

# **A phenomenological analysis of bodily self-awareness in the experience of pain and pleasure: on dys-appearance and eu-appearance**

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# **A Phenomenological Analysis of Bodily Self-Awareness in the Experience of Pain and Pleasure: on Dys-appearance and Eu-appearance**

## **I. Introduction**

In his thought-provoking and illuminative book *The Absent Body*, Drew Leder (1990) explores the role of the body with regard to subjectivity. On the one hand, human experience is always embodied. On the other hand, in everyday life my body is seldom a thematic object of my experience. When I engage in everyday interaction with others, I often do not think about my body. My body dis-appears from my attention. Leder differentiates between two ways in which one's own body can dis-appear from one's attention. He also makes a distinction between bodily dis-appearance and dys-appearance. The latter takes place when the body appears to me as "ill" or "bad" (Leder 1990:84). This is often the case when I experience pain or illness.

Whereas many phenomenological studies have explored cases of bodily dys-appearance (see Bullington 2009, Svenaeus 2001, Zeiler and Wickström 2009, Toombs 1993, Scarry 1985), few studies have focused on the opposite of bodily dys-appearance, i.e. on bodily modes of being where the body appears to the subject as something good, easy or well.<sup>1</sup>

The lack of studies in this area is probably due to the character of the phenomena. As a bodily mode of being that is experienced as harmful and distressing, bodily dys-appearance calls for attention and action not only by the person in pain, but also by relatives, friends and health-care professionals. Through the use of medical therapies and surgery, health-care professionals seek to soften bodily dys-appearance and enable bodily dis-appearance for patients. Bodily modes of being where I am aware of my body as something positive do not call for others' action in the same way. There may also be another reason for this lack. Some suggest that if "I suddenly give my attention to [the body's] function and processes, then my body as a whole is objectified,

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<sup>1</sup> For some exceptions to this tendency, see Young (2005), Irigaray (1985) and Szasz (1957).

becomes to me an other” (Erwin Straus, quoted in Young 2005:51).<sup>2</sup> If it is *a priori* assumed that attention to one’s body primarily or only implies alienation, then the lack of analysis of other bodily modes of being – i.e. modes of being that do not fit into this description – may be less surprising.

The aim of this article is to explore nuances within the field of bodily self-awareness. My starting-point is phenomenological. I focus on how the subject experiences her or his body, i.e. how the body stands forth to the subject. The body in this analysis is the *sine qua non* for the subject’s being-to-the-world. My body is what makes relations to others possible. It is made meaningful to me in interactions with others and the world and it is never merely an object to me. It is my lived reality. This is the perspective of the lived body that the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2002) writes about. My body, Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2002:167,453) says, is my “anchorage in a world.” Nevertheless, my body can appear to me in different ways.

Merleau-Ponty describes the tacit “self-givenness” of the body. He draws attention to the fact that I am bodily self-aware even if I do not reflect on how I position my body or how to move it. The body is given to me as the centre of my existence. This bodily self-awareness is different from the bodily self-awareness when I attend to my body as a thematic object of experience. The former bodily self-awareness is prereflective; the latter is reflective.

Prereflective bodily self-awareness is what makes it possible for me to engage in activities without thinking about locomotion. I am prereflectively aware of the position of my body at a particular moment, of movements that I may perform in the form of an “I can” (do this or that), and of my body as mine. Reflective bodily self-awareness is different. In reflective bodily self-

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<sup>2</sup> This is not only Straus’ view. For a discussion of this, see Young (2005).

awareness, the body is one's primary object. Such is the case when the subject directs her or his attention to the body in an effort to understand the bodily "feel" of her or his body.<sup>3</sup>

The distinction is useful in the discussion of different kinds of bodily dys-appearance, and I will suggest that we distinguish between three versions of bodily dys-appearance, i.e. cases where the body appears to the subject as bad or ill. This can help us explore nuances in, for example, experiences of pain. I also explore bodily modes of being where the body stands forth, to the subject, as something positive. I label these eu-static modes of being. This term combines the Greek *eu*, which means good or well, and *statis*, which means to stand. When the body stands forth as good, easy or well to the subject, I suggest that the body *eu-appears* to this person.

I will argue against those who claim that "the transformation into the bodily as physical always means discomfort and malaise" (Plugge, quoted in Young 2005:50-51). The analysis of appearance suggests that the subject can attend to her or his body as something positive and that this attention need not result in discomfort or alienation. It also highlights differences in terms of how the subject is aware of her or his body in cases of eu-appearance. I differentiate between three kinds of bodily eu-appearance. Eu-appearance can take place in physical exercise, in sexual pleasure and, I will argue, in some cases of wanted pregnancies.<sup>4</sup> Cases of bodily dys-appearance will also be compared, and sometimes contrasted, with eu-appearance. I will also, briefly, discuss the special case of masochism. Before engaging in this analysis, I will comment on the concept of the lived body.

## II. The Lived Body

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<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, reflective bodily self-awareness presupposes prereflective bodily self-awareness (see Zahavi 1999).

