

# Self-Consciousness and the Body

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## Abstract

Traditionally, what we are conscious of in self-consciousness is something non-corporeal. But anti-Cartesian philosophers argue that the self is as much corporeal as it is mental. Because we have the sense of proprioception, a kind of body awareness, we are immediately aware of ourselves as bodies in physical space. In this debate the case histories of patients who have lost their sense of proprioception are clearly relevant. These patients do retain an awareness of themselves as corporeal beings, although they hardly feel their bodies (they have normal sensation in the head, but from the neck downwards only sensations of pain and temperature, and of fatigue and deep touch). They can initiate movements, and with the help of visual feedback learn to control them.

It is shown that the traditional view of the self as immaterial is not supported by these cases. But the argument against this view has to be amended. It relies too much on bodily sensations, and misses the importance of active self-movement.

**Keywords:** Cartesianism, disembodiment, proprioception, self-consciousness

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