back, is simply about the spatial location of the pain. So—assuming that the reason why 'spatially ... the whole organism cannot be put into one of its parts' is not that it is already there—Wyller's remarks do no affect this claim. (I shall comment on the idea of an autopoetic unit in due course.)

The real disagreement between us is therefore over what bodily sensations are states or modes of. Wyller writes: 'whereas Hyman takes pains to be modes of persons' limbs, I propose we understand them as modes of persons located in their limbs' (393). (I assume he means any sensitive part of the body.) His view about the location of a painful sensation is the same as mine: it is in the part of the body that hurts. 'Hyman is right' he writes, 'that the pain of my thumb is in my thumb' (386). But his view about the *nature* of the sensation—its metaphysical status, if you like—is the view I attributed to Wittgenstein in 'Pains and Places', namely, that 'bodily pain', as Wittgenstein calls it, like grief or regret, is a state or condition of the whole person or animal that feels it, and not of the specific part of the body where it is felt.

The trouble with this combination of views is that it is inconsistent, because if a state or mode is a state or mode of something as a whole, and not of any of its parts, it cannot be located in one part of the thing rather than another. Or rather, more precisely, it cannot be literally, spatially and non-intentionally located in one part of the thing rather than another. The weakness of a chain may indeed be located in a single link. But in that case it would be wrong to say that this weakness is a state or mode of the chain as a whole, and not of any of its parts.

Wittgenstein evidently understood this point. That is why he wrote: '... if one wanted to find an analogy to the place of pain, it would of course not be in the mind (as, of course the place of bodily pain is not the body), but the *object* of regret.'[4] Wittgenstein believed that bodily pain is a state or condition of the whole person or animal that feels it, and not of any specific part of the body. He was therefore bound to deny that the place—that is the literal, spatial, non-intentional place—of bodily pain is somewhere specific in the body. And so he did. He claimed that when we locate a bodily pain somewhere in the body, this is an *intentional* location. It is like

[4] L. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology II*, G.H. von Wright & H. Nyman (ed.) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), §307. The emphasis is Wittgenstein's.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819106317068 Published online by Cambridge University Press

a place someone is thinking about, and not a place where the thinking happens. It is, he says, like the object of regret.

Hence Wyller cannot consistently agree with Wittgenstein that 'bodily pain' is a state or mode of the whole person or animal that feels it, and not of any specific part of the body, and at the same time agree with me that a pain in my thumb is literally, spatially and non-intentionallly located in my thumb. If he wants to avoid contradicting himself, he has to choose. One possibility he does not consider is that 'bodily pain' is *both* a state or mode of the whole person or animal that feels it, and of the specific part of the body in which it is felt, rather as the weakness of the chain is both the weakness of the chain as a whole and of a single link. Nothing I have said is inconsistent with this view.

Finally, I shall comment briefly on the idea that as an 'autopoetic unit' a human being is 'functionally ... wholly present in [its limbs]' (389). Wyller introduces this idea with a quotation from Kant's *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*: 'Where I feel, it is there that I am. I am as immediately in my finger-tip as I am in my head ... I would insist on its strict refutation before I could be persuaded to dismiss as absurd what used to be said in the schools: *My soul is wholly in my whole body, and wholly in each of its parts*.'[5] But these remarks, both Kant's and Wyller's own, are vague enough to be consistent with widely differing ideas about what human beings or their souls are. Indeed, Descartes famously said something similar in the sixth meditation: 'Nature also teaches me, by these sensations of pain, hunger, thirst, and so on ... that I am very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled with [my body], so that I and the body form a unit.'[6]

In my view, the best way to give substance to Kant's claim that I am in some sense 'immediately' in my finger-tip, is to interpret it as a challenge to Descartes' way of dividing mind and body, which for the first time made aches and pains 'modes of thinking'. This was the step in philosophy that made the body seem insensitive, like a prosthesis—the very idea that Kant objects to here. If, like Wyller, we accept Descartes' view that sensations are not states or modes of parts of our bodies—whether on the grounds that feeling pain is a conscious experience, or on the grounds that we, and not our

[5] I. Kant, *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics*, in Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770*, D. Walford (ed.) (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), 312f.

[6] R. Descartes, *Meditations*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, vol. 2*, trans. J. Cottingham et.al. (Cambridge: CUP, 1984), 56.

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finger-tips, feel pain—we have not really freed ourselves from his system, even if we deny the existence of the soul. We may have substituted the brain or the whole person for the soul, but we have retained the single most important boundary-line in Descartes' *mappa mundi*, and we are therefore still stuck with the prosthetic conception of the body that Kant was unwilling to accept.

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