<sup>4</sup> I am well aware that, on a global level, many pregnancies are not wanted by the pregnant woman and that most pregnancies involve shorter or longer periods of time where the body, typically, dys-appears. For a phenomenological analysis of unwanted pregnancies, see Lundqvist (2008).

The lived body is an ambiguous mind-body unity that experiences and acts in a specific situation. It is our lived relationship to a world immersed in meaning, which we constantly interpret and make meaningful to ourselves through interaction with others. The lived body is someone's "grasp of the world" (Beauvoir 2003[1949]:36,237). It is "not just one thing in the world, but a way in which the world comes to be" (Leder 1990:25). In this sense, my lived body is the *here* from which I see the world of far and near distances and the *now* in which I interpret my past and reach for the future.

Leder draws on Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger in his analysis of bodily modes of being. The lived body is *ex-stasis*.<sup>5</sup> The term is derived from the Greek *ex*, which means out and *stasis* (to stand). The body is that which stands out; it is that which by its nature "projects outward" from its here and now (Leder 1990:22). Though ex-static in this sense, the body can also dis-appear from my attention.

This is something of a paradox. On the one hand, the lived body is ex-static and the subject's necessary starting-point. It is that from which she or he engages with others and the world. It is that which make certain things and not others accessible to the subject and it is that which orients her or him in the world. On the other hand, when someone engages with others and the world in everyday activities, this person's body often remains only indirectly available to her or his experience.

### **III. Bodily Self-awareness**

#### *Bodily Dis-appearance*

Bodily dis-appearance typically takes place when the subject does not think about how to move the body, i.e. about locomotion, but instead about the accomplishment of a certain task. In such cases, the body is not a thematic object of the subject's experience. The object of the subject's

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<sup>5</sup> Heidegger (2003) uses this term in his discussion of Dasein, not of bodily awareness.

experience is instead, typically, something outside the body. It may be a certain task that she or he engages with or other human beings. In bodily dis-appearance, the body is that *from* which the subject attends *to* the world, as Leder (1990) points out.<sup>6</sup>

Dis-appearance is possible when the mind-body unity experiences and acts harmoniously in a specific situation. I move and engage in a wide range of activities without having to think about my body and bodily locomotion. I need not think about my body when I go by bike, just as a jogger need not think about how to move his legs when running. We have learnt these skills. To use Merleau-Ponty's term, the subjects in these examples have "incorporated" certain skills into their body schemas, i.e. into their systems of sensory-motor abilities.<sup>7</sup> The skills have become parts of our bodily know-how on a pre-reflective level and the body can dis-appear from our attention when performing the skill.

It is important to note that bodily dis-appearance does not imply that the body is *totally* absent for the subject. Even as my body recedes from thematic attention, it is my here and my now and that with which I engage with others and the world. In cases of bodily dis-appearance,

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<sup>6</sup> Leder makes a useful distinction between background dis-appearance, which takes place when body-parts are given a merely supportive role and slip to the margin of one's consciousness, and a focal dis-appearance. The latter takes place when body-parts dis-appear from someone's attention even though they "form the focal origin of a perceptual or actional field" (Leder 1990:26).

<sup>7</sup> This system typically functions without perceptual monitoring. In an oft-quoted passage, Merleau-Ponty explains that to know how to type is not to know every letter's place among the keys. It is "knowledge in the hands, which is forthcoming only when bodily efforts are made" (Merleau-Ponty 2006:166). When this has taken place, I need not think about which finger to move and which key to press (i.e. about the body-schematic performances) while typing: I focus on what I write.

the subject is prereflectively aware of the body as *her* or *his* body, of the bodily position and of the bodily I can.<sup>8</sup>

### *Dys-appearance*

Consider now the following. Two men are going for a walk. They enjoy the sun, the trees and their conversation. After a while, one of them starts to feel a vague, unpleasant pressure on his heels. This does not stop him from walking, talking and listening to his friend. When he later on takes off his shoes, he sees a reddening on his heels. This is of course a very different scenario from the one with a jogger who, after some hundred metres, feels an intense, acute pain in her legs which make her unable to run or, indeed, walk.

One difference can be highlighted with the distinction between (a) pre-reflective experience of discomfort, (b) lived, bodily discomfort and (c) suffered illness as suggested by Fredrik Svenaeus' (2009) in his elaboration on Kay Toombs (1992) and Jean-Paul Sartre's ([1943]2003) phenomenology of falling ill. Just as in Sartre's discussion about how someone may be pre-reflectively aware of a subtle head-ache when reading a book, the man above is pre-reflectively aware of the unpleasant heel pressure. Just as the pain in head-ache shows itself in the activity of reading and may, possibly, disappear if this activity is interrupted, so may the pressure on the heels. The pain quality in these scenarios depend on what the subject does, i.e. how she or he engages with others and the world, and upon "the way the world sucks me in" (Svenaeus 2009:56).

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<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of how technology can recede from one's attention, yet always be "semi-transparent" in the sense that I will be aware of the instruments that I use as "my" instruments, see Ihde (1979:19-20). For a discussion of how cultural norms can recede from one's attention, be incorporated into one's being, and how they at other times can be excorporated and able to be questioned, see Malmqvist and Zeiler (2010).

Svenaesus emphasises that at stake in the case of the head-ache, is not only pre-reflective awareness of discomfort but also the bodily dimension of this discomfort. We are aware of the vague pain being located in the head even when we do not reflect, thematically, upon this vague pain. I agree, though I would also suggest that since the pre-reflective experience of discomfort in cases such as those above also is a lived, bodily experience, the lived bodily discomfort (where the body “appears in a lived, rather than directly reflected, way”, Svenaesus 2009:62) is at least often included in the pre-reflective awareness of discomfort.

Let me now turn to the scenario with the jogger. She is pre-reflectively aware of her body as hers, of its position and bodily movement while running, even though she does not attend to her body as a thematic object of experience. When she feels the intense pain in her leg, however, this pain will draw her attention to this body-part. She will no longer be able to run and her leg will appear to her as painful. It dys-appears to her, i.e. it appears as bad or ill.

This is worth examining in some detail. Prior to the experience of pain, the jogger was the “center from which the rays of intentionality radiate[d] outward” to the world (Leder 1990:74). The hurt body-part disrupts this intentionality. The body is no longer the taken-for-granted starting-point for perception and action. The hurt body part has become an explicit object of the jogger’s attention. Pain disrupts, we might say, the jogger’s mind-body-world relation.

Leder (1990:73) suggests that pain effects a “spatiotemporal constriction” for the subject. This is an illuminating description. The jogger’s attention, which formerly may have focused on the scenery or on what has happened during the day, is drawn to his bodily here and now. While she may have been making plans about what to do after this exercise, these plans are – when she is in intense pain – experienced as distant. The jogger may also experience the distance that she needs to cover in order to get home as insurmountable, even if her home is not far away in terms of hundreds of metres. Leder also suggests that acute pain make us experience the body-part in pain as an “alien presence,” i.e. as an object other than the self (Leder 1990:73). This observation

is backed up by empirical research. Such research has shown that pain often results in an experience of the hurt body-part as an it – as not me.<sup>9</sup>

Alienation implies that the body (that I am) appear as other and strange to me. Possibly, when living with chronic pain, this experience may change its character. Of course, in both acute and chronic pain one may feel alienated from things that previously gave meaning to one's life and, also, from other people. This, however, can be distinguished from the alienation when a certain body-part is experienced as other than me. Furthermore, whereas I may experience the hurting body-part as an it, as strange and other than me also in chronic pain, awareness of the time-dimension – that pain will not go away – can matter for the pain quality and the experience of bodily otherness. This can be the case if my awareness that though pain varies with time it will not go away, and that pain may get worse, make me experience that I do not “trust” my own body; it has a life of its own. And, fear that pain will get worse may promote a tense mode of being, which can increase pain.

Imagine now a man who lives with chronic pain. This pain need not constantly be on the same level. It may be worse some days than others. Even during the better days, however, this person may be constantly aware of his leg as something that may easily start to hurt more. Now, while sitting at the breakfast table planning the day, he may be pre-reflectively aware of his body in pain. He may also be pre-reflectively aware of a number of other things – of the smell of the coffee that he's pouring into his and his partner's mugs, of the children joking and teasing each other and of the sun outside the window. These things exist, at the moment, at the margin of his consciousness. His primary concern, i.e. the thematic object of his attention, is what to do during the day. Here, however, he needs to attend to his bodily feel. He needs to think about how his

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<sup>9</sup> Empirical studies have shown that pain and the disruption of one's previous world that pain result in make one experience the body-part in pain as an object, as other than the self (see Good 1992 and White & Sweet 1955). See also Scarry's description of this experience in her analysis of experiences of torture (Scarry 1999:52).

body feels today in relation to what he and the others will do during the day. He needs to attend reflectively to his body. This does not necessarily imply a narrow focus on a certain hurt body-part. Beauvoir's term ([1949]2003) "the body in a situation" is useful here: the man's primary object of attention may very well be the bodily feel in his leg *in relation to* a range of activities that are desirable from the children's and the partner's point of view. And, the man is pre-reflectively and reflectively aware of his body *and* he attends to these others' wishes. This does not imply that he takes two intentional objects, but that he is aware of his body-in-the-context-of-his-partner's-and-the-children's-wishes.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, pain does not block, but colours, his way of engaging with others and the world.

Pain, typically, impacts on the subject's perception, thinking and action. To be in pain implies that one's world has been transformed. These descriptions, however, are more accurate as regards the acute pain of the jogger or chronic pain. They are less so in the case of the experience of the reddened heels. In such a case (case i), subjects can be pre-reflective aware of the body as bad or ill. The subjects' intentionality may be threatened, but not disrupted. Their mind-body-world unity is not (yet) broken and they typically do not experience alienation. This can correspond to Svenaeus' (2009) pre-reflective awareness of discomfort and lived, bodily discomfort. This is different from many cases of acute or chronic pain (case ii). Such cases seem to correspond to Svenaeus' (and Toombs 1992) suffered illness. The subject is both pre-

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<sup>10</sup> Dan Zahavi (1999:60) uses the metaphor of a circle in order to explain the relation between thematic objects and objects that are cogiven but that belong – at a certain moment – to the margin of the subject's consciousness. If applied to the scenario above, the bodily feel in relation to what to do, together with others, during the day occupy the centre of the circle and the man attends to this is a situational whole: his body-in-pain in relation to the week-end plans together with others. The sun and the smell of the coffee are objects around this thematic field, i.e. at the periphery. The man is pre-reflectively aware of them.

reflectively and reflectively aware of her or his body as bad, hurt or ill. The subject experiences disrupted intentionality and alienation.

There may also be reasons to add a third case. In this case (case iii), the subject cannot concentrate on anything else than the body-in-pain. I suggest that this is the case of pain that Emanuel Levinas ([1961]2005:238) talks about when he says that severe forms of suffering subjugate the self, fully. The acuity of this suffering lies in the “impossibility of retreat.” I am “held fast” in pain (Levinas [1974]1981:52). This pain can be impossible to express in words: it not only “resists” but “destroys” language (Scarry 1985:4). All that it is possible to articulate is the groan and the cry. The self “becomes” pain (Bullington 2009:106); the subject experiences that the hurt body is “swelling to fill the entire universe” (Scarry 1985:35). This negative bodily awareness absorbs the subject’s whole being.

This is the pain of torture or of surgery without anaesthesia.<sup>11</sup> Not only is the mind-body-world unity disrupted, but the subject’s perception, thought, world can (at least temporarily) be destroyed. Elaine Scarry comments on this pain in her analysis of the pain-experience of torture victims. In some moments of intense pain, she says, “the contents of one’s consciousness are ... obliterated ... the name of one’s child, the memory of a friend’s face, are all absent” (Scarry 1999:30). In such cases, one’s whole self is nothing *but* pain.

Scarry holds that intense pain annihilates objects of complex thought and emotion. In this pain, I suggest, reflective bodily self-awareness in the form of *thinking about the special bodily “feel”* of a certain painful sensation is no longer possible. Nevertheless, and even if complex thought

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<sup>11</sup> Consider the Somali model and the UN spokesperson against infibulations, W. Dirie’s description of her pain-filled experience of infibulation. When in intense pain, she experienced how she “left” her body. This is an extreme version of alienation, of the body being experienced as other-than-self. Dirie explains that while hearing the sound of the “dull blade sawing back and forth through my skin ... my legs were completely numb ... I felt myself floating up, away from the ground” (Dirie 1998:45-17).

and emotion are no longer positive, bodily pain can still be the primary object of experience. This is the case if the subject cannot but attend to pain, if one's whole world becomes pain.<sup>12</sup>

There is a qualitative difference between pain that I am pre-reflectively and reflectively aware of but which does not subjugate the self, fully and pain that does. Whereas the man at the breakfast table could attend to his bodily-feel-in-relation-to-plans-together-with-others, this is no longer possible in intense bodily pain.

### *Bodily Awareness – Pain and Pleasure*

The bodily awareness in the first case of dys-appearance (the reddened heels) need not result in the experience of alienation nor in a spatiotemporal constriction. Such experiences are, arguably, more common in cases of acute and chronic pain (case ii and iii). How can the experiences of alienation and spatiotemporal constriction be understood?

Alienation implies that the body (that I am) appear as other and strange to me. Leder suggests that this is a possible (but not necessary) consequence of the body becoming an object of experience. The body, which previously has been that from which I direct my attention to others and the world, now becomes that to which I attend. Perception introduces an element of distance. I no longer experience that I am my body, but that I have a body. Alienation may also be an effect of the disrupted intentionality. When pain threatens the goals I have, the painful body-part becomes a hindrance to me. Finally, since a particular body-part is painful there may be

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<sup>12</sup> To some, this pain may also be experienced in childbirth without anaesthesia. I am well aware that some claim that pain in childbirth is positive. Though I certainly agree that the birth of the child can be immensely positive, I fail to see how this future positive result could transform the experience of intense pain, for the subject, when she undergoes it, into something positive. I have no problem understanding, however, the kind of rationalisations ('it's not that bad, really') one may make when pain is on a lower level during labour or after the child is born. Of course, this pain is *not* pure undergoing but something in which the woman is active: pushing, holding back etc.

psychological reasons for the self to distance her from it (so that she will be prepared to do what it takes to get rid of the pain even if it involves painful measures, such as surgery). This can also, partly, explain the experience of alienation.

Now, experiences of bodily pleasure are typically not alienating experiences even though some of them imply not only a pre-reflective but also a reflective bodily self-awareness. In bodily pleasure, attention to the body as a thematic object of experience involves the kind of distance described above (the body that I am and that has functioned as that from which I attend to others and the world now become that to which I attend), but the body shows up as typically non-alien to the subject. In contrast to the cases of dis-appearance, it does so in a mode that catches the subject's attention.

The comparison with bodily modes of being where the subject attends to her or his body as positive also evokes questions as regards the spatiotemporal constriction. Eu-appearance does not imply a disrupted intentionality. In these situations, the body does not appear as hindrance. Nevertheless, scholars such as Beauvoir ([1949]2003) claim that intense bodily pleasure can result in a heightened awareness of the subject's here and now at the expense, temporarily, of awareness of far distances, the past and the future. If we were to accept such a description, and since the focus on the subject's here and now at the expense of other places and times is what characterises spatiotemporal constriction, it seems implausible to assume that all cases of spatiotemporal constriction are due to disrupted intentionality. Possibly, instead, the spatio-temporal constriction is related to how thoroughly one is bodily aware and the effects of pain on the self. In such reasoning, independently of whether one's bodily self-awareness is pre-reflective or reflective, intense pain as in cases of torture, above, would result in a more thorough spatio-temporal constriction than would the pain associated with the reddened heels – because of its subjugating effect.

As previous empirical studies have shown, analyses of how the body appears to the subject need to explore the interplay between the subject's experience of injury, disease and/or pain, the

social support or lack of support of others, and cultural norms as regards whether and how the subject can express these experiences.<sup>13</sup> A subject in pain does not first experience pain and then try to understand this experience in relation to others and her or his particular socio-cultural context. Nevertheless, and as shown by Sartre ([1943]2003), Beauvoir ([1945]2003) and Sandra Lee Bartkey (1990), the intersubjective thread can become particularly evident in analyses of how the body can dys-appear to me because of how others look at me and act towards me.<sup>14</sup> This can take place if I feel that others are staring at my body and if this makes me uncomfortable, frustrated or afraid. My body becomes something that I am acutely aware of and that hinders me from being or acting as freely as before. It should also be noted, however, that the gaze of others may also strengthen me. Arguably, the gaze of my loved ones can have positive effects (compare Svenaeus 2009). It can make the body eu-appear to me, i.e. appear as strong, good or easy.

In some of these examples, the body dys-appears to the subject even if she or he does not feel physical pain. Of course, the experience of physical pain is but one case of bodily dys-appearance.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> For some such empirical examples, see Turner and Wainwright (2003) and Honkasalo (2009).

<sup>14</sup> Sartre's description of the other's objectifying gaze, which makes me feel fundamentally at unease,

exemplifies this bodily dys-appearance as do Beauvoir's and Lee Bartkey's phenomenological analyses of the (male) gaze that objectifies women's bodies. Because of how others look at her body, the woman feels unease. Her world diminishes in the sense that she cannot attend to others and the world as before.

<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the body can dys-appear to me even if I experience no physical pain and even if others act towards me in a non-objectifying manner. Consider the situation when a teen-age girl, who has not experienced any symptoms but who has not yet had her menstruation, is told – after thorough medical examinations – that she has Mayer-Rokitansky-Kuster-Hauser syndrome (hereafter referred to as MRKH). This is a medical condition where the person has shortened or no vagina, no cervix and a partial or absent uterus. In such a case, though the person experiences no syndromes, this information about her body may

As a third example, lack of social support can result in a deepened experience of dys-appearance. When my body and world become painful, I need to develop strategies to handle everyday activities. If these strategies involve others helping me, and if I feel rejected by these others, my experience of dys-appearance can become even more complete than otherwise. In this sense, the intersubjective dimension of the situation in which my body dys-appears can aggravate or soften dys-appearance.

So far, I have mainly discussed pain; I will soon discuss bodily self-awareness in some cases of pleasure. Before doing so, I will offer a brief comment on the case of masochism. Recent empirical research highlights the heterogeneity in experiences and ways of talking about masochist experiences.<sup>16</sup> Only little empirical work has taken a phenomenological stance and focused on the bodily dimension of these experiences, but some such research suggest that it is not the bodily sensation of pain as such that these persons say they experience as pleasure. Though pain (often without physical injury) is sought and/or inflicted, in small doses, in a consensual situation of stage-setting where pain is an instrument “for staging dramas of suspense, supplication, abandon, and relief that enhance or substitute for sexual acts” (Williams, quoted in McCosker 2005), some empirical scholars have suggested that masochists seem to seek the meaning of the sensation of pain or the effect of the sensation of pain rather than pain as such (Baumeister 1988, Reik 1957). For the present discussion, it needs to be asked whether *the body*, for the masochist, really stands forth as positive (good, easy or well) in pain and/or whether pain – with its spatio-temporal constriction, its disruption of the mind-body-world unity – is

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affect her bodily self-awareness. The girl’s body may dys-appear to her, i.e. appear as bad or ill. Even if the doctor who informs her of the condition is caring and careful in terms of how she informs her or his patient, this new knowledge about her body can result in dys-appearance for the girl.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, GW Taylor and JM Ussher (2001) who analyse masochists’ stories about these experiences in terms such as dissidence, escapism or transcendence – as some examples.

experienced as pleasurable for other reasons, such as for its effect of blotting out “higher-order thought or complex or symbolic self-awareness” (Baumeister 1988:38).

### *Eu-appearance*

Just as the Greek *dys* is used to highlight the experience of the body as bad or ill in dys-appearance, I use the Greek *eu* to highlight the experience of the body as well, easy or good. Just as there are different forms of dys-appearance, there are different forms of eu-static bodily appearances or bodily eu-appearances. In these cases the body stands forth, to the subject, as well, easy or good.<sup>17</sup>

Eu-appearance can take place in physical exercise. Imagine a hot summer’s day. A woman plunges into the sea. She feels the warmth of the water against her body and starts to crawl along the sea-shore; she enjoys the strength of her arms when swimming. In such a case, she is aware of her body as well, easy or good. As long as she does not attend to her body as a thematic object of experience, this bodily self-awareness is prereflective. In other cases, however, she may be both prereflectively and reflectively aware of her body as well, easy or good. She may focus on the movements of her arms and legs, on the rhythm of her body in the water, and on the bodily feel when she stretches forward and when she uses her legs in order to propel herself in the desired direction. She may focus, reflectively, on the bodily feel of calm, deep breathing.

This is also the case in certain meditation techniques and, as just one example, in Binh Dinh Kung Fu breathing techniques. When learning this breathing technique, the subject focuses explicitly on first filling her lungs with air and then on moving that air from the chest region to the abdominal region and back again before breathing out. When doing this exercise, the subject

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<sup>17</sup> There are few contemporary philosophical analyses of bodily pleasures. For exceptions to this tendency, see Irigaray (1985) and Young (2005). In the social sciences, pleasure has been analysed in relation to food, eating and sexuality (Warde and Martens 1999, Mintz 1997, Lorentzen 2007). In theology, sexual pleasure has been analysed in terms of transcendence (Norman 2008).

may attend to the body and its functions without this implying that the body is experienced as other than the self, a part of the outside world.

In cases of eu-appearance, and irrespective of whether the bodily awareness is only pre-reflective or also reflective, the mind-body-world unity is in harmony. Even when the swimmer or the Kung Fu breathing practitioner explicitly attends to her or his body as a thematic object of experience, there is no threatened or disrupted intentionality, nor discomfort or alienation. Indeed, the bodily awareness in eu-appearance implies the opposite: comfort and harmony.

There are both differences and similarities between the phenomena of dys-appearance and eu-appearance. Leder (1990:75) suggests that whereas pain sensations are experienced in the subject's body, pleasurable sensations are not primarily experienced as sensations in the body but rather as sensations "in and from the world." He also suggests that pain tends to result in isolation and that pleasure is "secured primarily with and through others" (Leder 1990:75). Though I find Leder's discussion useful in many ways, I would like to qualify this description. Let me start with two notes of caution.

First, both experiences of pain and pleasure are made meaningful in interactions with others and the world. Though pain certainly can make the subject want to withdraw from others and the world, and though pain is experienced as a sensation in the subject's body, pain is intersubjectively interpreted in a particular situation, as is pleasure. The subject in pain does no more than the subject who experiences bodily pleasure first experience pain/pleasure and then, in a later step, try to make this experience meaningful to her or him. And, such meaning-making takes place in relation to other selves. Second, I would like to qualify the suggestion that painful sensations, more so than pleasurable ones, are experienced as sensations in the subject's body. I am not sure that this contrast is helpful when it comes to understanding the kind of pleasures discussed here, i.e. pleasures that result in an awareness of the body as positive. Though talking to a friend or watching a beautiful movie may be pleasures, they need not result in this positive *bodily* awareness. Leder (1990) is right in remarking that what I enjoy when eating is the taste of food

and not the taste of my taste buds. However, in the case of swimming, the subject may indeed enjoy the strength and pleasure of her or his body.

On the one hand, pleasures can be experienced as “more tied to a common world” than pain, since pleasures can be more easily and/or commonly shared with others (Leder 1990:75). On the other hand, the body can eu-appear to the subject without this pleasure being secured with or through others (as in the case of the swimmer). Both pleasure and pain can be experienced in the subject’s body.

There are, of course, several differences between the experience of eu-appearance and dys-appearance. The mind-body-world unity is threatened or disrupted in dys-appearance. This, I will argue, seems not to be the case in eu-appearance. Whereas dys-appearance implies discomfort, eu-appearance implies comfort and harmony. Furthermore, certain forms of dys-appearance can result in experiences of alienation, i.e. the body as an object. This is typically not the case in eu-appearance.

Consider now the case of wanted pregnancy.<sup>18</sup> Pregnancy is not straightforward, phenomenologically speaking. It is, in the terms of Kristeva (1981:31) and Young (2005:49), experienced as “the radical ordeal of the splitting of the subject: redoubling up the body,

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<sup>18</sup> I.M. Young explicitly focuses on chosen pregnancies, defined as either pregnancies where the woman explicitly decides to become pregnant or at least chooses to “be identified with and positively accepting it” (Young 2005:47). These are also the kind of pregnancies that I have in mind. Please note, however, that I wish to avoid totalising theoretical tendencies. Not all women whose pregnancies are chosen experience these *ever* as eu-static. Neither do I mean to support a romanticised conception of pregnancy. I am certainly aware that pregnancies often involve bodily dys-appearance. Furthermore, as historical analysis of motherhood ideologies has shown, motherhood narratives and motherhood rhetoric (which often include also pregnancy narratives and pregnancy rhetoric) have been used in ways that are – to say the least – detrimental to some women.

separation and coexistence of the self and another,” a decentred body subjectivity, “myself in the mode of not being myself.”

For many women, pregnancy involves dys-appearance. One may experience milder or more severe forms of nausea, vomiting, back-pain and fatigue. Though pregnancy is not a disease, my body can appear to me as ill. I cannot engage with others and the world in the sense that I could before my pregnancy started – because I am too tired, have too much nausea or vomit as soon as I rise from my bed. I may certainly feel that I have become different from before. Yet, at other times, when the pregnant woman no longer experiences nausea and does not yet experience back pain she can attend to her body as something positive. She can do so, Young (2005) suggests, with an aesthetic interest and with pleasure. I concur with Young. In pregnant embodiment, the woman can attend to her body without this hampering the accomplishment of her aims. She can attend to her bodily movements, to the “little tickle,” the “little gurgle in my belly ... my feeling, my insides” at the beginning of pregnancy, as something positive (Young 2005:49). Later on, the experience of the foetus’ movements within the woman’s womb can also, at times, be static.<sup>19</sup>

Eu-appearance in cases of pregnancy is different from eu-appearance in the cases discussed above. The foetus’ first movements produce, Young (2005:49) suggests, a “sense of splitting subject.” Though the pregnant woman may experience the foetus’ initial movements as movements fully of her body, i.e. not as other than the self, and later on, as movements of her body *and* movements of another, I concur with Young in holding that pregnant embodiment can challenge the boundary between inside and outside, between what is within, i.e. what *is* me, and what is separate from me. My insides become the outsides for someone else – while still remaining me, my body. Nevertheless, the pregnant woman may be pre-reflectively aware of her

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<sup>19</sup> Whether the body eu-appears to the pregnant woman depends on many factors. It can depend on whether she wanted the pregnancy in the first place, whether she feels capable of handling the situation, whether she has the support of others, and also on what feelings and images she has of what is to come, such as delivery.

body as something positive as in the cases of swimming and Dinh Binh King Fu breathing. She may also be reflectively aware of her body as good or well.

Consider now a parallel scenario to the one with the man in chronic pain at the breakfast table. A pregnant woman sits in a café with friends. She is prereflectively aware of her body as good. She also thinks about her positive bodily feel – i.e. she is reflectively aware of her body as eu-appearing. Now, imagine that the topic of conversation is pregnant embodiment. The woman explains to her friends how she experiences the bodily feel of pregnancy. Can she, at the same time, be reflectively aware of her eu-appearing body and attend to her friends and the conversation? My answer is affirmative. The woman can attend to her body-in-a-situation, i.e. attend to her bodily feel *in relation to* the topic of conversation with her friends, reflectively. Again, however, this need not imply that she takes two intentional objects at the same time.

#### *Spatio-temporal constriction and intense bodily pleasure*

When the subject's body, that *from* which she or he attends, is also that *to* which she or he attends as a thematic object of experience, then this implies a certain distance to the body. This is a result of reflective thought. It is crucial to note that this distance need *not*, as such, result in alienation. Even if the pregnant woman or the swimmer attend to their bodies as a thematic object of experience, as when they explicitly try to grasp and pin-point the bodily feel when swimming or when pregnant, this need not make them experience the body as an it. It is not the reflective awareness that make someone experience a certain body-part as other-than-self. A better candidate for this, as I have suggested earlier, is disrupted intentionality.

It has been suggested that strong pleasure, which lies beyond the limits of one's conscious control, cannot be accurately expressed in words (Norman 2008, Barthes 1975). Yet efforts are made by scholars such as Beauvoir ([1949]2003), Julia Kristeva (2001) and Luce Irigaray (1985) who use the term *jouissance* in their analysis of “extreme” pleasure, including sexual pleasure, “to the point of losing control and consciousness” (Kristeva and Clement, in Todd 2001:15). In

their analyses, intense bodily pleasure involves a spatio-temporal constriction, in the sense of a focus on the subject's here and now. This spatio-temporal constriction does not need to have a negative tone. It is a matter of bodily presence. Furthermore, when Beauvoir analyses female sexual pleasure, she emphasises that this bodily experience can be easily disrupted by worries about tomorrow. This pleasure is “a magic spell” and if “words or movements oppose the magic of caresses, the spell is broken” (Beauvoir ([1945]2003:417). Bodily pleasure fades if the subject tries to attend to other things than the lived here and now.

If this is accurate, the experience of bodily pleasure and pain seems to highlight one more similarity and one more difference. Pain, and in particular severe pain, effects a spatiotemporal constriction. Pain draws the subject's attention to her bodily here and now. Intense bodily pleasure seems to have a somewhat similar effect, yet with an important difference. Whereas the “magic spell” of pleasure can be easily disrupted, pain cannot.

In the case of extreme pain, as in torture, I suggested that the subject could not think about the bodily feel of pain while undergoing this pain. Such a “thinking about” presupposes a certain distance to that which I attend to. It was not possible to maintain this distance in cases of extreme pain. Nevertheless, pain was still the primary object of attention. It was impossible for the subject not to be directed toward the body-part in pain.

Possibly, a similar reasoning can be applied to cases of extreme bodily pleasure. In intense pleasure, the subject cannot think about the bodily feel without the pleasure being somewhat reduced. This would allow us to qualify the description of the magic spell above. The spell is disrupted not only if the subject attends to other things than the lived here and now and but also if she or he tries to think about the bodily feel of intense bodily pleasure, such as sexual pleasure, while experiencing it. This does not mean, however, that the body cannot be the subject's primary object of attention when she or he experiences intense bodily pleasure.

Just as there were different forms of dys-appearance, I suggest, we can also differentiate between forms of eu-appearance in:

- i) situations where the subject is pre-reflectively aware of the body as good, easy or well (example: the case of swimming);
- ii) situations where the subject is pre-reflectively and reflectively aware of her or his body as good, easy or well (example: some moments during wanted pregnancy);
- iii) situations where the subject is pre-reflectively and reflectively aware of her or his body as good, easy or well. The subject cannot attend to other things than her or his bodily here and now without this resulting in a diminished bodily pleasure (example: intense bodily pleasure).

Finally, whereas eu-appearance can take place in everyday physical exercise, the unusualness of the situation can make eu-appearance more likely to take place. If the woman in the case of swimming lives in a warm country and swims in the sea every-day, she may get habituated to the situation. Her body may, instead, dis-appear to her.

Consider also one more case of eu-appearance. Eu-appearance can take place when someone, while learning to dance, for once gets it right. On such an occasion, this person may be pre-reflectively aware of her or his body in positive terms. The subject feels the precision, the control and strength in her or his movements, even if she or he may not explicitly reflect on this bodily feel. This is a different scenario from the one where I, while learning to dance, think so much about how to move that I cannot get into the rhythm of the dance. It is also different from the case where the body dis-appears from dancers' explicit attention when they dance a dance they know well. In such a case, dancers have learnt the skill of dancing. To use Merleau-Ponty's term again, dancers have "incorporated" the skill of dancing into their body schemas, i.e. into their systems of sensory-motor abilities. The skill has become a part of their bodily know-how.

Now, this is of course different from the cases above. The person whose body eu-appears while learning to dance has not incorporated this skill.<sup>20</sup>

This can, however, explain why the swimming woman may be pre-reflectively and reflectively aware of her body as positive and why it may be more difficult for the dancer, who is learning to dance, to explicitly reflect on the body. Whereas the swimmer has incorporated the skill of swimming, the dancer has not (yet). Once the skill is incorporated, I need not think about the bodily movement. I can, instead, attend to the positive bodily feel.

## **Conclusion**

Previous phenomenological analyses have focused on the role of the body with regard to subjective and intersubjective meaning-making. While phenomenologists have distinguished between dis-appearance and dys-appearance, and between different kinds of dis-appearance, little attention have been directed to differences in dys-appearing bodily experiences. This article distinguishes between cases of pre-reflective and reflective bodily self-awareness. It suggests that we make a distinction between situations where the subject is pre-reflectively aware of the body as bad or ill and where intentionality is threatened; situations where the subject is pre-reflectively and reflectively aware of the body as bad or ill and where intentionality is disrupted; and situations where the subject is pre-reflectively aware of the body as bad or ill and where she or he cannot attend to others or the body in a reflective way because of pain.

In contrast to analyses of bodily modes of being where it is assumed that I only attend to the body when it is bad or ill, I suggest that the body can eu-appear to me, as something positive. The term eu-appear is derived from the Greek *eu*, which means good or well. The body can eu-appear to me as something that I am aware of as positive without this being an explicit focus for my attention and without its disrupting my way of being or acting; I can also be reflectively aware of my body as positive. Finally, there are also situations of intense bodily pleasure, where the

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<sup>20</sup> For an interesting analysis of the phenomenology of dance, see Fraleigh (1987).

subject is pre-reflectively aware of her or his body as good, easy or well and where the subject cannot attend to other things than her or his bodily here and now, without this resulting in a diminished bodily pleasure. Just as three types of dys-appearance were suggested, the article also suggests that we make a threefold distinction between cases of eu-appearance. By making these distinctions, the article hopes to contribute to a more nuanced discussion of bodily self-awareness.

Cases of eu-appearance are particularly interesting to analyse given the previously articulated idea that as soon as the subject attends to her or his body or its functions, she or he experiences the body as another. The article shows that this is not the case. The subject may attend to her body, reflectively and pre-reflectively, without this resulting in alienation or discomfort. This is important, given the often negative conception of the body that has prevailed in some Western philosophy.

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